

Disability Inclusive Graduation in Uganda

Disability Inclusive Graduation (DIG) Program

In late 2017 BRAC Uganda, the National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU), and Humanity & Inclusion (HI, formerly Handicap International), with support from BRAC UPGI and BRAC UK, began work to design and implement the Disability Inclusive Graduation (DIG) project in Oyam, Nwoya, Kiryandongo, and Gulu districts of Uganda.

The purpose of this project is to support people living in extreme poverty, with a special focus on those with disabilities, to achieve socio-economic empowerment and resilience and lift themselves out of extreme poverty. Disability inclusion is integrated into project design through a twin track approach of providing personalized support to participants with disabilities while advancing community-based advocacy to address environmental barriers and raise awareness on inclusion. The project also intends to focus on strengthening the capacity of livelihoods stakeholders to work on disability inclusion and to build evidence and best practices on disability inclusion in the livelihood sector, that can be scaled up by BRAC and other actors.

Participant Progress (2017-2021)

At the beginning of the DIG pilot, people living in extreme poverty with disabilities identified significant barriers to social protection, sustainable livelihoods, financial inclusion, and social empowerment.

In 2020, 2,700 households were selected for project treatment (including 554 persons with disabilities (PWDs)). As of 2021, all participants have received training on enterprise management, life skills, financial literacy, and Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) groups.

Among these, 117 VSLA groups formed with 394 PWDs taking leadership in the VSLA groups. So far, these groups have saved 103,817,238 US\$ with an average savings of 6,890 US\$ per participant.

The project supports households through both a primary and secondary asset in order to bolster the household's resilience through income diversification that ensures they are better able to weather shocks related to volatility of agricultural production and marketing, climate change, and other risks. Primary livelihood assets transferred to date include: 7,900 goats, 694 pigs, 57 cattle, and petty trades worth US\$ 30,244,000 shillings. For secondary assets, 2,982 poultry birds including chicken, ducks,

and turkeys, 615 piglets, and 6,6060 kg of seeds have also been transferred.

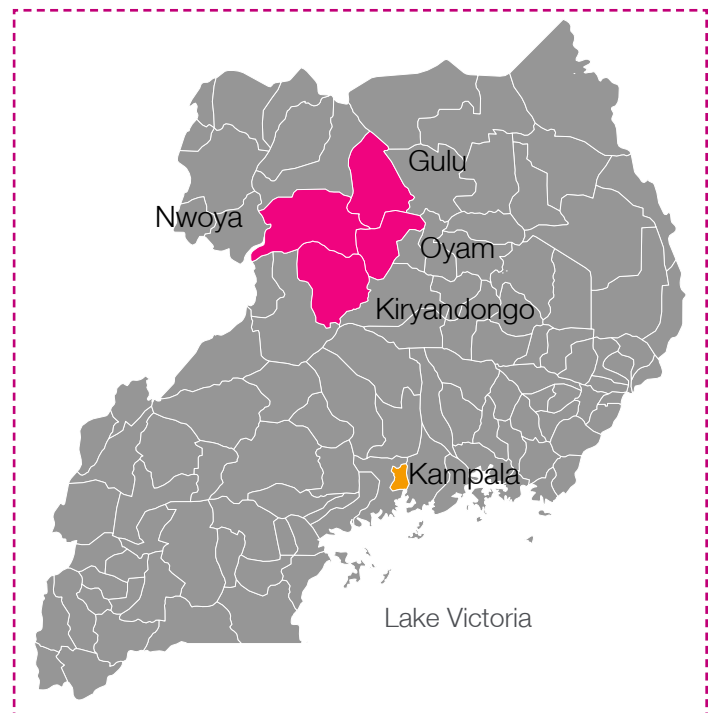
To ensure people with disabilities are supported to actively engage in income-generating activities, HI has undertaken assessments of PWDs that were identified by BRAC Project Assistants (PA's) during household selection. In 2020, the rehabilitation team conducted screenings of 289 PWDs in Gulu, Lacor, Kamdini, Minakulu, Loro, Bweyale, and Kigumba Districts.

