



MIDLINE ASSESSMENT, A PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE
TOGETHER FOR INCLUSION CONSORTIUM.

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List of abbreviations

ACAMO The Association of Blind and Partially Sighted of Mozambique
ADRA Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AMFIU Association of Microfinance Institutions of Uganda
CRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DPO Disabled Persons' Organisations
DF The Development Fund
EE Economic Empowerment
EENET Enabling Education Network
ENAB Ethiopian National Associations of the Blind
FAMOD The Mozambican Federation of Disabled Persons' Organisations
FEAPD Federation of Ethiopian National Associations of People with Disabilities
FFO The Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People
FENAID Fikir - Ethiopian National Association on Intellectual Disabilities
FNPH The Nigerien Federation of People with Disabilities
HRA Human Rights Advocacy
IE Inclusive Education
IA Inclusion Africa
MHU Norwegian Association of Mental Health Youth
M&E Monitoring and Evaluation
NABP The Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted
NAD The Norwegian Association of Disabled
NCA Norwegian Church Aid
NFU The Norwegian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities
NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
Norad Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PTA Parent Teacher Association
NUDIPU National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda
RHF The Norwegian Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
SCN Save the Children Norway
SCM School Management Committee
SDG Sustainable Development Goal
SF Stromme Foundation
SHA-U Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association Uganda
SSUPDO South Sudan Union of Persons with Disabilities Organisation
TOFI Together for Inclusion
YWCA Young Women's Christian Association

Executive summary

The Institute for Urban and Regional Research at OsloMet was commissioned by the Atlas Secretariat to carry out a midline review of the “Together for Inclusion” Consortium (TOFI). The team was asked to assess the collaboration in Norway, in the six project countries, and between Norway and the project countries. The review was carried out in the period between November 6th and December 23rd. Data was collected from a review of documents, through a survey, and by carrying out individual interviews and group discussions with the Atlas Secretariat, country leads in Norway, country coordinators in the project countries, as well as consortium members in each country.

In Somalia and South Sudan, DPO implementing partners were also interviewed. In total, 27 online individual and group interviews were carried out in the period between December 7th and 17th. A survey was sent to respondents identified by the Atlas Secretariat and country coordinators. 183 invitations were sent out, 79 respondents filled out the questionnaire, indicating a response rate of about 43%. For Norwegian respondents, the response rate is about 49%, and for respondents in project countries, about 42%.

TOFI objectives

The main objective of the collaboration is to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities. At the core of the TOFI model is the idea that rights-based, inclusive development will be achieved as a result of the creative processes that are expected to happen in places and spaces where DPOs and NGOs meet. In addition, the TOFI model aims to ensure that DPOs take the lead in the partnership. Placing persons with disabilities and DPOs in the lead role is a crucial component of the collaboration.

The role of the Atlas Secretariat

The Atlas secretariat submitted the application for TOFI funding to Norad in June 2019 and was granted funding in December 2019. Only two months had been available to put together the large and novel application. The Atlas secretariat serves as the Norad contracting partner and the grant manager and subsequently signs contracts with the other consortium parties. There are now 15 active DPO and NGO consortium partners. The secretariat has carried out its responsibility for multiple tasks within a short timeframe, and because of this, the workload for the secretariat has been extremely high. Tasks include leadership of the consortium, managing the grant, all financial management, coordination, M&E and quality control, technical support, as well as writing new applications (such as the 2020 application). Additionally, there is the issue of how deeply, or how far out in the implementation chain, the Atlas secretariat should reach with its technical support.

Carrying the responsibility for the implementation of a very large programme, with many consortium members, based on a novel collaboration model, with no inception phase, in a short space of time, across several countries, and with strict requirements regarding monitoring and reporting decided on in part by Norad and in part by the Atlas Secretariat, the Atlas secretariat opted for a comprehensive system of M&E and reporting. This is complemented by an M&E software to aid programme implementation (after the decision had been made by members that M&E would be centrally driven). This situation effectively placed the Atlas secretariat in the role of ‘super controller’. The challenge faced by the Atlas secretariat in managing TOFI had repercussions throughout the TOFI implementation chain, where it created pressure to deliver inputs to the management systems, while staff simultaneously worked on project implementation. All this happened in a context of Covid 19 that impacted mobility and thus project implementation, and Covid also led to school closure and economic hardship for target groups.

Respondents' views on the collaboration

The large picture emerging from the survey is that there is a strong spirit of collaboration, members have got to know each other, they are building trust, and respondents say they have learnt a lot and that they have been inspired by the work of TOFI. The results show some frustration that is higher in Norway compared with the project countries, and especially among Norwegian DPO members (yet overall levels of frustration are low). The survey results also show that respondents in the project countries are considerably more satisfied with the collaborative process than are respondents from Norway. Respondents are particularly pleased with information flow, communication, planning and reporting, but less happy with training and capacity development and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) activities. Many respondents in Norway, and DPO respondents particularly, are dissatisfied with the latter.

Participants in interviews and group discussions offered more detail. A common concern held by most respondents throughout the implementation chain is that they have struggled to find the time to learn all the new process tools, timelines have been shifting, and there have been short, and too many, deadlines, as well as lack of advance notice for important events, such as training. The survey respondents single out M&E as the most challenging area. The roll out has taken time, and the work on the baseline displaced project implementation activities in the project countries. Members in several project countries have found the technology platforms difficult to access, and members report they have not yet accessed the app.

On the other hand, the ambition and hard work of the Atlas Secretariat is appreciated. Organisations in Norway and in the project countries report that they find the tools useful, and that they have learnt a lot, both from learning the tools and participating in the work on the baseline. For some countries, the baseline work served as another collaborative effort, bringing the members together. There is a sense that the collaboration tools are in place now, finally, and that the collaborative effort is set and ready to go in earnest and that members will benefit from the comprehensive tool sets. Members appreciate the huge task that has been accomplished in rolling out the systems, and respondents hope that the collaboration will continue to really reap the benefits of the investments that have been done.

It is clear that many of the challenges outlined above stem from the lack of a preparatory, or inception phase, for the TOFI consortium and the short timeframe for implementation of the TOFI programme.

Collaboration in Norway

Collaboration in Norway is organised around the country groups, led by what the consortium has decided to call a country lead. The country lead's most important task is to channel information to and from the Atlas secretariat, and to the country team in Norway, and in the project countries. The structure with country leads is appreciated by consortium members, and in the views of other country focal points, the country leads have overall been effective in carrying out their responsibilities. In three of the six countries, a DPO holds the role of country lead. The role of DPOs as country lead gives DPOs the formal lead status, and this allocation of roles has become accepted by members. The country group meeting provides all country leads with the opportunity to have a direct line to the Atlas Secretariat and to bring the concerns from the country group and the project countries to the Secretariat.

Communication between country leads and country coordinators is in most cases on a weekly or even daily basis. Partners in the project countries assess the support from the country lead and Norwegian partners in planning, reporting and problem solving as very good.

Collaboration in project countries

The extent to which DPO and NGO consortium members collaborate in project countries vary significantly across countries. The formal collaborating mechanisms are the national coordinating body and technical working groups in the thematic focus areas of the consortium: inclusive education (IE), economic empowerment (EE) and human rights advocacy (HRA), and there are also initiatives to establish M&E thematic groups. Survey results show that the thematic working groups are very important in driving the collaboration forward. Nevertheless, in three of the six project countries, DPOs do not participate at all, or not fully, in the collaborating mechanisms. In the two countries where they do not participate at all, this is because the DPOs are nascent organisations, and do not have adequate capacity to serve as consortium partners. Joint project implementation takes place through the NAD/EENET inclusive education model in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Uganda. Another typical model for NGO-DPO collaboration is when DPOs work at the community level with children and persons with disabilities to identify, mobilise, and build awareness so that they may participate in IE and EE projects run by NGOs. DPOs and NGOs also collaborate on training that take different forms. NGOs may train DPOs, DPOs may train NGOs, or they conduct training as a joint effort.

DPO-NGO collaboration

The TOFI model aims to ensure that DPOs takes the lead in the collaboration. Placing persons with disabilities and DPOs in the lead role is a crucial component of the collaboration. Structurally, this has been achieved by placing DPOs in the roles of country leads and country coordinators in three out of the six countries: Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Uganda. In these countries there are relatively strong, DPO organisations and/or federations. In countries where DPOs are not in the lead, this reflects the relatively weaker institutional structures of DPOs in these countries. The survey results show that the idea of assigning DPOs to the driver's seat is only fully accepted among Norwegian DPOs and that in the project countries a majority of both DPO and NGO respondents think the leadership *should* be shared. In practice, in the project countries, DPO and NGO respondents report that there is a large degree of shared responsibility.

Outcomes

In terms of strengthening of each organisation's capacities, the survey results show strong, positive effects on learning. There is a lot of learning between organisations, both NGOs learning from DPOs and the other way around. NGOs are increasingly becoming disability inclusive as they expand their target groups to include children, youth, and adults with disabilities, and they learn from DPOs about approaches and methods for identification, mobilisation and monitoring. NGOs also adopt inclusive practices beyond TOFI. The network DPOs have outside of the disability movement, and the dialogue they have established with allies, have improved a lot through the collaborative approach of TOFI. Administrative capacities have improved for NGOs and for DPOs, such as for planning, reporting, budgeting, and monitoring. Adoption of TOFI tools and models are somewhat less common, but even here there seem to have been rather strong effects. Project country respondents report more positive effects of the collaboration, and especially for adopting innovative ways of working and for the usefulness of the training and capacity development.

Recommendations

Recommendation to Norad and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The programme should be extended beyond 2023 in order to reap the full benefits of the investments made in the consortium, and in view of the importance of inclusion for achievement of the sustainable development goals. It is important for Norad to be clear in their communication with the Atlas secretariat, as early as possible, on whether the consortium can apply for continued

funding. Not knowing whether the project will continue, creates a great deal of uncertainty among the organisations, and increases the risk of losing key staff and dismantling important structures.

Recommendations to the Atlas secretariat:

- Focus should be on the implementation of existing process tools, and on training. The organisations are weary of introducing new tools. Special attention must be paid to countries where the technological infrastructure technological competence among consortium staff is weak, to ensure they have access to the required technical support (for example bought in-country).
- Annual timelines and milestones should be agreed, and changes only made if absolutely necessary. This is now much easier as the project is now well underway, and tools and plans are in place.
- Information regarding activities, information requests and events should be clear and timely (provided well in advance)
- Tasks that are assigned to the project countries should be carefully selected, the purpose should be explained, and deadlines should allow sufficient time.

