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WFP Disability Inclusion Helpdesk

Learning Brief



INTRODUCTION

In 2020 WFP introduced its [Disability Inclusion Road Map \(2020-2022\)](#) to accelerate progress towards implementing the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and meet its obligations on disability inclusion more broadly. In June 2021 WFP initiated a partnership with [CBM Global's Inclusion Advisory Group \(IAG\)](#) to support implementation of the Road Map.

In September 2021 WFP and IAG launched a [Helpdesk](#) to enable WFP employees around the world to access timely, tailored, practical advice on improving disability inclusion in their programmes.

As of December 2022, IAG advisors have solved 63 Helpdesk requests from WFP offices in 26 countries.

This learning brief provides an overview of the Helpdesk and summarises key lessons from its operation and the broader partnership between WFP and IAG.

April 2023

How does the Helpdesk work?



The Helpdesk provides on-demand, confidential, technical advice on disability inclusion which is tailored to the needs of WFP's programme teams. The Helpdesk is managed by IAG using an online platform provided by a third-party supplier. Any WFP employee can register on the platform using their existing WFP credentials and submit a request by filling in a simple form.

Each request is reviewed by IAG's Helpdesk Coordinator to check that it is within the scope of the Helpdesk service (i.e. any aspect of programming across all locations, sectors, and programme cycle processes). Requests relating to WFP's other corporate domains (e.g. logistics, procurement, human resources, ICT, facilities management) are referred directly to WFP's HQ Disability Inclusion Team to address. IAG aims to respond to all requesters within 3 days. For programme-related requests, the Helpdesk Coordinator will seek additional information in order to allocate it to the most

suitable expert from IAG's pool of Technical Advisors. This usually requires a call with the requester to discuss their specific support needs and to determine the timeframe and format for any advice products.

Some requests are solved within a few days, other may require further dialogue, multiple products, and ongoing support over a much longer period. All written technical advice products are peer reviewed by a second IAG Advisor for quality assurance purposes. IAG's pool of advisors includes international and national staff of the CBM Global Federation as well as sub-contracted associates and consultants.

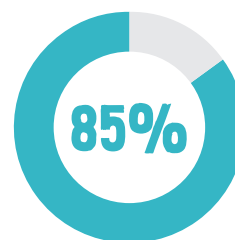
IAG is committed to collaborating with and enabling the disability movement. As such IAG also pursues every opportunity to involve Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and other members of the disability movement in its responses to Helpdesk requests.

How has the Helpdesk helped WFP?

A recent survey showed high levels of user satisfaction.



of users surveyed said they would use the Helpdesk again and recommend the service to colleagues.



said that the assistance supported them to improve disability inclusion in their programme.

Specifically, users have appreciated the high levels of responsiveness of Helpdesk advisors; the precision and practicality of the written advice products; as well as the tailored, capacity building approach of the Helpdesk.

Support to Asia-Pacific Regional Disability Inclusion Initiative

WFP's Regional Disability Inclusion Advisor for the Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau (RB) coordinates the implementation of the regional rollout of the WFP Disability Inclusion Road Map. The Helpdesk has enabled the Regional DI Advisor to respond to the high demand for technical support from colleagues across the region.

This has helped to demystify disability inclusion for many WFP Country Office (CO) colleagues and build their confidence to develop dedicated disability inclusion action plans. Here are some examples of the support provided to the Asia-Pacific region:

- **Philippines:** The Helpdesk supported the CO to **assess disability inclusion in a simulation exercise** for an Anticipatory Action programme. Local IAG advisors used an observation checklist to monitor the exercise in real-time and then provided a written summary of feedback and recommendations.
- **Pakistan:** The Helpdesk provided written guidance in response to a request from the CO for **advice on how to conduct an exercise to map OPDs**. The guidance included specific tips on the methodology as well as general considerations to ensure the exercise was inclusive.
- **Regional Bureau Bangkok:** The Helpdesk advised the regional Cash-Based Transfers Team how to consider disability within **research on digital financial inclusion**. An IAG Advisor reviewed the methodology and final report and participated in a panel discussion to help disseminate the findings.

Strategic support to HQ Disability Inclusion Team

In addition to responding on-demand to requests submitted to the Helpdesk, IAG also collaboratively identifies proactive tasks with the WFP's HQ Disability Inclusion Team, to enable them to address strategic priorities and build institutional capacity on disability inclusion in programming.

Here are some examples of the support provided to the HQ Disability Inclusion Team:

- **CO DI Action Plan template:** The Helpdesk produced a template and process guide for COs to develop DI Action Plans aligned to the HQ DI Work Plan for 2023. A number of COs have begun using the tool, including Ethiopia, Egypt and Panama.
- **Post-Road Map planning workshop:** The Helpdesk designed and facilitated a three-day, hybrid-format workshop to enable the HQ DI Team to consult key stakeholders and partners on the priorities for the post-Road Map phase and develop a Work Plan for 2023.
- **Corporate evaluation guidance:** The Helpdesk supported the HQ DI Team to develop guidance for the WFP Office of Evaluation on how to integrate disability inclusion in WFP evaluations. This guidance is now being used by evaluation managers and consultants.



Partnerships and engagement with the Disability Movement

The Helpdesk has involved OPDs or other members of the Disability movement in responses to 8 requests so far. Here are some examples:

- **Ethiopia:** The Helpdesk supported focal points at WFP Ethiopia to meet with representatives from the African Disability Forum (ADF) and the Federation of Ethiopian Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FEAPD) to discuss opportunities for collaboration to support the CO's efforts on disability inclusion.
- **Indonesia:** The Helpdesk supported WFP Indonesia to develop a partnership with an OPD called OHANA and is providing ongoing technical advice to support OHANA to implement a scoping study to inform WFP's programming.
- **Syria:** The Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD) nominated members of the Syria disability movement to invite as guest speakers to a training for WFP Syria staff. The Helpdesk supported WFP Syria Country Office to arrange for two Damascus-based disability advocates to join the training and share their experiences and insights.

