



Establishment of the Disability Working Group (DWG) Northeast Nigeria – Lessons Learned

Acronyms

BAY	Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe
DWG	Disability Working Group
GFFO	German Federal Foreign Office
HI	Humanity & Inclusion
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Program Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
(I)NGOs	(International) Non-Governmental Organisations
JONAPWD	Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities
LNOB3	Leave No One Behind Phase 3
MSNA	Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment
NHF	Nigerian Humanitarian Fund
OPDs	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
UN CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Participants from UNOCHA and UN Women at the initial meeting of the Disability Working Group. ©CBM

Executive Summary

This case study presents the efforts made to mainstream disability inclusion within the humanitarian response in the Northeast region of Nigeria under the ‘Leave No One Behind!’ Phase 3 project, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. Nigeria shows notable progress in aligning with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, focusing on the systematic integration of disability considerations across sectors.

The Disability Working Group Northeast Nigeria was successfully established in October 2023, comprising local organizations of persons with disabilities and other humanitarian partners. It has promoted disability inclusion across the humanitarian coordination system by addressing gaps in disability-specific interventions and by advocating for resource mobilization. It has significantly contributed to shaping inclusive humanitarian policies and enabling the effective participation of organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in decision-making.

The case of Nigeria reflects how effective collaboration between OPDs, UN agencies, and humanitarian organizations can drive systemic changes for disability inclusion. These initiatives emphasize the importance of inclusive planning, tailored sectoral interventions, and continuous capacity-building for OPDs to enhance their impact. Despite challenges, such as limited awareness of disability inclusion, funding gaps and inconsistent data collection, the evidence from Nigeria shows the potential for meaningful change when disability inclusion is prioritized within humanitarian action. Moving forward, sustained commitment, targeted advocacy for adequate funding and programming, and the expansion of technical capacities are crucial to ensuring that the rights and specific requirements of persons with disabilities are consistently met in humanitarian responses.

Key Facts	
Establishment	2023/ 2024
Geographical Focus	Northeast Nigeria, specifically Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States.
Primary Aim	Promote a cohesive and supportive environment for disability inclusion in humanitarian and developmental programs.
Initial Challenges	Limited integration of disability inclusion in humanitarian coordination structures, resulting in fragmented efforts and inconsistent implementation of inclusive practices for persons with disabilities.
Strategic Alignment	The strategic alignment with the IASC guidelines positions the DWG Northeast Nigeria as a key partner in promoting and implementing disability inclusion across humanitarian and development programs in northeast Nigeria.
Funding	Successfully advocated for \$2,5 million from the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund (NHF) for disability inclusion programs.
Current Efforts	Regular coordination meetings and active involvement of OPDs in shaping programs and policies to become more disability inclusive through recent multisectoral data collection and analysis.
Future Needs	Addressing challenges such as the lack of disability inclusion awareness, and securing sustained multi-year funding

Introduction

In humanitarian crises, persons with disabilities are often among those most in need of assistance as they are at heightened risk of violence, exploitation, or abuse. Persons with disabilities face discrimination due to significant barriers to accessing needed humanitarian assistance. Increased vulnerability of persons with disabilities is created by a range of factors, including environmental barriers, stigma, and discrimination, as well as the design and delivery of the humanitarian response itself. If persons with disabilities are not considered throughout the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) and in humanitarian coordination, humanitarian action may fail to address the specific factors that put them at risk. This includes barriers to equitable access to protection and assistance.

Due to a strong push from different entities, the shift toward a rights-based approach to addressing disability-specific discrimination and rights violations has only recently emerged in the humanitarian field, gaining momentum in 2016 during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. In the subsequent years, more evidence highlighted the gaps experienced by persons with disabilities during humanitarian crises, culminating in the endorsement of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action 2019¹.

Despite the progress that has been achieved with the endorsement of the IASC guidelines, the latest research² shows that disability-specific humanitarian coordination structures, which are crucial to enhancing disability inclusion in any given humanitarian response, are still rare. And where they exist, they are often volatile, emerging, and disappearing based on short funding cycles.