Recommendations to the Atlas secretariat and Norwegian consortium members:

- Ensure that the monthly meetings between country leads and the Atlas Secretariat become an effective forum for understanding each other's perspectives and for sharing of information.
- Consider joint annual meetings between the Atlas Secretariat and all the country groups for discussion of progress and challenges, issues of concern to the Secretariat and to project countries (one or two meetings per year)

Recommendations to consortium members in Norway and in project countries:

- Ensure all organisations have a role in the thematic working groups, including distributing the lead roles among members.
- Consider whether there should be more exchange between the experts on IE, EE and M&E in Norway, and the thematic working groups in project countries
- More in-person meetings and learning visits to strengthen relationships between the organisations, in-country and across countries.
- Attention should be paid to identifying effective ways for consortium members to continue to share and learn in all areas (on the topic of inclusion, methods, tools etc.)

Recommendation for everyone – DPOs in the lead?

- Consider how DPOs in countries where DPOs do not participate, or only partially participate, in national level coordination mechanisms, can participate at the country level.
- Convey with clarity the principle of DPO leadership where this is not clear to participants.

Introduction and scope of work

The purpose of the midline evaluation has been to assess the performance of the TOFI consortium and to offer recommendations for strengthening the consortium to achieve overall results. In response to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the focus of the evaluation has been on the collaborative efforts among TOFI members in Norway, among TOFI partners in each of the six project countries (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda), and between the Norwegian members and the implementing partners in the south. The evaluation team was asked to examine the collaborative process among TOFI members, paying attention to the degree of joint priority-setting, decision-making and implementation, the extent to which consortium members learn from each other and innovate, and the extent to which true partnership between NGOs and DPOs is developing. TOFI has been operating in the midst of a pandemic, and we were also asked to assess what an extent the pandemic has affected the collaboration. The 18 organisations in the TOFI consortium manage a budget of NOK 494 million over a period of four years.

The objective of the consortium is to take the lead in fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities. The Atlas Secretariat's home page presents the idea of the programme succinctly *"the programme puts persons with disabilities in the driver's seat and aims to reach the most marginalized with high-quality organisational capacity building, disability rights advocacy, inclusive education and economic empowerment projects in six target countries"* and *"... we take a strong participatory approach to the design and implementation of the programme. Our focus is to build on those experiences to generate innovation, learning and radical new approaches to influence policy and inform inclusive development practice in the target countries and beyond."*

Data collection strategy.

Document reviews focused on the applications to Norad (2019 and 2020) and the 2020 annual report.

The survey. We obtained email addresses from the Atlas Secretariat. Altogether about 180 invitations were sent out by email, asking TOFI participants to participate in the web-based survey. Of the 183 invitations sent out, 79 respondents filled out the questionnaire, indicating a response rate of about 43%. For Norwegian respondents, the response rate is about 49%, and for respondents in project countries about 42%. The full survey results can be found in annex 2.

Online individual interviews and group discussions. Data was collected from individual interviews and group discussion with the Atlas Secretariat, all the country leads, country coordinators, and DPO and NGO consortium members in each country. In Somalia and South Sudan DPO implementing partners were also interviewed. In total, 27 individual and group interviews were carried out in the period between December 7th and 17th.

Project country context

Practically all the respondents in the survey say that Covid 19 has impacted on the programme to a great extent or to some extent. The extent to which respondents' work has been slowed down as a result of the pandemic and whether the pandemic has hindered them from visiting consortium members are shown in Tables 20 and 21. The pandemic appears to have had significant negative effects on the work, and this is the case for all categories of respondents. Particularly DPOs report large negative effects. Respondents in the project countries seem to have had fewer restrictions on seeing other consortium members than those in Norway, although restrictions have been

considerable. In Norway, nine in ten say that the pandemic has restricted such travels to a great extent.

Table 20. Extent to which work has been slowed down by the Covid-19 pandemic, by category of respondents (%). N=79.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|----------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| To a great extent | 50 | 25 | 57 | 45 |
| To some extent | 50 | 63 | 43 | 49 |
| Very little or not at all | 0 | 13 | 0 | 4 |
| Don't know / hard to say | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

The pandemic has also hindered the mobility of consortium members, so consortium members have met less frequently.

Table 21. Extent to which the Covid-19 pandemic has hindered respondents from visiting other consortium members, by category of respondents (%). N=79.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|----------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| To a great extent | 90 | 88 | 14 | 30 |
| To some extent | 10 | 0 | 50 | 45 |
| Very little or not at all | 0 | 0 | 36 | 21 |
| Don't know / hard to say | 0 | 13 | 0 | 4 |

There are ongoing conflicts in several of the countries, and the project in Ethiopia has been most severely affected.

Guidance for readers.

The first section of this report presents the responses to the survey. The survey represents a bird’s eye view of the collaboration. The answers provide an overall assessment of the collaboration; the coordination mechanisms, DPO-NGO collaboration, changes in inclusive practices etc. It does not provide a country-by-country analysis as respondents in each country are too few but rather makes a distinction between Norway and the project partner countries. The full survey report has been attached as annex 2.

The second section presents the findings from the online interviews and group discussion with each country, in alphabetical order. The section also draws on the narrative, or open, questions from the

survey where respondents were asked to write about their experience with various aspects of TOFI. In places where direct quotes have been used in these country presentations, the quotes are drawn from the written answers given by the respondents to the survey questions. The country presentations are descriptive, and we have used bullet points for efficiency reasons. This section is intended to reflect, unfiltered, the broad range of views that emerged, during interviews, discussions, and from survey respondents. Hopefully, it may serve as a useful kick-off for discussions at the country level by highlighting strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations – as observed by in-country respondents. It should be kept in mind that the online format, and the limited time spent in conversation, did not enable any in depth analysis at the country level. The project country descriptions are written using the same structure for ease of comparison. For readers who are not interested in the details on each project country, there is a box at the end of each country presentation that highlights the key findings.

In the third section, we reflect on some observations that can be drawn from the various data sources.

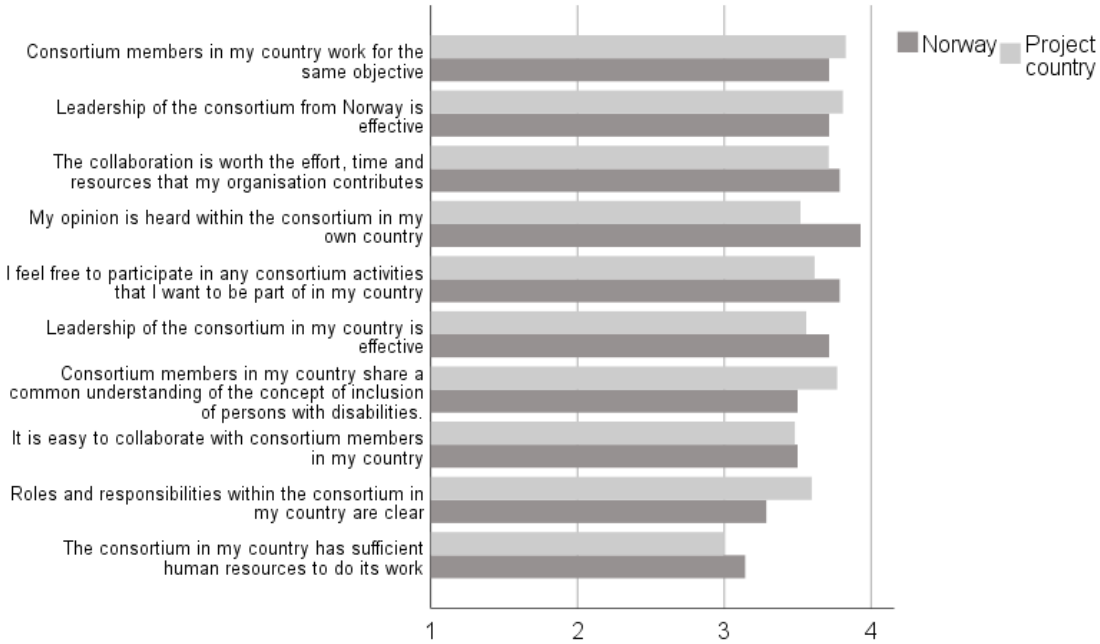
Finally, we present recommendations.

Views on the consortium – observations by the survey respondents

All respondents report at least a certain degree of information about the consortium. In Norway respondents from DPOs are both the best informed but also with one in five reporting that they are not so well informed; all NGO respondents are at least quite well informed. The percentage being very well informed is higher in the project countries than in Norway, the best informed appear to be the NGO respondents in the project countries.

The respondents were asked a number of statements about the consortium to which they could either fully agree, partly agree, partly disagree or fully disagree. Figure 5 shows the level of agreement with positive statements about the consortium. (Not all figures and tables are presented in this report, so please refer to annex 2 for more detail). As can be seen from the table, respondents have a very positive view about most aspects of the consortium, for the most part leaning towards ‘fully agree’ on the different items that were asked, ranging from whether they work for the same objective, having an effective leadership, being heard, possibility to participate in activities, and more. Slightly more problematic seems to be sufficiency of human resources, where the mean response was close to ‘partly agree’. Differences between respondents in Norway and project countries are minor; respondents from Norway are particularly enthusiastic about their opinion being heard within the consortium in Norway, while respondents in the project countries are slightly more prone to say that roles and responsibilities within the consortium are clear, and that members of the consortium share a common understanding of the concept of inclusion of persons with disabilities.

