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WISH2ACTION

Women's Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) 2 Access
Choice Together Innovate Ownership Now (ACTION)

A transformative project breaking down barriers to essential sexual and reproductive health services and information



Overview

WISH2ACTION was a multi-country initiative led by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). Humanity & Inclusion (HI) served as the technical disability inclusion partner.

Over its lifespan, the project generated an estimated 29.5 million couple years of protection, averted 4.3 million unsafe abortions, and prevented 21,379 maternal deaths.

Strategy and Operations

The project's core strategy was to 'Leave No One Behind' by using an integrated approach to ensure equitable access to family planning (FP) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services. It specifically prioritised the most underserved populations, including the poor, youth under 20, and persons with disabilities.

The project operated through a 'cluster model', which involved strong cooperation between public and private partners, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), to promote inclusion.

Budget

The consortium contract value for lot 2 was £164.8 million, and the HI budget was £9.6 million.

Aims

WISH2ACTION's core aim was to improve access to quality, integrated, and inclusive family planning and SRHR services for marginalised and hard-to-reach populations. To achieve this, the project developed and implemented several key strategies based on assessments that identified significant barriers for women and girls with disabilities, such as discrimination from healthcare providers and inaccessible facilities.

Locations

Humanity & Inclusion worked in 11 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda.



Duration

The project ran from September 2018 to March 2024.

Consortia Partners



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Main Objectives



Creating an inclusive culture by raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and challenging negative social norms and beliefs among healthcare workers, community leaders, and persons with disabilities themselves.



Improving Quality of Care by building the capacity of health workers to provide quality, non-discriminatory services and conducting accessibility assessments of health facilities.



Strengthening coordination and partnerships between OPDs, public and private service providers, and community leaders to ensure long-term, sustainable, and inclusive SRHR services.



Promoting disability-disaggregated data collection using tools like the Washington Group Short Set of Questions to improve programming and services.



Enhancing referral networks to ensure persons with disabilities are connected to comprehensive care that meets their additional needs, such as rehabilitation or assistive devices.



Engaging in policy and advocacy to promote national ownership and the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in the field of SRHR.

Activities

1. Assessing Barriers and Improving Accessibility

HI conducted assessments in countries like Uganda, Madagascar, South Sudan, and Ethiopia to identify barriers at health facilities and based on the findings, HI implemented accessibility improvements. In Bangladesh, HI piloted changes like ramps, accessible toilets, and tactile markings in eight family planning service centres and health facilities.



2. Capacity Building and Training

HI developed and delivered training packages, webinars and technical materials for health workers, organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), and government representatives on disability-inclusive SRHR services. This included modules on disability inclusion, inclusive SRHR services, and the use of the Washington Group Questions and Social Behavioural Change Communications.

3. Engagement with OPDs

HI engaged organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to support demand creation for SRHR services, disseminate information, provide referrals to health facilities, and advocate for disability-inclusive services at both community and facility levels. This also included representing persons with disabilities in coordination efforts like Cluster Management Committees (CMCs).



4. Development of Policy and Coordination Mechanisms

HI supported the establishment of Cluster Management Committees at the local level in Bangladesh, comprising government representatives, social services, service providers, and OPDs, to advocate for disability-inclusive SRHR.

At the national level in Bangladesh, HI facilitated the formation of a government Disability Inclusive Technical Working Group to develop a Standard Operating Procedure for persons with disabilities.