This resonates with research findings highlighting that specialist organizations such as CBM or Humanity & Inclusion (HI) play a key role in advocacy efforts at both global and local levels, and in raising awareness and building constituencies for action around inclusion:

*'At best, a critical mass of specialist organisations in response can also contribute to a greater sense that inclusion is a collective responsibility and not something that any organisation can achieve alone or in-house. [...] At worst, this can mean that whether the needs of entire population groups are properly considered or addressed can be heavily dependent on whether a handful of small organisations manage to gain a foothold in a response.'*³

The following case study aims to illustrate the practical application of disability inclusive humanitarian coordination achieved through the establishment of the Disability Working Group (DWG) Northeast Nigeria. By showcasing the successes and challenges encountered by the DWG Northeast Nigeria, this case study aims to provide practical insights and lessons learned that can be applied to enhance disability inclusion in humanitarian responses globally. We hope that this example will inspire other humanitarian actors to adopt similar approaches in other contexts.

¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. (2019). Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-guidelines-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-humanitarian-action-2019>

² Humanity & Inclusion (HI). 'Mapping of Disability Inclusion Coordination Mechanisms'. FG2A (2023). and 'Mechanisms for Coordination of Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action: A Comparative Case Study Examination of Experiences in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh, and Venezuela'. FG2A. (2023).

³ Lough, O., V. Barbelet, and S. Njeri. 2022. 'Inclusion and Exclusion in Humanitarian Action: Findings from a Three-year Study'. HPG report. London: ODI.

Background and Context

Nigeria has a total population of about 228 million people (2024). The conflict in northeast Nigeria continues to create a major humanitarian protracted crisis, affecting 8.3 million people in the BAY (Borno, Adamawa Yobe,) states who require assistance (Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan 2024⁴). Over 2 million people are internally displaced and nearly 1.5 million returnees lack essential services. Conflict drives displacement and resource scarcity, fuelling tensions, particularly between farmers and herders. Rapid population growth further strains the situation.

Humanitarian operations remain difficult, dangerous, and costly, with supply routes often insecure. Therefore 1 million people find themselves in areas currently inaccessible to international aid. Due to the above-mentioned reasons, Nigeria is facing an ever-worsening food security and nutrition crisis, and malnutrition among children is a major problem. According to UN OCHA, more than 4.8 million people in the BAY states are at risk of severe food insecurity in the lean season 2024.

Climate change exacerbates the humanitarian needs with severe floods in 2022 and 2023 affecting millions of people, disrupting food security, and increasing disease outbreaks, such as a cholera outbreak in 2022, affecting more than 15,000 people in the northeast. The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2023 states that 12% of the population in need (8.3 million), e.g. nearly 1 million people, have a disability.

Based on the above and as part of its activities under the Leave No One Behind Phase 3 (LNOB3) project, CBM Nigeria in collaboration with different Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD)⁵ Borno state chapter has been pushing during 2022 and 2023 to establish a ‘Disability Working Group’ as part of the humanitarian coordination structure in the BAY states. This working group was formally launched in October 2023 and has the aim to foster disability inclusion in the wider humanitarian coordination and response in the northeast of the country.



CBM training for various humanitarian actors in Nigeria. Participants are developing actions plans for their organisations. ©CBM

⁴ Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan. (2024). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-humanitarian-response-plan-2024>

⁵ The sub-clusters of JONAPWD Borno states are groups of persons with disabilities representing diverse groups of disabilities. They are part of the national umbrella organization of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in Nigeria, JONAPWD (<https://jonapwdng.org/>). JONAPWD Borno state chapter, in this region, unites key OPDs and plays a central role in facilitating and coordinating development actions across Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.

