



CBM Evaluation Summary

Evaluation: Synthesis of 24 Project Evaluations conducted in 2016 and 2017

Quick Facts

Countries: several

Date of Evaluation Report: May 2018

Type of Evaluation: External Meta Evaluation

Background and Context

CBM International commissioned the independent Center for Evaluation (CEval Germany) to conduct a synthesis of a sample of 24 project evaluations. The evaluations took place in 2016 and 2017 and spread across CBM's project regions and initiatives.

The purpose of the synthesis was to gain a broader understanding of achievements of CBM supported interventions (projects) and to learn from recurring findings and recommendations. It assessed the usage of evaluations by project and partner staff to enhance the utility of evaluations.

Methodology

A total sample of 50 evaluation reports went through a first quality check to identify reports of sufficient methodological soundness. Secondly, those reports that met the quality standards were analysed in depth. An online survey captured the views of CBM staff worldwide on the usability and utility of externally commissioned evaluations, including staff in Member Association (MA) Programme Offices as well as in Regional Hubs and Country Offices (RH/CO). General documents on CBM's strategy and its Initiatives complemented the data sources included in the study.

Main Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation synthesis provides a number of findings for learning and improvement. Additionally, CEval rated CBM's performance per evaluation criterion on a four-point scale from 1 to 4 (substantial need for improvement – scope for improvement - satisfactory - very good).

Relevance examined the alignment of project impacts with CBM's mission and vision and overall strategy to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities. The 24 project evaluations under review confirmed the relevance of CBM supported work by enabling greater independence of persons with disabilities, facilitating their participation in the community, and enhancing inclusion by mainstreaming disability and creating awareness in the target group. Based on the respective findings the evaluation team judged the overall relevance of CBM's projects as **very good**.

Effectiveness looked at main immediate results in CBM's mandate areas. Achievement of outputs in Eye Health and Community Based Rehabilitation/Inclusive Development (CBR/CBID) were assessed, as these were the only areas covered by more than two evaluation reports. Within Eye Health, planned outputs such as number and quality of surgeries and refractive corrections have generally been achieved and backed by sufficient evidence, while within CBR/CBID reporting on achieved outputs such as eye and orthopaedic surgery, outreach and referral activities, the formation of village groups, awareness and sensitization measures and the provision of loans to persons with disabilities was found more difficult. This was owed to a lack of clarity on the concept of CBR/CBID, both on the side of the project evaluators as well as on the partners' side. Nevertheless, based on the respective findings the evaluation team judged overall effectiveness of CBM's projects as **very good**.

In terms of **efficiency**, the evaluation found that integrating different partners with diverse strengths often facilitated the efficient use of resources. Working with the government as a partner helped to achieve not only efficiency, but also sustainability of outcomes. However, in some cases difficulties in collaborating with public sector institutions lead to delays or misuse of resources. Supporting factors for the efficient use of inputs were the communities' involvement in the project, and the reach and acceptance of the target group. Although most projects are reported to have been implemented timely and according to set budgets, it was difficult to conclude on efficiency due to different ways of assessing cost effectiveness across the evaluations: While some reports only gave static overviews on outputs implemented, others showcased detailed calculations on cost-effectiveness of different activities and benchmarked it to governmental services. With respect to efficiency of human resources, staff fluctuation and lacking capacities of field staff were mentioned as impeding factors by several reports. Based on the respective findings the evaluation team judged overall efficiency of CBM's projects as **satisfactory**.

Sustainability of projects was examined from both a social/political and a financial angle. Most reports concluded that increased awareness and improved information on persons with disabilities, capacities built for trainers, health workers or teachers, and ownership of village-based initiatives would be maintained beyond the project end. Extensive community engagement and participation was considered crucial in this regard in most projects. The evaluation identifies good practices in policy-making, such as disseminating knowledge through white papers, guidelines and academic curricula or feeding information generated during the project into National Strategy Plans. In contrast, more than half of the evaluations reported that securing future funding presented one of the main challenges for projects. The evaluations revealed that projects attempted to create strong partnerships to ensure sustainability, but often it remained unclear how an efficient hand-over could take place, or who would be responsible for continuing and financing the initiative. Exit strategies and business plans were often not explicitly articulated. Based on the respective findings the evaluation team judged overall sustainability of CBM's projects to show **scope for improvement**.

The evaluation reports showed some evidence for **impact** on the individual level, such as greater mobility and (economic) independence, additional educational support and health relieve (e.g. following surgeries). On the community level, projects led to enhanced participation and integration of persons with disabilities in community life and improvements in social interaction through awareness raising measures. On the other hand, only limited impact on an institutional level could be identified, and elaborations on impact often lacked rigorous and uniform understanding of impact levels as well as assessment methods and must be handled with care. Based on the respective findings the evaluation team judged overall impact of CBM's projects as **satisfactory**.

Lastly, the online survey assessed the perception of CBM staff towards **usability** of evaluations, regarding their results and recommendations. 32 CBM staff members across the Federation responded, which corresponded to a response rate of 62.5%. 74% of respondents considered results and 84% considered recommendations of evaluations as either "very useful" or "completely useful". However, it was found that follow up processes require improvement. On the one hand, this refers to the sharing and dissemination of evaluation findings and recommendations to promote organizational and sectorial learning. On the other hand, structured processes regarding management responses and their implementation are not always adhered to. Based on the respective findings the evaluation team judged overall usability of CBM's projects as **satisfactory**.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

By looking out for repeating results and recommendations in the 24 evaluation reports the synthesis identified the following recommendations:

- Continue target group adjusted awareness raising
- Invest in (partner) staff capacity to successfully reach beneficiaries
- Improve M&E capacities of project staff, especially at the implementation level at the partner organisations
- Not only collect, but track baseline data
- Further strengthen project planning and management capacities of partner organisations and CBM country teams
- Review the allocation of resources (quality vs quantity)
- Improve project design and develop exit-strategies
- Give greater consideration for community engagement
- Improve the management of partnerships to scale impact
- Increase government commitment through advocacy efforts

Main recommendations and follow-up for CBM's work

The study concludes with various recommendations for different CBM stakeholder groups.

For CBM International, recommendations include the need for improvements of methodological quality and usage of project evaluations.

For regional and country offices, recommendations cover suggestions around increasing government liaison, strengthening project and partnership management capacities, consolidating projects' M&E systems and promoting the (mandatory) reflection on/formulation of exit strategies.

Lastly, recommendations at the implementation or partner level advocate for fostering community relationships and treating them as prime stakeholders.

Various stakeholders of CBM jointly developed a management response to address the issues identified and to make the recommendations actionable. The quality and usability of evaluations was included in CBM's Programme Quality Framework as well as in the organisation-wide key performance objectives. For example, one Global Key Performance Indicator states that every evaluation will be followed up with a management response and action plan. Measures to further improve our learning from evaluations are being implemented and CBM expects to see substantial results within the next 3 to 5 years.