5. Making Information and Communication Inclusive

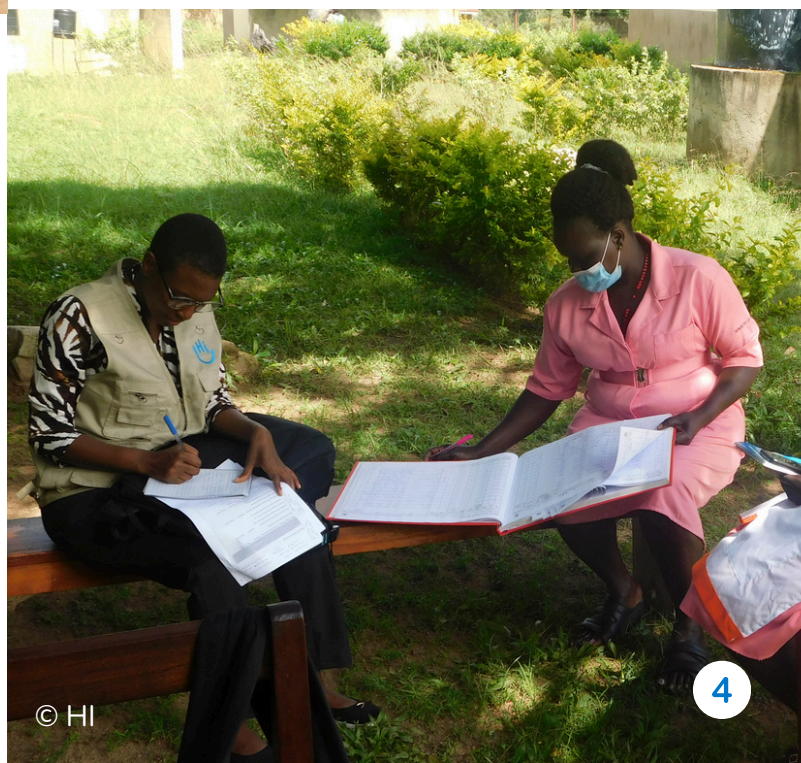
Through regular project activities, HI disseminated accurate information about the availability of SRH services and centres. HI contributed to the conversion of health information material into audio formats for persons with hearing impairment, ensuring broader accessibility.

HI also supported the distribution of mobile animated videos made by partner DMI, which challenge social norms and address stigma around SRHR for young people with disabilities.



6. Improving Data Collection and Management

To address gaps in data, HI prepared beneficiary lists using the Washington Group Questionnaire (WGQ). The project promoted the collection of disability-disaggregated data in health and SRHR using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions to improve programming and services.

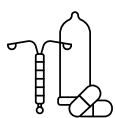




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Project Impact

The WISH2ACTION project had striking impacts across all countries of operation. Through its diverse methods and focus on collaboration and community-led work, the project achieved:



3.5 million

additional users of modern
contraception methods



21,579

maternal deaths averted



76 million people

reached with mass media campaigns in
East and Southern Africa



5,078 people

directly informed about health
information



Over 2,500

healthcare providers trained in inclusive
sexual and reproductive health
practices



Increase to 10%

from 8% of clients accessing SRHR and
family planning services being people
with disabilities



8.4 million

family planning users in total



4 million

unsafe abortions averted



13 million

unintended pregnancies averted



HI's Impact

Empowered individuals and communities

Our work involving organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) directly resulted in an increase in persons with disabilities receiving SRHR services. It also empowered OPD members to become active advocates, leading to increased community awareness that persons with disabilities have equal rights to SRH services, and encouraging women with disabilities to speak up.

Improved data access for decision-making

Local government offices in Sitakund Upazila, Bangladesh, began utilising the database of persons with disabilities, which HI had compiled using the Washington Group Questionnaire, to inform their support initiatives.

Enhanced accessibility and uptake of services

The accessibility works implemented in health facilities were described as 'eye-opening' and had a positive impact on the uptake of SRH services by persons with disabilities. These improvements ensured that persons with disabilities could access service centres smoothly with their assistive devices.

Increased confidence and skills of health workers

Health workers who received training through HI's efforts reported improved confidence and skills in offering SRHR services to persons with disabilities, leading to more disability-inclusive services at both health facility and community levels.

Spotlight: South Sudan

HI worked with people with disabilities in several cluster sites within South Sudan, including Juba, Yei, Bentiu, Wau, Aweil and Torit.

The project prioritised women and adolescent girls with disabilities, but also worked with men and boys to understand barriers to access.

Achievements

Community Engagement and Awareness:

- HI developed seven disability inclusive **awareness posters** that were approved by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and 175 copies were distributed to partners.
- HI conducted **sensitisation meetings** (73 participants) with OPDs, Disability Inclusion Committees, and SRH/non-SRH actors in Bentiu, Juba, and Yei on how to build a comprehensive and inclusive referral mechanism for persons seeking services.
- In 2023, HI conducted 15 **community awareness sessions** (6 in Yei, 6 in Bentiu, 3 in Juba) reaching 473 beneficiaries, including 156 persons with disabilities, covering topics like teenage pregnancy, early marriage prevention, and family planning benefits.
- **Community dialogues** were carried out in Yei to understand why men restrict female partners from seeking family planning services.