Timeline of the DWG Northeast Establishment

Initial Meetings and Conceptualization of the DWG

After a failed attempt by CBM and UNICEF to set up the Disability Working Group as a sub-group of the Child Protection Group in 2019, the idea of a DWG was proposed as a new and necessary initiative to address the unique barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the humanitarian context of northeast Nigeria in early 2023. This initiative was particularly crucial given the significant gap in coordination mechanisms for disability inclusion and a persisting lack of awareness on the topic by many organizations in Nigeria. Despite an open call by UN OCHA for \$1 million in disability inclusion funding in late 2022, no organization or working group had been established to access this support. This lack of response highlighted the need for a structured group like the DWG to effectively coordinate and channel resources toward disability-inclusive humanitarian actions.

Recognizing the potential impact, representatives from various organizations, including CBM, led the initiative. CBM, known for its technical expertise and long-standing commitment to disability inclusion, emphasized the importance of working with OPDs such as the JONAPWD Borno state chapter. Their participation, alongside other local disability advocacy groups, was essential in garnering broad-based support for the initiative. Representatives from the Cedar Foundation for Disabilities and Save the Children International (SCI) played crucial roles in this collaborative effort. The Cedar Foundation led the group of organizations in proposing the idea, while CBM and Save the Children provided valuable guidance on the establishment process. After the failed attempt of CBM and JONAPWD Borno state chapter in 2019 to establish a DWG, CBM had launched an extensive awareness and training campaign on disability inclusion in the humanitarian sector. This effort contributed to higher awareness and the eventual outreach by OPDs, as well as other organizations, many of which were not OPDs but had previously benefitted from CBM's training. Together with CBM, they contacted a UN OCHA representative specializing in localization efforts. They emphasized the importance of securing UN OCHA's support, as it oversees inter-cluster working groups and provides necessary structures for such initiatives.

Developing the Terms of Reference

Before the formal establishment of the DWG in northeast Nigeria, several preparatory steps were undertaken to ensure a solid foundation. On August 7, 2023, the initial planning meeting took place, marking a significant milestone in the establishment of the DWG. This meeting brought together key representatives from various organizations, including Supertouch Kindness Foundation, Cedar Foundation for Disability, Adamawa People with Disability and Vulnerable Support Initiative, Adamawa Concerned Disabled Foundation, Joyce Initiative for Women and Children Development, and members of the Education in Emergency Working Group, such as Save the Children, Restoration of Hope Initiative, Adamawa State Basic Education Board, and UNICEF. The purpose of the meeting was to gather input, build support, and ensure the DWG would be inclusive and representative of all relevant stakeholders.

One of the critical outcomes of this meeting was the development of the Terms of References (TORs) for the DWG. The TOR outlined the group's mission, objectives, structure, and operational guidelines. Participants reviewed and discussed the draft TOR, providing feedback and suggestions for finalization. Several action points were identified, including sharing the meeting report with all participants, identifying other organizations working on disability inclusion, and calling for a follow-up meeting to finalize the TOR. This collaborative effort ensured that the DWG's mission and objectives resonated with the broader disability community.

The preparatory meetings played a crucial role in finalizing not only the TORs but also in coordinating capacity-building efforts and developing all other supporting formalization documentation, with contributions from CBM, UN OCHA, and other partners.

Launch of the DWG

The DWG Northeast Nigeria was officially launched on October 31 in Maiduguri, capital of Borno state, marking a critical milestone in integrating disability inclusion into humanitarian actions. The event brought together various stakeholders, including international and local Non-Governmental Organisations (I/NGOs), government agencies, and community-based organizations, showcasing the strong commitment to advancing disability inclusion in the region.

The launch received significant government support and diverse participation, highlighting the growing commitment to disability inclusion at both the state and federal levels. However, it must be underlined, that CBM played a key role in making the launch event possible, by providing strong financial and logistical support. Often, similar initiatives fail due to a lack of resources and coordination. The Director of Social Welfare and the Borno State Commissioner of Women Affairs and Social Development provided key endorsements, reinforcing the importance of coordinated efforts to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are upheld in all humanitarian responses.