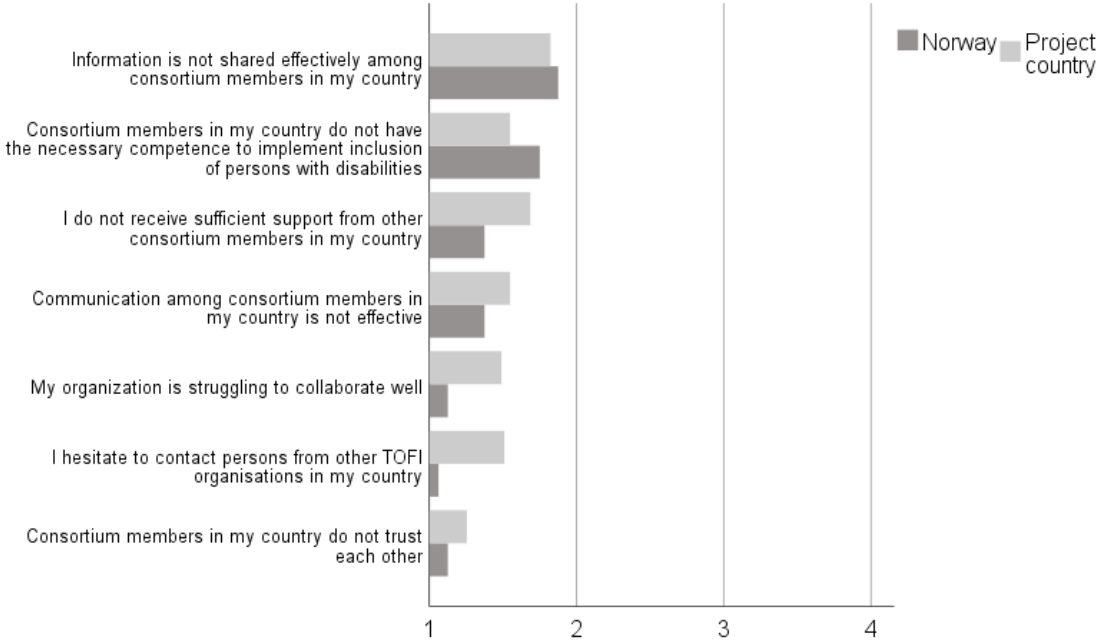
Figure 5. Level of agreement with positive statements about the TOFI consortium, by country. Mean score on a scale from 1 (fully disagree) to 4 (fully agree). N=79.



We computed an index based on the mean score across the different items asked, with the same range (from 1 to 4) as the individual questions. The mean score of 3.6 confirms the tendency of the respondents to lean more towards ‘fully agree’ than ‘rather agree’ with the items. There is no big difference in scores between the TOFI countries, the mean score for the positive statements ranges from 3.4 in Ethiopia to 3.7 in South Sudan; it is 3.5 for respondents in Norway and 3.6 for respondents in the project countries overall. Neither is there a big difference between DPOs (a mean score of 3.6) and NGOs (3.5). Respondents with different positions in the consortium also have very similar views on the consortium; the highest score is given by those working on administration and finance (3.7), but no position has a lower score than 3.5.

A similar set of negative statements was shown to the respondents, and levels of agreement can be observed in Figure 5. As can be seen from the figure, the tendency is that respondents disagree, at least partly but often fully, with these statements. Although differences are small, for most items respondents from Norway are more likely to disagree fully than are respondents in the project countries. The figure shows that consortium members in both Norway and the project countries agree on a high level of trust in the consortium. Slightly more problematic, but still with an average satisfactory score, seems to be the efficiency of information sharing in the consortium.

Figure 6. Level of agreement with negative statements about the TOFI consortium, by country. Mean score on a scale from 1 (fully disagree) to 4 (fully agree). N=79.

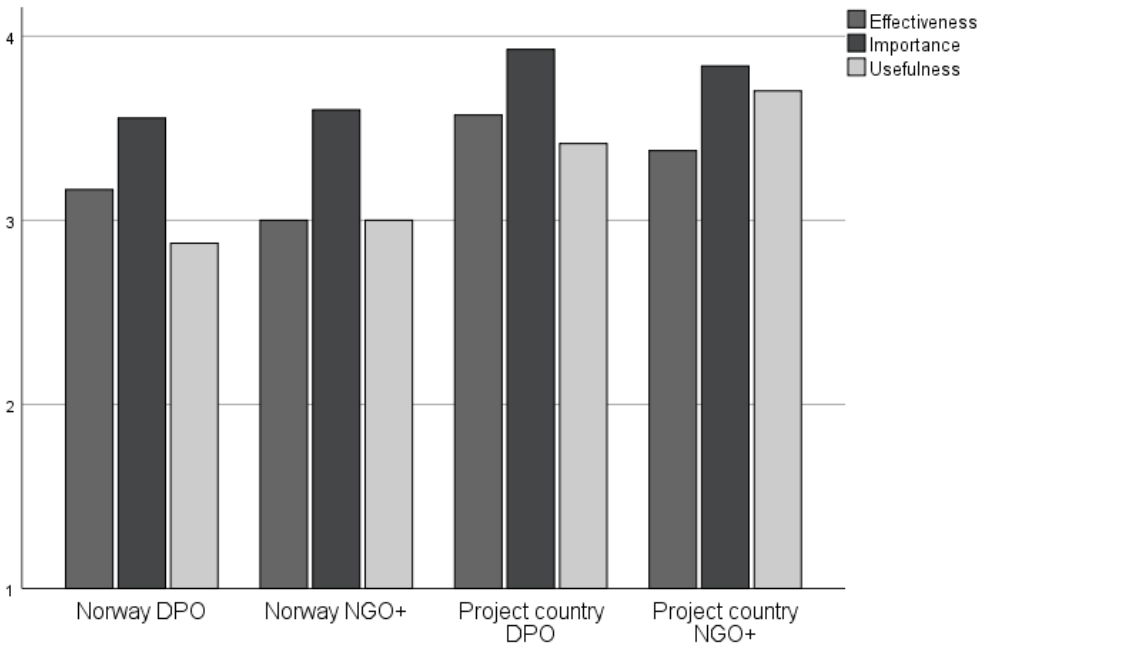


A similar index was computed the mean score across the different items asked, with the same range (from 1 to 4) as the individual questions. A mean score of 1.6 shows that on average people are more likely to ‘partly disagree’ than to ‘fully disagree’ with the statements. Respondents in Norway are on average more likely to fully disagree (1.4) than are respondents in the project countries (1.6). In individual project countries the scores range from 1.5 in Mozambique, Uganda and Somalia, to 1.9 in Ethiopia. There is only a minor difference between DPOs (a mean score of 1.5) and NGOs (1.6), but Norwegian NGOs are the most prone to disagree with the negative statements (1.3). Among the

different positions in the consortium, members of the coordinating bodies are the least likely to agree with the statements (1.3). Country coordinators in the project countries and those working in administration and finance (both a score of 1.7) lean more towards ‘partly disagree’ than ‘fully disagree’.

The next set of questions relate to how the respondents rate the national level coordination body in terms of its effectiveness (on a scale from 1 ‘very ineffective’ to 4 ‘very effective’) and similar scales for respectively the coordination body’s importance for driving the collaboration forward and its usefulness in the respondents’ day-to-day work. Responses are shown in Figure 7. Respondents in the project countries are, on average, more impressed by the performance of the coordination body than are respondents in Norway. Highest scores are reached for the assessments of the coordination body’s importance for driving the collaboration forward.

Figure 7. Perceived level of coordination body’s i) effectiveness, ii) importance for driving the collaboration forward, and iii) usefulness in respondent’s day-to-day work on a scale from 1 (very low level) to 4 (very high level) by respondent category. N=65.

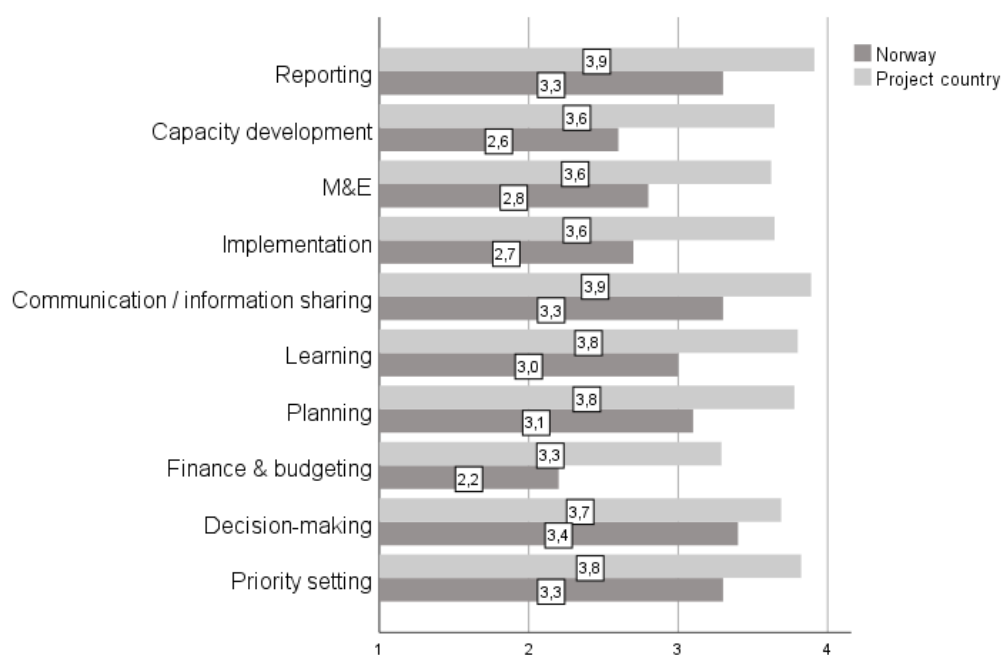


Note: Don’t know have been removed.

The national coordination bodies

In the next battery of questions, the respondents were asked to assess the importance of the coordination body in their country for a number of different purposes. Figure 8 gives the average score on a scale from 1 ‘not important at all’ to 4 ‘very important for respondents working in Norway and in the project countries respectively. For these questions there are large differences in assessments between respondents in Norway and the project countries. Thus, the respondents in the project countries give close to top scores on all items except finance and budgeting. The Norwegian respondents give more modest assessments as shown by the figure, but with relatively high scores for decision-making, priority setting and reporting.

Figure 8. Perceived importance of own country’s coordination body for various aspects of operation, measured on a scale from 1 ‘not important at all’ to 4 ‘very important’.



Note: 'Don't know' and 'not relevant' have been removed.