Partnership and Policy:

- HI participated in **preparatory meetings** for the launch of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the president of South Sudan then signed in February 2023.
- HI **worked with local partners** like the Reproductive Health Association of South Sudan (RHASS).
- The HI WISH team **participates in the Family Planning 2030 meetings and the MoH Directorate of Health Education and Promotion technical working group** to review Information, Education, and Communication materials.
- The team was **awarded best prize** at the International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) 2022 for their poster on increasing access to SRHR for women and girls with disabilities through partnerships with OPDs.



Silvia Poni Philip, a student with hearing impairments from Juba, South Sudan, feels safer now she has learnt about reproductive health with the help of WISH | © Seppora Body / HI



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Capacity Building and Training:

- HI conducted **trainings on disability inclusive SRHR for local authorities** involved in municipalities, urban planners, and architects across Juba, Yei, and Bentiu. 58 staff attended these trainings in Q3 2022, with post-tests showing a 77% increase in knowledge on disability and inclusive SRH services.
- Two trainings on inclusive SRH in Torit resulted in a **62% increase in knowledge** for health service providers and a 68% increase for OPD members, among the 53 participants.



Media and Outreach:

- Multiple **radio talk shows** have been conducted in Juba and Yei, aimed at raising awareness on barriers persons with disabilities face in accessing SRH services and stigmatization. For example, five radio talk shows conducted in 2022 reached an estimated 700,000 listeners on City FM in Juba and 400,000 on Spirit FM in Yei.
- In 2023, a **joint Round Table Discussion** was organised with Amref Health Africa in Juba to inform 15 youth with disabilities about accessible youth-friendly spaces.

Rhoda's Story

Rhoda, a visually impaired single mother, found the WISH project transformative. After participating in capacity-building training, community dialogues, and awareness sessions, she gained valuable knowledge about family planning and SRHR. Empowered by this information, she not only embraced family planning for herself but also became a champion and advocate in her community in South Sudan.

As a senior woman, she now provides crucial guidance to other women and girls and actively supports young people at the school for the blind, ensuring they have the information she once lacked. Her journey demonstrates the project's success in empowering individuals to become leaders and advocates for change.



“

I have realized that it is fundamental for the rights and wellbeing of women, girls, boys and men with disabilities to have effective inclusive SRH services. This is to ensure that our adolescent girls and adults with disabilities can avoid adverse health and socioeconomic consequences of unintended pregnancy and have a satisfying sexual life like any other person. Previously, I used to think that [people with disabilities] were not sexually active.

– Nurse from South Sudan, reflecting on the HI training

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Explore more highlights from around the world

The WISH2ACTION project achieved a wide range of outcomes by tailoring its interventions to local contexts.

Uganda

- **Inclusive Health and Governance:** Health workers and community health workers were trained in basic sign language to improve communication with clients with hearing impairments. The project successfully advocated for the inclusion of a person with a disability on the Health Unit Management Committee (HUMC) of each of the nine supported health facilities, ensuring their voices are part of local health governance.
- **Empowering Communities and Advocates:** Community sensitisation sessions using drama performances were organised to address discrimination and stigma against girls with disabilities. The project disseminated guidelines, research, and best practices at a national-level meeting with major SRHR stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, to ensure the sustainability of its learnings. The project also empowered OPDs to organise their own 'White Cane Day' events, showing increased capacity for independent advocacy.

Bangladesh

- **Data for Governance:** HI's beneficiary database, created using the Washington Group Questionnaire, was adopted by local government authorities in Sitakunda Upazila to better support persons with disabilities.
- **Facility Accessibility:** The project completed accessibility works, such as installing ramps and tactile markings, at eight family planning service centres, making them more accessible for persons with disabilities.
- **Inclusive Communication:** In collaboration with the government, the project developed and customised Social Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) messages to make them disability inclusive.

Madagascar

- **Advocacy:** The WISH2ACTION project manager presented at the International Family Planning Conference 2022 and conducted sign language training for 41 service providers from Marie Stopes Madagascar. An address book of inclusive services was finalised and distributed in a poster format for easy access.