At the event, the DWG Coordinator, selected by organizations of and for persons with disabilities and the first to propose the working group's establishment, presented the DWG strategy. A response and feedback session followed, fostering an inclusive dialogue among all participants. During this session, the DWG's core functions and two-year plan (2023-2025) were validated. The core functions include informing key partners with relevant data and evidence to support decision-making, implementing strategies in adherence to IASC guidelines, ensuring adequate monitoring and evaluation, building capacity, and supporting service delivery. The two-year plan focuses on building internal capacity, conducting multi-sector needs assessments, mainstreaming disability inclusion in relevant programming, advocating for resource mobilization, and developing a disability dashboard. With an estimated three million people affected in the region, up to 700,000 can be targeted through these coordinated efforts, highlighting the DWG's commitment to making a significant impact.

The workshop included key discussions on inclusive practices for children with disabilities and presentations on coordination, resource mobilization, and capacity strengthening. Alhaji Grema Goni, the representative from the JONAPWD Borno state chapter, delivered a significant message, referencing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). He emphasized that humanitarian efforts must prioritize the removal of barriers and ensure that persons with disabilities are included in all stages of planning and implementation, highlighting the role of OPDs in this process.

The workshop's success was evident in the diverse attendance, including members from CBM, JONAPWD Borno state chapter, ICRC, UN OCHA, IOM, sector coordination leads, UN Women, Save the Children, and other national NGOs. The broad participation highlighted the collective commitment to advancing disability inclusion in both humanitarian and development efforts.

During the launch, UN OCHA publicly announced that \$2 million from the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund funding pot was specifically allocated to support disability inclusion in the humanitarian response for the 2025 funding cycle. The amount was increased to \$2.5 million later.

Key Success Factors

The successful establishment of the DWG Northeast Nigeria was driven by several key factors:

- First and foremost, the strategic alignment with the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) played a crucial role. These documents marked a significant shift in humanitarian response strategies by emphasizing the need to analyse vulnerabilities based on gender, age, and disability. This focus not only provided a clearer understanding of the impact of the conflict on different populations but also ensured that disability issues were given the attention they deserved within the broader humanitarian efforts.
- Furthermore, UN OCHA's platform played a crucial role in advancing the initiative, legitimizing the DWG, encouraging government participation, and facilitating access to essential resources. By working closely with relevant state ministries and leveraging existing mechanisms focused on disability programming, UN OCHA strengthened the DWG's ability to integrate existing policies on disability inclusion into their activities and programs, aligning with their broader participation and coordination efforts.
- Additionally, the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund significantly enhanced these efforts in 2023 by dedicating a \$2.5 million disability inclusion⁶ envelope. CBM was directly invited by UN OCHA to participate in the technical review committee due to its expertise in inclusion, which contributed to shaping the guidelines for the NHF disability funding before the official call was released. While CBM's participation represented its expertise, it also played a role in supporting DWG's objectives. The NHF engaged the DWG in strategic and technical reviews, ensuring disability inclusion was embedded across all projects. With this backing, the DWG secured a prominent role within the humanitarian coordination system, making disability inclusion a key part of the response strategy in northeast Nigeria.
- Moreover, CBM played a pivotal role in building the DWG's capacity. Shortly after the launch, CBM facilitated training to help the group distinguish between OPDs and organisations working for persons with disabilities, providing advocacy strategies that guided their activities. CBM also strengthened the DWG's infrastructure by funding a one-year subscription for its email domain.

OPD Leadership: JONAPWD Borno state chapter's role in the DWG

The leadership and advocacy efforts of organizations like the JONAPWD Borno state chapter were another critical factor in the DWG's success. Actively participating in the initial meetings facilitated by CBM and other organizations, the umbrella OPD played a crucial role in shaping the group's objectives and strategies. Their primary role involves ensuring effective two-way communication. On one side, they communicate with members of the DWG and other stakeholders, attending monthly coordination meetings, providing updates, sharing challenges, and offering feedback from the disability community. On the other hand, they ensure that their member OPDs are informed about current happenings, and opportunities and that their expertise and experiences are meaningfully considered in relevant meetings. This dual role helps ensure that the requirements of persons with disabilities are prioritized in all responses and actions of the DWG.