Improving disability data

Data has been a common theme of requests to the Helpdesk. Here are some examples:

- **Iran:** The Helpdesk provided written advice to the CO on how to use assessment data to determine eligibility and prioritisation for a cash top-up targeted at households with persons with disabilities.
- **Venezuela:** The Helpdesk developed focus group discussion questions for the CO to use to understand the requirements of children and caregivers with disabilities to access school-based food and nutrition assistance.
- **Lebanon:** The Helpdesk developed a questionnaire for the CO to collect data on people with disabilities' preferences for different cash modalities and their requirements to enable barrier-free access and usage of assistance.

Training to strengthen awareness and capacity

Nearly 250 WFP employees have attended training and awareness sessions delivered by the Helpdesk. Hundreds more have benefited from training materials produced by the Helpdesk upon request. Here are some examples of how the Helpdesk has supported awareness and capacity:

- **Nepal:** The Helpdesk supported the CO to implement its Disability Inclusion Action Plan by developing introductory training materials for senior managers and programme officers. Local Helpdesk advisors also co-facilitated sessions with Field Office teams alongside OPD representatives.
- **Syria:** The Helpdesk supported the CO to implement its Protection Capacity Building Strategy by designing and facilitating a training of trainers for a small group of focal points including M&E and AAP associates as well as members of the CO Gender Results Network.
- **Various:** The Helpdesk has developed a range of other materials for use by the Asia-Pacific DI Advisor including short, tailored awareness sessions with the senior management of several COs; training on disability-inclusive CBT for the Cox Bazaar programme team; and a workshop with the Research, Assessment, and Monitoring team in Cambodia.



What have we learned?

Helpdesks can enable institutional change

The **unique advantage of a general Helpdesk facility** is the capacity to provide support at short notice in response to a wide range of requests. This gives confidence to leaders within RBs and COs to set more ambitious commitments and it enables WFP's HQ DI Team and Regional DI Advisors to dedicate more of their time to systems change and capacity building.

Mandate and motivation of Helpdesk users is crucial

A Helpdesk facility can also contribute to **practical improvements to knowledge, behaviours, procedures, as well as programme design and delivery** but only if its users have sufficient motivation, mandate and time to implement the advice themselves and to influence the practices of their colleagues. Requests which seek ongoing support for the implementation of a strategic plan (e.g. CO DI Action Plan) will yield the highest results because they have **buy-in from leadership** and the technical support can be **timed to have maximum value**.

Impact requires collaboration and ongoing support

Helpdesk advice is more relevant if the requester is willing to **engage in a dialogue about their needs** and context. Such a collaborative approach enables Helpdesk Advisors to learn how to adjust their advice and written products to ensure they are **fit-for-purpose**. This approach often leads to ongoing support. The impact of a training, for example, is enhanced if the requester works with the Advisor to plan **follow up support** such as individual coaching or a review of tools and procedures. And the impact of written advice is enhanced if the requester seeks to discuss how it can be applied to implementing partners. This is a key step in achieving change in front-line practices.

Advisors require opportunities to learn and improve

Before the Helpdesk was launched, IAG and WFP provided extensive briefings for Helpdesk Advisors. It is important to continue providing opportunities for Helpdesk advisors to develop their understanding of WFP's programming and procedures. This includes **field visits** to provide exposure to the realities of WFP field programmes; facilitated **peer learning sessions** to exchange knowledge gained through responding to requests; **pairing of new advisors with established advisors** during scoping calls with requesters; **webinars** with key WFP stakeholders to ask questions about WFP institutional structures and ways of working.

Engaging OPDs requires relationship building

Although OPD engagement is a key result area in WFP's Disability Inclusion Road Map (and now also in the 2023 Work Plan) the Helpdesk has received **very few requests from COs** on this topic. IAG have strong connections with the disability movement in different regions and the Helpdesk can facilitate engagement, however, WFP COs must commit to investing in building relationships with OPDs. The **partnership between WFP Indonesia and OHANA** (with support from the Helpdesk) is an example that could be emulated in other locations. These partnerships can create opportunities for meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in WFP's programming but they require a **strategic capacity exchange approach** to build trust.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next phase of the partnership between IAG and WFP will prioritise the following:

1. Continue the provision of reactive advice

The Helpdesk will continue to be available for all WFP programme employees. WFP and IAG will conduct targeted outreach to promote the Helpdesk to users who are best placed to use its advice.

2. Provide proactive support to RBs and COs

IAG will provide more intensive and targeted support to the RBs and COs who commit to developing and implementing their own Action Plans.

3. Facilitate OPD engagement in the provision of advisory support to WFP

IAG has begun collaborating with the African Disability Forum to enable its national OPD members to forge relationships with WFP COs and provide advisory support.

4. Systematic capacity building

IAG will work with the HQ DI team to explore options for systematically training and coaching disability inclusion focal points within programme teams and for building the capacity of cooperating partners to meet standards of quality and protection.

5. Provide proactive support to the HQ DI Team

IAG will continue to provide a range of support to the WFP HQ DI Team in line with their strategic priorities (e.g. corporate guidance on the twin-track approach to disability inclusion in programming).

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

IAG and WFP will continue to monitor the performance of the Helpdesk and seek opportunities to improve the advisory service to programme teams.



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