As a result of the screening exercise, 226 participants (151 women, 138 men) underwent a comprehensive assessment to determine their rehabilitation and psychosocial support (PSS) needs. Through this comprehensive assessment, 345 participants have received PSS, 226 received occupational therapy, and 217 have received physiotherapy

Additionally, the rehabilitation teams and psychosocial workers have been referring participants who needed immediate support to the nearest health facilities where they can access specialized support.

Lessons Learned

Initially, the DIG pilot anticipated a target of 15 percent of participants being PWDs. However, throughout the implementation, the prevalence among the target population was closer to 24 percent. This increase led



to a need for additional resources in most areas of the disability inclusive programming including: additional funds to support disability inclusion activities, additional assistive devices and healthcare services, and improved linkages between participants and existing services such as healthcare facilities. In line with this is consideration for persons with multiple disabilities who need to be supported with more than one assistive device.

In the future, there is a need for more support for children with disabilities through community education to eliminate the growing stigma and discrimination that have prevented participants from advocating for their rights and being able to participate holistically in development initiatives. BRAC will be partnering with more disability inclusive platforms to advocate for their rights and also support training of parents and caregivers on disability inclusion.

Additionally, both COVID-19 and climate change significantly impact people living in extreme poverty and increase economic and social uncertainty. Within the DIG program, these have been addressed through both tailored training and the promotion of semi-intensive management practices coupled with biosecurity in all livestock units. Diversification of household income generating activities and sources is also strongly recommended to help households manage shocks and risk caused by these challenges.

Component	Graduation Intervention
Social Protection	Consumption support — monthly stipend of 50,000 US\$ for 6 months
	Emergency health fund — needs-based health subsidy
	Linkages to health and education services — Linkages to medical services, and government or community schools, where available
	Life Skills Training in 12 modules — Training provided by PAs during savings group meetings and home visits
	Rehabilitation & Mental Health Support — Support from (HI) Physiotherapist, Occupational therapist, and/ or Psycho-social Workers as necessary
Livelihoods Promotion	Asset Transfer — Distribution of asset packages to households directly, ensuring that they are tailored to different disabilities and that family members of persons with disabilities are engaged.
	Technical, Business Skills and Financial Literacy Training — Training on how to manage livelihoods and business skills as well as market linkages.
	Assistive Devices & Home/Work Environment Adaptations for Persons with Disabilities — Assistive devices and home/work environment adaptations provided for persons with disabilities to support the success of their livelihoods where applicable
Financial Inclusion	Inclusive Financial Literacy Training — Initial financial literacy training delivered alongside technical livelihoods training
	Inclusive Savings Groups — Bi-monthly savings collection; micro-loans, life skills and financial literacy refresher trainings. PWDs encouraged to take leadership positions, have caregivers attend and include non-PWD members from the household as well.
	Linkages to Formal Financial Services — Linkages to formal savings accounts and microfinance institutions where appropriate
Social Empowerment	Life Skills Training — Training on social and health issues delivered in bi-monthly savings group meetings and individual empowerment plans (supported by HI)
	Village Poverty Reduction Committees — Disability-inclusive committees where volunteers from community meet every quarter to give ultra-poor households a voice in their community
	Household Coaching — Bi-monthly household visits to monitor participant progress and family welfare
	Advocacy / Social Cohesion Activities — Sensitizing village leaders, government officials, and other relevant service providers on disability inclusion and inclusive access to services through NUWODU's District Women's Associations

BRAC's Ultra-Poor Graduation Initiative provides technical assistance, advisory services, and strategic recommendations to the, FCDO, Cartier Philanthropies, Medicor Foundation, the National Community Lottery Fund, BRAC Uganda, Humanity & Inclusion, and the National Union of Women with Disabilities Uganda to support the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Graduation pilot. BRAC has expertise in advising Graduation programs in diverse contexts and direct implementation of the approach in Uganda, South Sudan, Liberia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.