⁶ Reliefweb. Nigeria Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2023. 11 Apr 2024. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-humanitarian-fund-annual-report-2023>

Furthermore, JONAPWD's Borno state chapter efforts in building sustainable support systems, including the establishment of a secretariat, have significantly enhanced the operational and coordination capacities of the DWG. Their programs take a role in community awareness but also try to bridge the gaps between humanitarian response, assistance, and development priorities with their advocacy efforts.

It is crucial to note, that before the developments around the establishment of the DWG, CBM had already supported the capacity strengthening of the JONAPWD Borno state chapter with the view to ensuring that the organisation has the capacities and resources to actively engage within the humanitarian space and coordination structures. Thus, in addition to funding two positions through the LNOB3 project, and providing temporary office space and a secretariat with equipment, CBM supported the JONAPWD Borno state chapter with training on advocacy and engagement strategies to their leaders and those of the different sub-clusters. CBM also helped coordinate and revive monthly coordination meetings within the JONAPWD Borno state chapter and their sub-cluster to strengthen their capacities in identifying the challenges persons with disabilities face and in interacting with relevant stakeholders. These efforts played a crucial role in addressing the initial challenge of not having an entry point for engagement by humanitarian actors interested in working with and for persons with disabilities. JONAPWD Borno state chapter subsequently started to actively participate in cluster meetings which allowed them to engage and discuss disability inclusion and to enhance their visibility among other actors.

Nowadays, the JONAPWD Borno state chapter is working closely with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development to integrate disability issues into state policies, creating a collaborative environment that supports disability inclusion. JONAPWD Borno state chapter has successfully advocated to secure a proper office space in Maiduguri, for its long-term functioning. The umbrella OPD celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disability 2023 and the White Cane Safety Day for the blind, which increased awareness of various organizations involved in disability issues, such as Save the Children. For the future, the JONAPWD Borno state chapter highlights the need for continuous capacity-building support of its members, service delivery, and sustained funding.

Overall, these success factors—strategic alignment with the HNO and HRP, strong support from UN OCHA, Save the Children, CBM, effective leadership and advocacy by a strengthened JONAPWD Borno state chapter, made possible by CBM support—collectively contributed to the successful establishment and ongoing impact of the DWG.

Current Functioning and Key Activities of the DWG

Current Functioning of the DWG

UN OCHA staff praised the DWG as one of the most active and engaging working groups, consistently keeping disability inclusion at the forefront of the humanitarian agenda. It was noted that the DWG members focus on the agenda and the effectiveness of their coordination. This recognition underlines the DWG's success in advocating for the rights and priorities of persons with disabilities.

The DWG now operates as a well-structured body ensuring clear leadership, predictability, and accountability in addressing disability inclusion. The team includes representatives from key government agencies, such as the Disability Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women Affairs, along with partners like the Cedar Foundation for Disability and the Adamawa People with Disability and Vulnerable Support Initiative.

The roles and responsibilities within the DWG are clearly defined to ensure effective functioning:

- **DWG Coordinator:** Oversees the general affairs of the DWG, acts as the primary voice of the group, plans activities, and ensures coherent responses to disability inclusion needs. The coordinator also engages with stakeholders and advocates for resources, ensuring the interests of the DWG are prioritized.
- **DWG Co-Lead:** Assumes responsibility for the co-leadership of the group, ensures the strategy is updated based on emerging needs, and coordinates partners to prevent overlap and duplication of efforts.
- **Information Management Officer:** Collects, analyses, and reports data on DWG partner activities, ensuring evidence-based decision-making. This role also involves supporting multi-sector needs assessments and maintaining effective information management systems.

At the state level, the DWG operates focal teams in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States to ensure localized and effective disability inclusion responses. These teams aim to strengthen coordination and accountability of state-level responses by clearly defining roles and responsibilities among organizations.