We computed an index for all coordination body items in Figure 8, with the same scores ranging between 1 and 4. The mean index score was 3.3, i.e., on average higher than 'rather important' but considerably lower than 'very important'. The mean scores for various categories were the following:

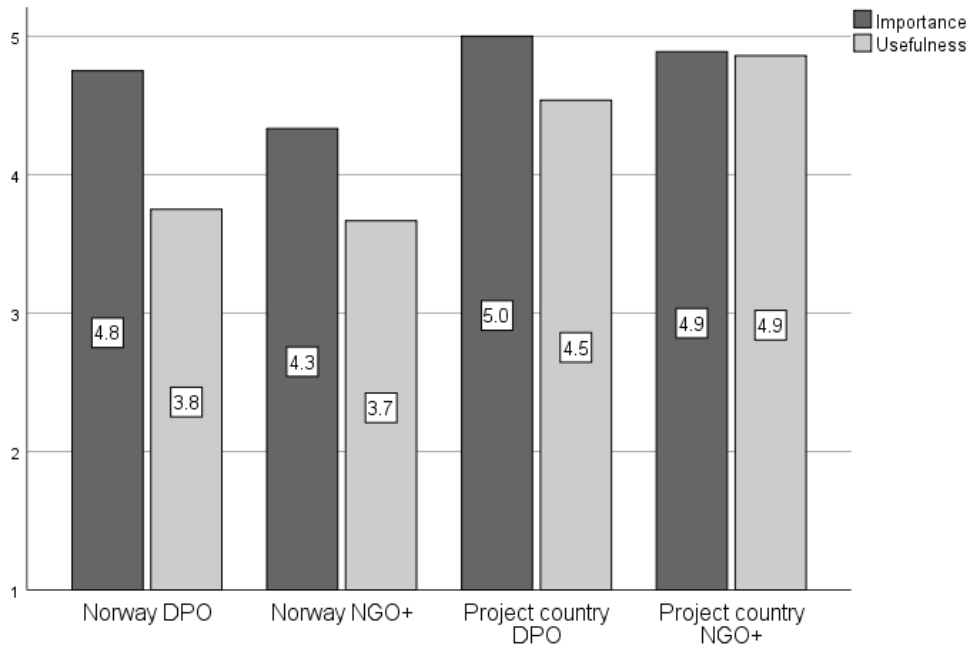
Norway, DPOs 2.9
 Norway NGOs+ 3.0
 Project country DPOs 3.4
 Project country NGOs+ 3.4

Particularly positive assessments of the coordination body were given by country coordinators in the project countries (3.5) and members of thematic/technical working groups (3.5).

The thematic working groups

Thematic working groups have been set up in many of the TOFI countries, covering the areas of inclusive education, human rights, and economic empowerment, and some also have working groups on M&E. Comparatively high is the level of memberships in human rights thematic working groups among DPOs in the project countries; NGOs in these countries are more likely to be members of inclusive education working groups. The respondents attach a great amount of importance to the working groups for driving the collaboration forward, as shown by Figure 10. Exceptionally high ratings are given for the working groups' importance in driving the collaboration forward, and especially so in the project countries. More modest are the Norwegian respondents' assessments of the working group's usefulness for respondents in their day-to-day work.

Figure 10. Importance of working groups for driving the collaboration forward, and their usefulness for respondents in their day-to-day work, by respondent category. Mean score on a scale from 1 (not important/useful at all) to 5 (very important/useful, where 3 indicates that some are useful, others less useful. N=78.



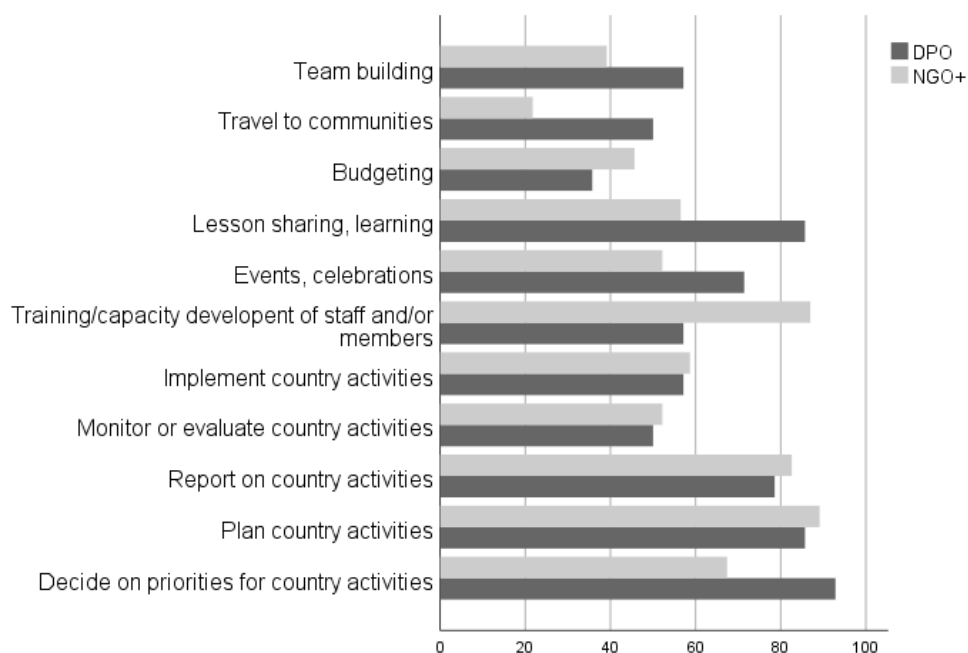
We also asked about memberships of DPOs in the thematic or technical working groups where the respondents participate. Results are displayed in Table 8, showing great variation between different categories of respondents, though few report working groups without representation of at least one DPO.

Table 8. DPO membership in thematic/technical working groups where respondents participate (%). N=77.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| Several | 60 | 13 | 64 | 44 |
| One or two | 10 | 50 | 29 | 24 |
| None | 0 | 0 | 7 | 16 |
| Don't know/don't participate | 30 | 38 | 0 | 16 |

Next, we asked for which purposes the respondents meet with other TOFI organisations. As can be seen from Figure 11, slightly different purposes are highlighted by DPOs and NGOs; DPOs are more likely to meet to decide on priorities for country activities, and for lesson sharing and learning, for travelling to communities and for team building. NGOs for their part more often mention that they meet with other TOFI organisations for training and capacity development of staff and members. Both types of organisations meet to plan and report on country activities.

Figure 11. Purposes for which DPOs and NGOs+ respectively meet with other TOFI organisations (%). N=60.

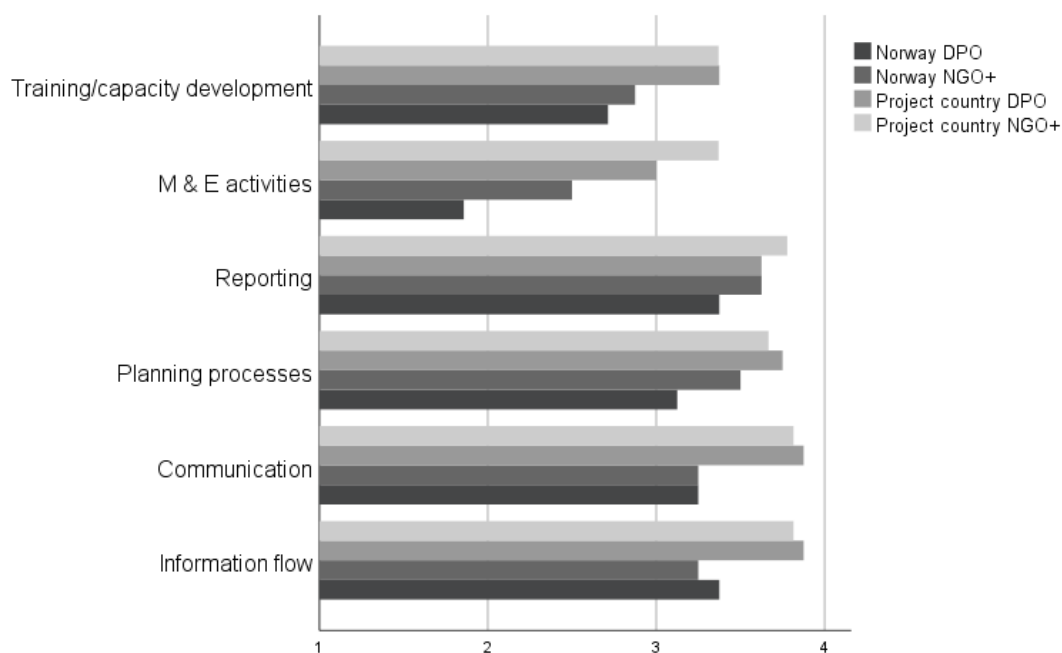


Note: Don't know have been removed.

Collaborative processes

Figure 12 shows the level of satisfaction with various aspects of the coordination. Respondents were asked to assess their level of satisfaction on a scale from 1 'not satisfied at all' to 4 'very satisfied'. Mean scores for various categories of respondents are displayed in the figure. As a rule, respondents in the project countries are considerably more satisfied with the coordination bodies than are respondents from Norway. Respondents are particularly pleased with information flow, communication, planning and reporting, but less happy with training and capacity development and monitoring & evaluation activities. Especially many respondents in Norway, and DPO respondents in particular, are dissatisfied with the latter.

Figure 12. Level of satisfaction with various aspects of coordination between Norway and project countries, by category of respondents. Mean score on a scale from 1 'very dissatisfied' to 4 'very satisfied'. N=52.



Note: Don't know have been removed.

Table 11. Actual frequency of communication between Norwegian partner and partner in project country, by category of respondent (%).

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|---------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| At least weekly | 78 | 88 | 100 | 59 |
| At least monthly | 11 | 13 | 0 | 37 |
| At least quarterly | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| DNK / Not relevant | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The preferred frequency of such contact is displayed in Table 12. As can be seen from the table, only a few respondents from NGOs would prefer more frequent contact with their Norwegian partners, otherwise respondents are satisfied with the regularity of contact that they currently have.

Table 12. Preferred frequency of communication between Norwegian partner and partner in project country, by category of respondent (%).

