

ECID Newsletter



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Communities share their experiences of accessing services in a focus group discussion for people with disabilities in Kaduna State, Nigeria

Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development (ECID) is a 4 year programme funded with UK Aid from the British people, which aims to contribute to reducing levels of poverty for some of the most marginalised people in Myanmar, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. Working in a consortium of 9 global organisations, led by Christian Aid, and implemented through local partner organisations, we aim to work with communities to realise their rights and amplify their voices so they are included in decisions made about access to essential services.

Since the start of 2020, the ECID programme has grown and evolved beyond expectations, following much piloting of different programme ideas and development of tools in the co-creation phase. The implementation phase burst into life with the start of the baseline which brought together the programme in its entirety. Everything from our GESI strategy framing to community engagement, the research ethics to digital elements, all taking shape with a clear focus to understand the voices of the most marginalised and how to achieve community-led action planning and advocacy strategies.

Adapting to Covid-19

Much of this work has since been adapted due to Covid-19. The impact of the pandemic on programme activities has been immense. However, there has been a single motivation that the needs of the most marginalised are as important as ever under Covid-19. Interactions between marginalised communities and decision makers are as critical as ever.

As lockdowns and restrictions on movement are changing across Myanmar, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, we are beginning some field activities, with significant consideration of *Do No Harm* protocols, in light of the risks of Covid-19.

In May the Zimbabwe and Myanmar teams piloted remote enumerator training with physical distancing procedures in place for participants. Each of the three countries have adapted their programme design and undertaken additional initiatives, seeking to provide basic humanitarian support to their target groups. Nigeria is carrying out research to understand the implications of the lockdown on their target groups and Zimbabwe is undertaking an access to information audit to support future advocacy plans. You will read more about these changes in the country updates which follow.

Next steps

Over the next quarter, we will be bringing together the baseline data with the programme data, which will show highlights from across the global consortium. As an evidence-based programme, this is an important moment for setting the agenda for our advocacy plans, defining our ongoing learning framework and determining key research questions.

Fond farewell to our Myanmar Country Manager

We would also like to say goodbye to Rajan Khosla, the Christian Aid Myanmar Country Manager. We want to thank him for all of his work from the inception of this programme. He has been a real driving force in developing the approach in Myanmar, bringing his extensive programme experience and really shaping the ECID consortium thinking. Good luck in your next challenges Rajan.



Our work in Myanmar

ECID programme activities in Myanmar will take place in Kachin and Kayin States focussing on internally displaced people (IDPs), drug users, female sex workers, people living with HIV/Aids, LGBT+ communities and people living with disabilities. These were the groups identified as those who suffer the most from discrimination and are excluded from accessing basic needs and human rights. Activities will focus on bringing about the change these groups need to access services, through empowerment and advocacy. Watch this video showing our approach in Myanmar.

To achieve this change, the ECID programme focuses on community-led data collection, improving data literacy of marginalised groups and community campaigns to encourage policy makers and other power holders to engage with this data, so that basic service delivery will be more inclusive to the needs of marginalised people.

Adapting to Covid-19

Usually, ways of working between programme staff, partners and communities is mostly through face to face engagement. Not all communities have access to internet or laptops, which restricts remote engagement. The Covid-19 pandemic has therefore presented some considerable issues in reaching these communities. Despite these issues, adaptations have been made in response to the crisis to facilitate remote engagement as much as possible. The Myanmar team recently delivered a training on digital feedback questionnaires (below). This was delivered online, with community members sharing computers whilst keeping to social distancing measures. Although this way of working presents challenges, the team are also seeing this time as a good opportunity to support local partners in developing the digital aspects of their work and their capacity to engage remotely with communities.



Certain groups of people are more vulnerable to the impacts of Covid-19. We know that emergency goods and services often don't reach IDPs and those with a disability. As ECID is aiming to reach such groups, the team has been able to share information and provide awareness training on Covid-19 ensuring they are not left behind.

Working in partnership

The team have also continued to build capacity of local partners to provide essential services to vulnerable communities during this challenging time. An example of this was the Myanmar team supporting local partner 'Myanmar Physically Handicapped Association' (MPHA), to access further resources that would support people with disabilities in project areas. As part of the early ECID work, MPHA had gathered data insights and built relationships with community leaders and village authorities. Following the arrival of Covid-19 this information and connections could be utilised to quickly gather need and beneficiary information to support a funding proposal. As a result, MPHA are now carrying out a range of activities in the marginalised communities, including: emergency cash grants for those with disabilities, data collection and Covid-19 social distancing awareness sessions.

From this experience, we gained valuable skills in a challenging time in delivering remote trainings, capacity building for partners and collaborations with communities.

Case study - A teacher excluded from receiving food and health care support

Daw Seng Nan (below) has been living in a camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Kachin since 2016, after escaping the fighting between Union Military and the Kachin Independent Army. She has been disabled since childhood. Daw relies on food provision from NGOs and works as a primary school teacher for which she receives a small amount of money.

Daw reported that those with a disability are excluded from basic services including health care services and food provisions in the camp. The impacts of this have been made worse since lockdown resulting in loss of livelihoods for many, including herself while schools are closed.

The ECID programme in Myanmar advocates for the rights of people like Daw Seng Nan. By focusing on marginalised groups such as IDPs and those with disability, it strengthens their capacity to engage with stakeholders and improve their human rights and access to basic services.



Our work in Nigeria

In Nigeria, ECID is targeting three key groups: adolescents, rural women, and people with disabilities and focuses on four key sectors: education, health, infrastructure, and agriculture. The programme takes place in the two states of Anambra and Kaduna. National reach is also maintained through advocacy work and through supporting national government structures to build and maintain an effective foundation of evidence to support policy making decisions.