The state-level coordination approach involves:

- **Government Agency/Partner:** Each state's agency responsible for the welfare of persons with disabilities co-chairs the state focal team, providing dedicated support for all categories of humanitarian response efforts.
- **DWG State Focal Point:** Led by JONAPWD Borno state chapter, where an organized leadership structure exists, or a capable national partner otherwise. The focal point coordinates the general affairs of the state-level DWG, engages with stakeholders, and ensures a coherent response to disability inclusion in line with the relevant data.
- **DWG State Co-Focal Point:** Supports the focal point in coordinating activities and ensuring effective responses. This role also involves engaging with key stakeholders and partners for the harmonization of activities.

The state focal teams work closely with the central DWG coordination team to align their activities with the broader DWG strategy. This includes capacity building, advocacy, and ensuring that disability inclusion is integrated into state policies and programs. The collaborative efforts at the state level aim to create a supportive environment for disability inclusion, bridging gaps between humanitarian response and long-term developmental goals.

Key Activities and Their Relevance

Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment: A crucial activity led by the DWG Northeast Nigeria was the implementation of a multi-sectoral needs assessment (MSNA) in 2024. This assessment has been instrumental in evaluating and addressing the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States. Recognizing the importance of gathering detailed and accurate data, the DWG initiated this assessment to inform its strategies and advocacy efforts, ensuring that the requirements of persons with disabilities are thoroughly considered in the humanitarian response.

The MSNA was launched with an inception/review workshop held on November 23, 2023, at the UN OCHA office. The main presentation by a consultant detailed the "Assessment Protocol," outlining the aims, objectives, methodologies, and ethical guidelines for the study. Participants were then divided into breakout groups to discuss specific objectives, barriers faced by persons with disabilities, and strategies for ensuring access and inclusion. Group discussions highlighted key areas such as the need to assess barriers to services, the impact of crises on persons with disabilities, and ways to achieve inclusion through policy implementation and removal of barriers. The workshop concluded with action points for tool development, work plan, and budget updates.

This assessment is critical in providing an immediate overview of the situation, identifying needs, and setting priorities for humanitarian action. By filling significant data gaps, it enables informed decision-making and effective response planning. The involvement of stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and community leaders, ensures a comprehensive approach. The findings will be pivotal in shaping disability inclusion strategies, influencing policy reforms, and enhancing the overall humanitarian response in northeast Nigeria. Additionally, this assessment will position the DWG as a key player in strengthening disability inclusion across multiple clusters/sectors, reinforcing its role in driving comprehensive and inclusive humanitarian efforts.

Despite the importance of this assessment, one major challenge was financial resource mobilization. The timing of the planning process did not align with the annual financial planning cycles of the DWG members, preventing them from allocating the necessary resources in advance. However, DWG members collectively pooled their resources to support both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. To ensure sustained and systematic resource mobilization for future assessments, it is essential to consider the budget planning timelines of DWG members. Aligning the planning process with these cycles will help secure adequate funding without delays, while also fostering greater ownership and commitment from the members.

Development of the 5Ws Reporting Template: The DWG recently initiated the process of developing the 5Ws reporting template which has gone through the first and second stages of review by technical partners, including CBM, during the time of writing this case study. The 5Ws template, once completed and launched, will provide the platform for organisations to submit monthly reports of disability inclusion activities within the humanitarian space to the working group, which will then be published on the publicly accessible dashboard of the DWG.

Remaining Challenges

Remaining Capacity Gaps: One of the enduring challenges for the DWG Northeast Nigeria is the initial and persisting lack of awareness and understanding of disability inclusion among many humanitarian organizations in the region. Tubi Kachollom from Street Child of Nigeria, an organisation that has benefitted from different capacity-building efforts under the LNOB3 project, noted that many actors were initially unaware of the importance of integrating disability considerations into their projects. This leads to significant barriers in effectively addressing the requirements of persons with disabilities.