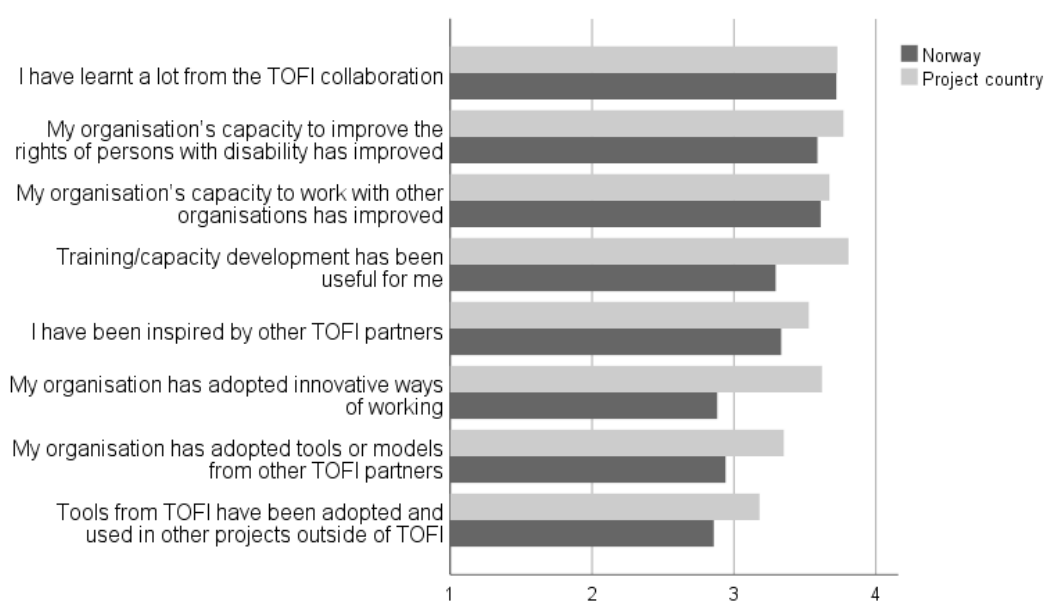
| | Norway | Project country |
|--|--------|-----------------|
| | | |

| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| At least weekly | 78 | 88 | 100 | 74 |
| At least monthly | 11 | 13 | 0 | 22 |
| At least quarterly | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| DNK / Not relevant | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Changes in ways of working as a result of TOFI participation

A battery of questions was asked to assess the effects of the TOFI collaboration on various aspects of the respondents' work. Figure 13 shows the level of agreements with certain positive statements about such potential effects on a scale from 1 'don't agree at all' to 4 'fully agree'. The effects seem to be particularly great in terms of learning, but also the organisations' capacity to improve the rights of persons with disabilities, and their capacity to work with other organisations. Adoption of TOFI tools and models are somewhat less common, but even here there seem to have been rather strong effects. The figure shows the slight greater tendency among project country respondents to report positive effects of the collaboration, and especially for adopting innovative ways of working and for the usefulness of the training and capacity development.

Figure 13. Agreements with statements on positive change as a result of participation in TOFI activities, by country. Mean scores on a scale from 1 'do not agree at all' to 4 'fully agree'. N=78.



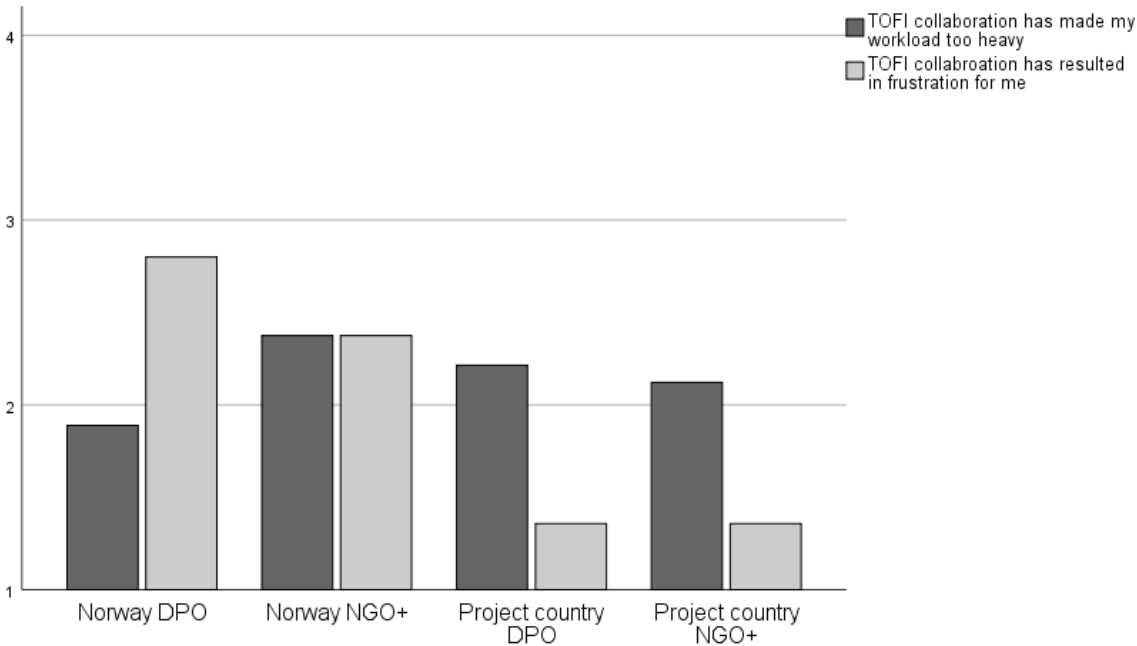
Note: Don't know have been removed.

An index was computed based on responses to this battery to examine the extent to which different categories of respondents have changed their way of working in a positive way more generally. The mean score of the index is 3.5 (on average between 'partly agree' and 'fully agree' with the statements given). In the partner countries the index ranges from 3.3 in Somalia to 3.8 in Niger and

Uganda; the mean score for the project countries is 3.6. The mean score for the Norwegian respondents is, as expected, lower at 3.3. If we look at differences between DPOs and NGOs, we find that index scores are somewhat higher among DPOs in both Norway (3.4 vs 3.1 for NGOs) and in the project countries (3.7 vs 3.5), thus the effects are reported to be slightly greater on DPOs' ways of working. When it comes to responsibilities in the consortium, it is the country coordinators in project countries, members of coordination bodies, and members in the thematic and technical working groups that give the most positive assessments (all with a mean score of 3.6).

In the same battery in the questionnaire there were also two negative statements that the respondents could agree or disagree with, and responses for various categories of respondents are illustrated in Figure 14. It is noteworthy that a considerable proportion of the DPO respondents in Norway report that the collaboration has resulted in frustration, a sentiment that is not shared by counterparts in the project countries.

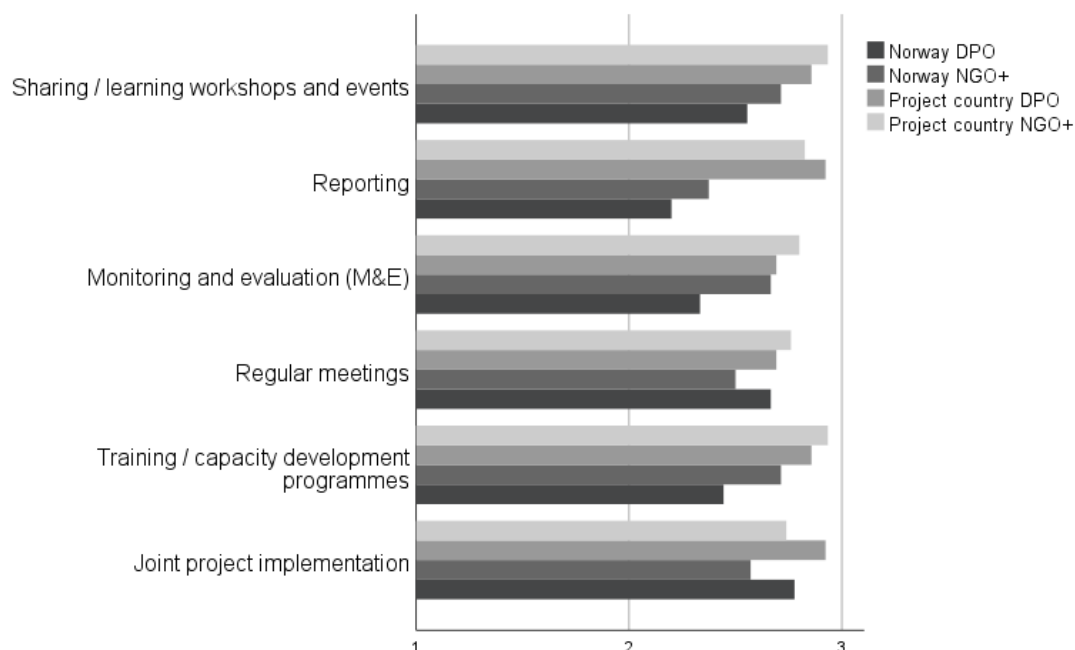
Figure 14. Agreement with statements about heavy workload and frustration as a result of TOFI collaboration, by respondent category. Mean scores on a scale from 1 'do not agree at all' to 4 'fully agree'. N=78.



Note: Don't know have been removed.

A last battery of questions in this section relate to arenas for learning within the consortium. On a scale from 1 to 3, where 1 indicates 'very useful' and 3 indicates 'not useful' respondents were asked to assess how useful they find various arenas for learning. Results are displayed in Figure 15. For the most part the respondents give a high rating; respondents in the project countries for the most part a bit more so than respondents in Norway. Differences are largest when it comes to reporting, where respondents in Norway are more reluctant to give a high score.

Figure 15. Assessment of usefulness of TOFI arenas for learning, by category of respondents. Means on a scale from 1 'not useful' to 3 'very useful'.



DPO-NGO relationships in TOFI

This section looks into the relationships between NGOs and DPOs in TOFI. First, respondents were asked whether they feel that DPOs and NGOs are equal partners in the consortium. Responses are shown in Table 13. Between half and just above two thirds of the respondents believe this is fully the case, less than one in ten think it is not the case, the rest opting for 'partly'.

Table 13. Opinion on whether or not DPOs and NGOs are equal partners in TOFI, by respondent categories (%). N=79.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|-------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| Yes | 70 | 50 | 64 | 68 |
| Partly | 20 | 38 | 29 | 23 |
| No | 10 | 0 | 7 | 9 |
| Don't know | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 |

When asked who are currently in the driving seat of the collaboration, in Norway the responses differ substantially between DPO and NGO respondents as shown in Table 14. Very few NGO respondents recognise a leading role of DPOs, while a clear majority of DPO respondents report that they are in the lead. In project countries the picture is different, but also here DPO respondents are more likely to assign themselves to the driving seat than are NGO respondents.