In both Anambra and Kaduna states, partners have met with key stakeholders at community and state level to influence endorsement of the programme. Partners are also working with community members to validate and prioritise the development issues identified during the baseline survey.

Adapting to Covid-19

Covid-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities in Nigeria, with vulnerable and marginalised groups bearing a disproportionate share of its economic impacts. Government policies that restrict people's movement and ability to work, while necessary to protect the health of the population, are increasing the levels of poverty and hunger in poorer and more vulnerable communities.

Currently, the Nigeria team is continuing to plan and adapt activities alongside partners, in ways that suit the current context. Partners have also been carrying out Covid-19 awareness raising within communities, using materials produced by Christian Aid in local languages and, in some cases, leveraging on their own resources to produce sensitisation materials. These materials are crucial as some hard-to-reach locations do not have easy access to information provided from other sources.

ECID is well placed to respond to these issues facing vulnerable groups during this crisis; analysis has shown that some of the negative effects of the Covid-19 response could be mitigated if the government had reliable data on vulnerable populations and used this data to inform policy making. The current lack of data on these groups, paired with the lack of space for civil society organisations (CSOs) to participate in Covid-19 response, increases the need for ECID to ensure strong evidence use amongst, and collaboration between, government, CSOs, and vulnerable groups in driving a more inclusive approach. In response to this need, the Nigeria team is deploying a data collection tool, which will gather the views of marginalised groups on the effects of the pandemic and the resulting policies, and the impacts on their lives. Much of the process is being carried out virtually, in line with current restrictions, and tools are being deployed in some of the most hard-to-reach locations in the state. The information that will be gathered is intended to provide evidence of access for vulnerable and marginalised communities to services such as healthcare, information, and water. This will subsequently be used over the coming months to support advocacy efforts and influence policy making in ways that benefit vulnerable communities.

Next Steps

The ECID Nigeria baseline report is being finalised, which will be used as a resource for advocacy activities. The findings in the report will be validated at community and state level to ensure that it is a true reflection of the information that was collected. The final report will be made public during the launch of the programme in the two states, however findings have already begun to shape future plans and activities. This has been possible due to the active involvement of partner staff as enumerators during the baseline process. Their involvement provided them with key insights into the unique experiences of the communities and the target groups, in addition to providing more opportunities for building trust from the communities. The insights that they have gained are already being utilised to identify relevant policies, simplify them and reproduce in suitable formats. Making the policies more accessible will ensure that a critical aspect of the programme to increase awareness and understanding of policies by marginalised groups is achieved. Combined with data from the communities this will provide tangible advocacy points and rights-based approach to ensure improved access to services.



Community voices

People with disabilities in Nigeria are often discriminated against and stigmatised, which leaves many of them unable to access the basic services that are essential for living a dignified life. Some people with disabilities who have participated in ECID's community activities (above) to gather insights, have recounted their experiences of discrimination.

One person recalled, *"I was rejected by a higher education institution despite passing the tests. They feel we won't achieve anything"*.

Another reported, *"some parents feel funding our education is a waste of resources and time. Only a few of us have the courage to struggle for education"*.

It was also shared by multiple people with disabilities that, when accessing health care, they had been overlooked by health workers who prioritise the needs of people without a disability. In Nigeria, ECID works to address the discrimination that faces numerous marginalised groups such as this, in both the public and private sphere.

Our work in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe ECID seeks to foster collaboration among civil society to effect inclusion and empowerment of marginalised women and people with disabilities in Manicaland and Matabeleland North Provinces. The work focus on access to services, including health, social welfare and social protection, economic policies, public finance accountability and other emerging areas as identified and prioritised by communities.

Adapting to Covid-19

Covid-19 has brought further challenges to the lives of the marginalised communities. Many women and people with disabilities are already experiencing increased hunger and poverty prevalence, gender based violence, and disproportionate exposure to Covid-19 related risks. National lockdown restrictions are also compromising community advocacy initiatives which creates a divide between development work and communities.

The Zimbabwe team have been innovative in the design and implementation of activities to ensure inclusion and empowerment of women, girls and people with disabilities, in Covid-19 responses. Partners have worked hard to strengthen relationships with communities, central and local government departments and other development actors with many meetings taking place remotely through Whatsapp and phone. Activities and information dissemination that can't be done remotely have been carried out in a safe and socially distanced-way, with authorisation from local and provincial government bodies.

Click here to read more about how the programme has adapted in our programme officer's blog 'Adapting to Covid-19 in Zimbabwe'.

Achievements

Engagements with key stakeholders during the initial stages of the project revealed high levels of interest. In Mutare district, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, Community and Small to Medium Enterprises Development expressed interest in collaborating and highlighted the importance of social inclusion of people with disabilities and women in service delivery. The Ministry of Health and Child Care and the Covid-19 District Taskforce in Binga district, commented that the initial project research activities were useful in providing the taskforce with an opportunity to reach out to the most

marginalised communities with accurate information about the virus as well as bringing related feedback from these communities. This has been the vital acceptance from key decision makers which partners can leverage as the project begins to more closely engage with communities.

Next Steps

The importance of compliance with Government rules and regulations cannot be over-emphasised in the Covid-19 context with authorisations from local and provincial governments to carry out project activities requiring continuous review.

Various activities have been outlined for the coming quarter including research, community radio programmes, partner finance and monitoring assessments, and online trainings and meetings.

As the number of Covid-19 cases has surged in Zimbabwe over recent weeks, staff and partners will continue to exercise great caution in every aspect of the project.

Contact us

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