To address this challenge, CBM facilitated several training sessions under the LNOB3 project, both in Nigeria and on a West African regional level, all of them co-facilitated by OPD leaders. These sessions focused on various aspects of disability inclusion, such as understanding the rights of persons with disabilities, implementing inclusive practices in humanitarian responses, and using data to inform decision-making. The training emphasized the critical role of OPDs in all stages of planning and implementation, ensuring that their perspectives shape relevant programs and policies. Fwangshak Guar from CBM highlighted the importance of empowering OPDs to advocate for themselves and drive the agenda, highlighting the principle of **'nothing about us without us'**. CBM's logistical and financial support was crucial in enhancing the capacity of other humanitarian organizations to integrate disability inclusion into their work, fostering a more inclusive humanitarian response in northeast Nigeria. Despite these advances, the need for sustained funding and ongoing capacity building remains a significant challenge.

Funding Constraints: Despite the initial successes, the DWG faces ongoing challenges in securing consistent, multi-year funding. Such funding is essential for building the capacity of local organizations to deliver sustained, impactful inclusion programs for persons with disabilities. The DWG continues to advocate for resource mobilization and dedicated budget lines to support its coordination activities and initiatives. Addressing these funding challenges is crucial to maintaining and expanding progress in disability inclusion for affected populations in northeast Nigeria.

In summary, while significant strides have been made in building awareness and capacity, securing long-term funding is vital to ensure these efforts can be scaled and sustained. Without it, the future impact of initiatives such as the DWG Northeast Nigeria remains uncertain, potentially preventing the full integration of disability inclusion into the broader humanitarian response.



Members of DWG at the initial meeting of the DWG. ©CBM

Strategic Roadmap for Disability Inclusion: Aligning with Relevant Policies

As per the DWG internal documents, the idea behind forming the DWG was to create a forum of organizations of/for persons with disabilities and entities that focus on the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the northeast region (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States). The group's primary aim is to create a cohesive and supportive environment for disability inclusion in humanitarian and developmental programs via the DWG strategy for 2023–2025. The strategic planning process for the DWG was crucial in laying a solid foundation for its operations and ensuring its effectiveness in promoting disability inclusion. The DWG strategy involves several strategic areas⁷:

- **Embedding Disability Inclusion in the Humanitarian Cycle:** The DWG aims to ensure that disability inclusion is considered at every stage of the humanitarian cycle, from planning through implementation to evaluation. This involves collaborating with other clusters, raising awareness about the concept in all relevant meetings, and insisting on visibility through participation in relevant agendas. By embedding these practices, the DWG ensures the requirements of persons with disabilities are prioritized in all humanitarian actions.
- **Standardized Tools and Guidelines:** The DWG aims to align its work with standardized tools and guidelines, particularly those developed by the IASC. This alignment promotes consistency, quality, and adherence to international best practices in disability inclusion. The DWG will promote these standards in collaboration with partners to ensure a unified approach.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Accurate data, disaggregated by disability is crucial for informed decision-making. The DWG will focus on collecting and analyzing this data to effectively tailor relevant assistance and programs, including those of concerned humanitarian actors. This data is fundamental in understanding the specific requirements of persons with disabilities and in providing a solid evidence base for advocacy efforts across many sectors.
- **Integrating Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian and Development Programs:** Integrating disability inclusion requires thorough audits and a focus on working closely with engaged partners to change their internal ways of working. By bridging short-term humanitarian response with long-term development goals, the DWG will address immediate requirements while also building resilience and sustainable development for persons with disabilities.
- **Engagement of OPDs:** Central to the DWG's approach is the active promotion and involvement of OPDs. This engagement ensures that the perspectives of persons with disabilities directly influence the design and implementation of programs and policies, particularly within cluster work in the humanitarian context. It also encompasses all state frameworks, including bills, policies, and service provision, affecting not only humanitarian assistance but also its long-term provision in a manner consistent with Nigeria's adherence to international standards.

Ensuring the DWG's continued integration into the formal humanitarian coordination system is key to maintaining its relevance and maximizing its impact. This recognition allows the DWG to more effectively advocate for disability inclusion within the established frameworks of humanitarian action in northeast Nigeria.

⁷ DWG Strategy 2023-2025