Table 14. Opinion on who are currently in the driving seat of the collaboration, by respondent categories (%). N=79.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| DPOs | 77 | 13 | 42 | 23 |
| NGOs | 0 | 13 | 17 | 40 |
| Both equally | 11 | 50 | 33 | 30 |
| Hard to say / Don't know | 11 | 25 | 8 | 6 |

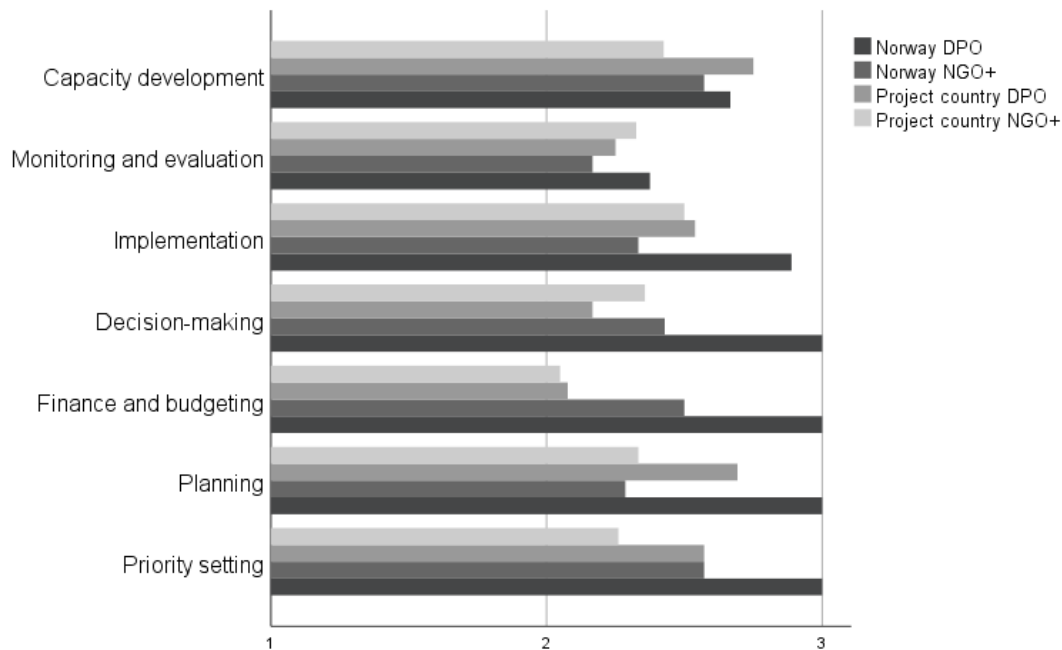
Respondents were also asked who in their opinion *should* be in the driving seat, and also for this item responses vary considerably, as shown in Table 15. DPO respondents in Norway are the most insistent that this should be DPOs; in the project countries the majority of respondents in both DPOs and NGOs tend to agree that this responsibility should be shared by both types of organisations.

Table 15. Opinion on who should be in the driving seat of the collaboration, by respondent categories (%). N=76.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|---------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| DPOs | 80 | 38 | 36 | 23 |
| NGOs | 0 | 13 | 7 | 13 |
| Both equally | 20 | 50 | 57 | 60 |
| Hard to say / Don't know | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |

The level of influence of DPOs in various aspects of TOFI operations was asked in a battery of questions, where respondents could rate this level on a scale from 1 'no or little influence' to 3 'very much influence'. Responses are given in Figure 16. As can be seen from the Figure, DPO respondents in Norway give a maximum, or close to maximum score on four of the six items and by far estimate DPOs' influence to be greater than what NGO respondents in Norway do. Project country respondents are more unified across regardless of type of organisation. They give a lower score on DPOs' influence on finance and budgeting than on the other listed items.

Figure 16. Opinion on level of influence of DPOs in various processes of collaboration in TOFI. Means on a scale from 1 'little or no influence' to 3 'very much influence', by respondent category. N=79.



Inclusion practices

The questionnaire contained several questions on the TOFI organisations' inclusion practices. A total of 43% of the respondents reported that they had increased the number of persons with disabilities in their staff as a result of the TOFI collaboration, with the following distribution: 30% in Norwegian DPOs, 13% in Norwegian NGOs, 50% in project country DPOs, and 49% in project country NGOs.

All together 53% of the respondents stated that their organisations have a policy document for inclusion, and distribution by respondent categories are displayed in Table 16, showing that such documents are more common in the project countries than in Norway, and that a greater share of the Norwegian respondents are unaware of the existence of such a document.

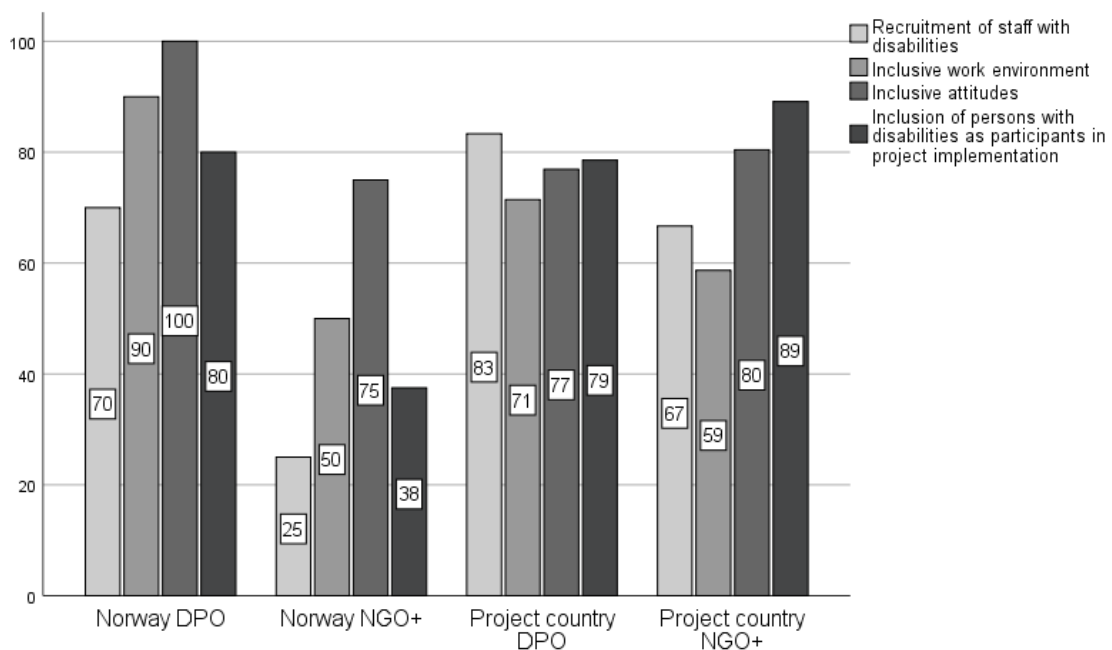
Table 16. Presence of a policy document for inclusion in respondents' organisation, by category of respondents (%). N=78.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|-------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| Yes | 40 | 50 | 57 | 54 |
| No | 20 | 13 | 36 | 28 |
| Don't know | 40 | 38 | 7 | 17 |

Inclusion practices were also measured in a battery of questions in which respondents could tick whether various aspects of inclusion are practiced in their organisation. Figure 17 presents the percentage of respondents who state that such inclusion is practiced for various categories of

respondents. Norwegian NGO respondents give a much lower score on almost all the indicators than do respondents in other categories, and particularly few of them practice inclusion by recruiting staff with disabilities. Differences in inclusion practices between DPO and NGO respondents vary much less in the project countries than in Norway.

Figure 17. Percentage of respondents indicating that their organisation practices various forms of inclusion, by category of respondents. N=79.

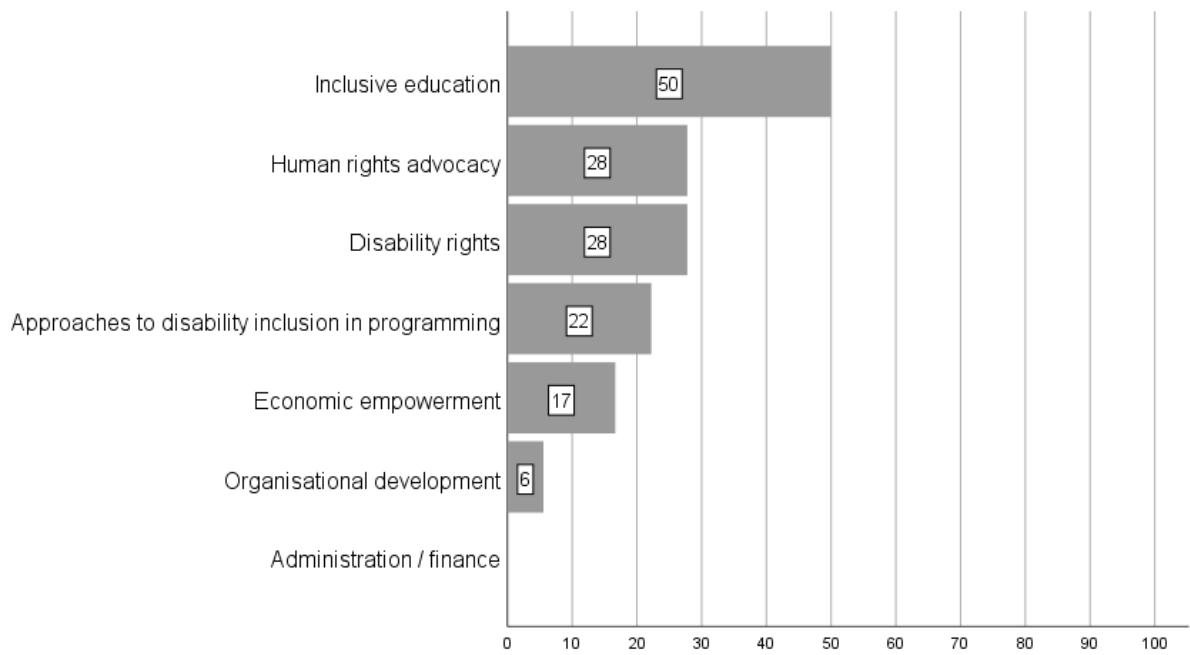


Collaboration between DPOs and NGOs in the project countries

The first set of questions in this section was asked only of NGO respondents in the project countries. When asked whether the organisation they work in had worked with DPOs before TOFI started, 22% stated that they had done so on a regular basis, 37% sometimes, while only 7% had never done so. The remaining 15% were unsure (N=41). While 55% of this category of respondents reported that DPO consortium members had carried out formal training programme(s) for their staff, 33% said that this had not happened, and the remaining 13% were unsure (N=40).

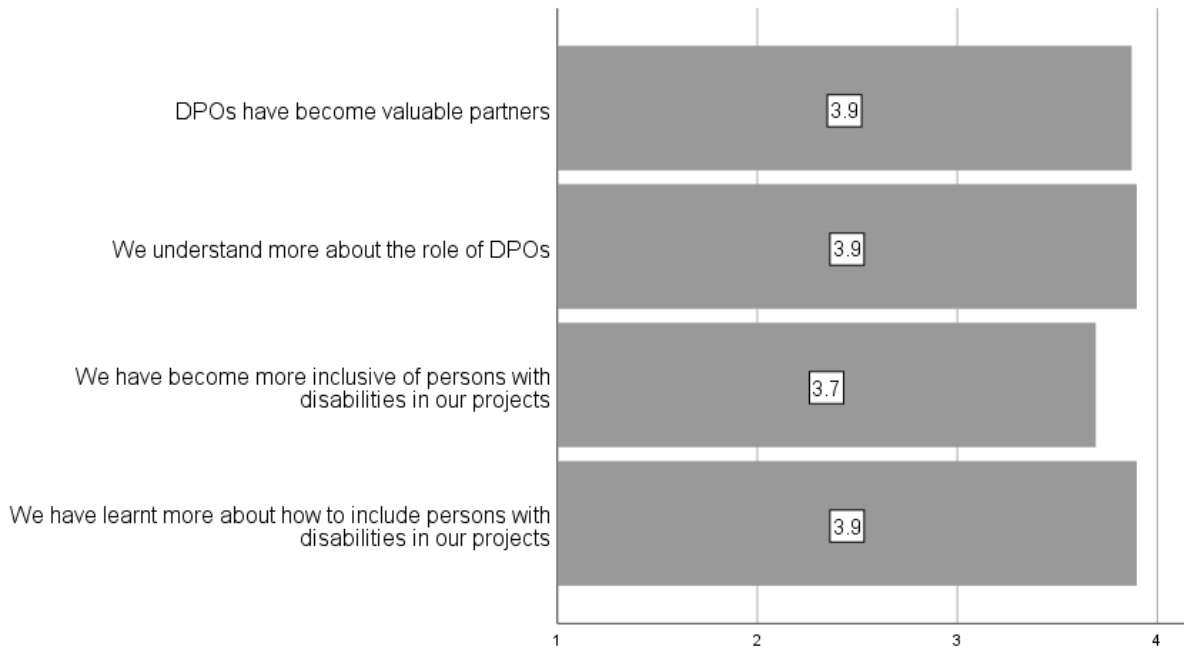
Figure 18 shows the content of these programme(s) for those who had participated.

Figure 18. Content of programmes given by DPOs to NGOs. Per cent of those having received such programmes. N=22.



NGO respondents were asked to which extent they agree with four statements on the effects of collaborating with DPOs. Responses were given on a scale from 1 ‘fully disagree’ to 4 ‘fully agree’, and mean scores are presented in Figure 19. Responses were almost unison with virtually full agreement with all statements, indicating enhanced awareness of inclusion practices in project country NGOs.

Figure 19. Level of agreement with statements on effects of collaborating with DPOs. Means for NGO respondent in project countries on a scale from 1 ‘fully disagree’ to 4 ‘fully agree’.

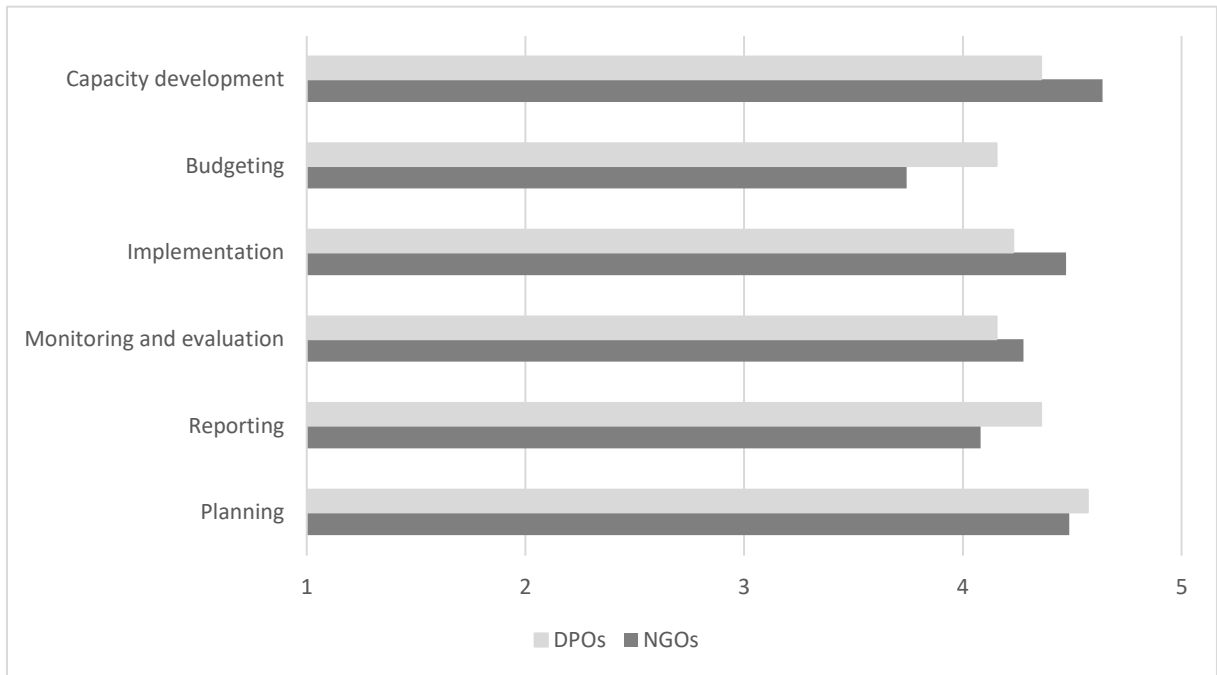


Note: Don't know have been removed.

DPO respondents in the project countries were asked whether they feel it is easy for their organisation to have a dialogue with NGOs as equals. Of the 14 respondents, 5 (36%) said that it is 'very easy', 6 (43%) 'rather easy', and the remaining 3 (21%) 'not very easy'. When asked whether they feel it is easier to have a dialogue with NGOs as equals now than it was before they joined TOFI 79% answered 'yes', 14% answered 'no', while the remaining 7% found it hard to answer. This is another indication of improved DPO-NGO relationships as a result of TOFI.

Both NGO and DPO respondents were asked how well they collaborate with their respective national DPO and NGO partners regarding different aspects of their operations. Responses are illustrated in Figure 20. On a scale from 1 to 5 for the majority of indicators the score is well above 4 ('well'), with only budgeting falling slightly below 4 for NGO respondents. Differences between NGOs and DPOs for this question battery are, as the figure shows, almost negligible.

Figure 20. Assessment of collaboration with respective NGO/DPO partner in project country. Mean score on a scale from 1 'very badly' to 5 'very well', by category of respondent. N=51.



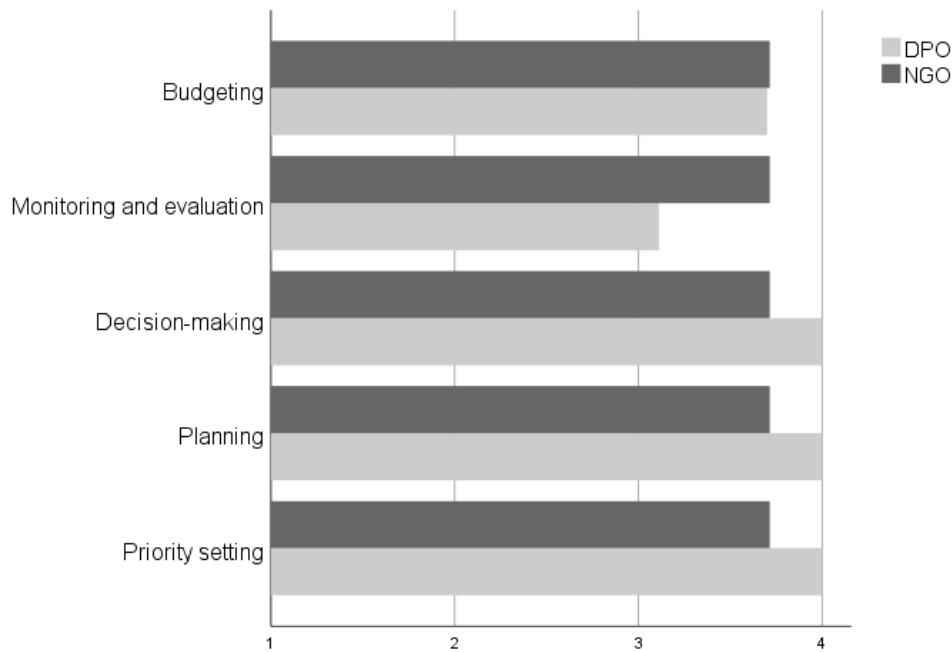
Note: Don't know have been removed.

Collaboration among TOFI partners in Norway

One section of the questionnaire was asked only of respondents in Norway. Respondents from DPOs and NGOs in Norway were asked how much they have learnt from their consortium partners in Norway. On a four-point scale 20% of DPO respondents gave top score 'very much', but 80% 'rather much'. All (100%) of NGO respondents gave 'rather much' as their response (N=18).

Figure 21 shows the level of influence DPOs have on various aspects of the collaboration in Norway as perceived by respectively DPO and NGO respondents. Scores are very high among both respondent categories, with only a slightly lower score among DPO respondents in assessing own influence over monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 21. Reported level of influence of DPOs for various aspects of collaboration in Norway, by category of respondents. Mean score on a scale from 1 'no influence' to 4 'much influence'.



Note: Don't know have been removed.

However, DPO and NGO respondents in Norway have somewhat different perceptions on the degree to which they feel DPOs are in the lead, as shown in Table 17, DPO respondents believe this is the case to a large extent, but no NGO respondents give a higher rating than 'to some extent'.

Table 17. Extent to which respondents feel DPO partners are in the lead (%), by category of respondents in Norway. N=18.

| | Norway | |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO |
| To a large extent | 70 | 0 |
| To some extent | 30 | 75 |
| Not at all | 0 | 13 |
| Don't know | 0 | 13 |

The work of the Atlas Secretariat

This section of the questionnaire was asked only of those who said that they are very much familiar (48%) or somewhat familiar (47%) with the work of the Atlas secretariat (hereafter Atlas), while the 5% who said hardly or not at all were not asked the subsequent questions.

First the respondents were asked a battery of questions to assess their satisfaction with various aspects of Atlas's work. They could respond along a scale from 1 'very dissatisfied' to 4 'very satisfied'. Mean scores of respondents in Norway and project countries are displayed in Figure 22. The responses show a very substantial gap in responses between respondents in Norway and in the

project countries, the latter being much more satisfied than the first. Respondents from Norway are in particular dissatisfied with monitoring and evaluation with, as the figure shows, a score below 'dissatisfied'. The Atlas Secretariat also receives a relatively low score on general communication. The same respondents are, however, 'rather satisfied' with capacity development and training conducted by Atlas, communication during work on the annual report, handling of the annual reporting process, and the general coordination of TOFI.

Figure 22. Satisfaction with various aspects of the work of the Atlas. Mean scores on a scale from 1 'very dissatisfied' to 4 'very satisfied'. N=73.



Note: Don't know/not relevant have been removed.

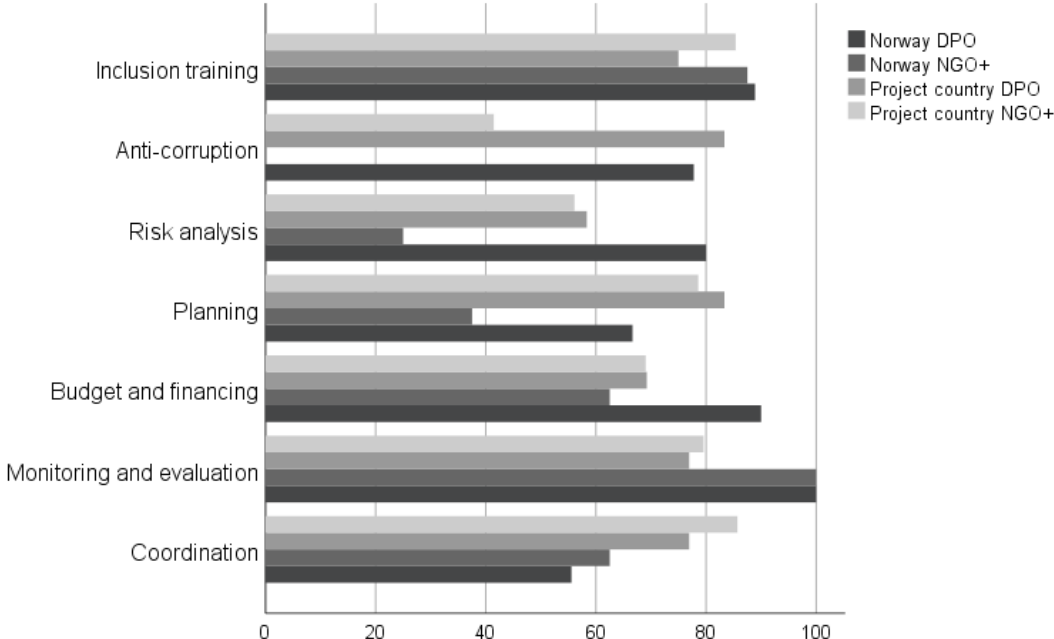
We computed an additive index generated by the mean score on the variables in the above figure. This gave a mean score across the sample of 3.4. Norwegian respondents have a mean score of 2.8; project country respondents of 3.6, thus confirming the large difference in views shown in the figure. The mean scores in project countries range from 3.3 in Mozambique and Somalia, to 3.8 in Ethiopia and South Sudan. Comparing DPOs and NGO gives the following mean scores:

- DPOs Norway: 2.5
- NGOs Norway: 3.1
- DPOs project countries: 3.5
- NGOs project countries: 3.6

Thus, it is mainly the Norwegian DPOs that give a medium rating of Atlas' performance, the other categories (and especially in the project countries) being much more positive. We also checked how those with different responsibilities in the consortium answered, which showed that Norwegian country leads gave the lowest score (2.5), while members in coordinating bodies and in thematic/technical working groups gave the highest (3.6).

Figure 23 shows the percentage of different categories of respondents who have received various forms of support from Atlas in the last two years. A large majority of respondents have received such support in several of the listed areas. Training in inclusion of persons with disabilities, and support in monitoring and evaluation, have been received by close to or above 80% of respondents of all respondent categories. Norwegian NGOs have received less support in most of the different areas than other categories of respondents (no one in this category report to have received support in anti-corruption). The main exception is monitoring and evaluation for which all Norwegian respondents have received support from Atlas.

Figure 23. Percentage stating that they have received support from Atlas in the last two years, by category of respondents. N=75.



How satisfied the respondents were with the support given by Atlas is shown in Table 19. Based on the analysis above, it is hardly any surprise that Norwegian respondents, especially from DPOs, are less satisfied than the other respondent categories.

Table 19. Satisfaction with support given by Atlas, by category of respondents (%). N=74.

| | Norway | | Project country | |
|-----------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| | DPO | NGO | DPO | NGO |
| Very satisfied | 10 | 38 | 54 | 58 |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Rather satisfied | 30 | 50 | 39 | 33 |
| Rather dissatisfied | 10 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| It varies | 50 | 13 | 0 | 5 |
| Don't know / not relevant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

The TOFI collaboration in Norway

The Atlas Secretariat

The team held a group interview with members of the Atlas Secretariat.

The Atlas Secretariat sent the application for TOFI funding to Norad in June 2019 and was granted funding in December 2019. Only two months had been available to put together the large and novel application. There really is no provision for an inception period in Norad-funded projects, so while this was something that Atlas and all parties would have liked – to prepare, create and set up structures, start hiring, and plan the work - it was not a possibility. While the Atlas Alliance had over time advocated for increased funding for disability inclusion, when Norad launched this particular call for applications, it was Save the Children Norway (SCN) that suggested the idea of a consortium application. The TOFI organisational model was partly inspired by an English model where NGOs and DPOs had joined forces, however, in the English case, NGOs were in the lead.

The Atlas Secretariat is Norad's contract partner and grant manager. Decisions on the allocation of funding to consortium partners is formally made by the Atlas board on the recommendation of the Executive Committee. The Atlas Secretariat subsequently signs contracts with consortium members.

The Atlas board is the decision-making body in TOFI. An executive committee was set up as a working group to work on issues, such as allocation of grants to consortium members. Committee members are one from the Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD), one from the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABP), one from SCN, and one from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). In addition, the Executive Director, the senior advisor on disability inclusion (who serves as the TOFI coordinator), and the senior M&E advisor represent the Atlas Secretariat in the meetings. Initially the committee met once a month. Later meeting frequency was reduced to two to three times per year.

From September 2021, a country lead group was added, intended to become the regular forum for collaboration among country leads. This group meets once per month.

One of the key roles that the Atlas Secretariat manages is M&E. The Atlas Secretariat initially established a working group on M&E and consulted with the member organisations to identify an appropriate M&E system. The idea of a unitary M&E system was inspired by the English model and encouraged by SCN and others. However, the need for a unitary M&E system spanning across six countries with multiple partner organisations made it necessary to develop a complex M&E system rather than a simple system which many are used to working with within one's own organisations. Norad requested Atlas to use the Washington Group criteria in the reporting system. Moreover, there was an aim that the M&E system to not only produce reports for TOFI reporting but also to produce knowledge for wider sharing beyond TOFI. Due to its assigned role as lead on M&E, Norad asked the Atlas Secretariat to remove the resources for M&E in the budgets of each organisation and leave the centralized resources that were being allocated.

As a result of TOFI, in the Secretariat's view, DPOs and the Atlas Secretariat are in a stronger position to determine the development agenda, and their convening power has been considerably strengthened.

Challenges

- Future funding is unpredictable, yet there is reason for optimism, and the Atlas Secretariat is working at the political level to ensure a continuation of the project.

- Due to the late start of the project (signature and first disbursements taking place in December 2019 and December 2020) and Covid 19, the project implementation has been delayed, and project spending lags significantly behind schedule.
- The Atlas secretariat carries responsibility for multiple tasks within a short timeframe, and consequently, the work pressure has been extremely high. Tasks include leadership of the consortium, managing the grant, financial management, coordination, M&E and quality control, technical support, as well as writing of new applications (such as the 2020 application). Additionally, there is the issue of how deeply, or how far out, in the implementation chain, the Atlas secretariat should reach with its technical support.
- The collaborative decision-making process makes it easy to over-extend the programme, and to say yes, rather than no, to new initiatives which in turn increase the workload of the Atlas secretariat.
- Many of the organisations have not worked in such a consortium before and are not used to plan activities which are supposed to be carried out jointly with other organisations. Thus, one of the main challenges has been related to organisations working too independently when they are supposed to carry out activities together. This has particularly been challenging for the DPOs who might be dependent on cooperation with the NGOs to be able to carry out programme implementation.

The Norwegian consortium members

Data was collected from interviews with six country leads, and other representatives from the country lead organisations. In addition, the team held two group interviews with 1) DPO representatives of the Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People (FFO), Norwegian Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (RHF), the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABP), Youth Mental Health Norway (MHU), and 2) NGO participants from the Strømme Foundation, Naturvernforbundet, YGlobal, and Plan International Norway (Plan).

Country Leads and the country group in Norway.

Collaboration in Norway is organised around the country groups, led by a country lead. The country leads are tasked with coordinating with their country group, with the Atlas Secretariat and with the country coordinator in their respective countries. The country lead's most important task is to channel information to and from the Atlas Secretariat, and to the country team in Norway, and in the project countries. The frequency of country group meetings and the interaction among country group members vary considerably (Ethiopia: every second week, Uganda: quarterly, Niger: on a needs basis, Mozambique: on a needs basis, less frequent now, South Sudan: quarterly, with additional meetings on a needs basis), and the need by participants for meetings varies.

Consortium members say they appreciate the structure with country leads and in the views of other country group members, the country leads have overall been effective in carrying out their responsibilities. The role of DPOs as country lead affords DPOs a formal lead status, and this allocation of roles has become accepted by members. Interestingly, respondents in interviews and group discussion say that DPOs and NGOs collaborate as equal partners, while survey results presented above suggests that members think there is still a way to go to achieve equality. The new country lead group meetings with representatives from the Atlas Secretariat is seen by country leads to be very useful for sharing information. It provides all country leads with the opportunity to have a direct line to the Atlas Secretariat and to bring the concerns from the country group and the project countries to the Secretariat.

This quote from one of the DPO survey respondents in Norway, captures the collaboration:

“In Norway, the coordination body between the Norwegian organisations works rather well. In general, there is a lot of willingness and readiness to collaborate and share information, which contributes very positively to the programme and the consortium overall. There are various levels of engagement from the NGOs in the consortium. It works best in phases where we, for instance, are developing joint documents, such as the result framework, reports etc. When discussing issues where all organisations are involved, such as risk management, the coordination works well. The coordination is not necessarily working as well when it comes to more daily routine tasks, or tasks which affect only a few of the organisations in the consortium. Furthermore, the coordination works well for the organisations in Norway, but the coordination of all actors, in Norway and the project countries, is more challenging.”

Challenges in the horizontal collaboration were seen to be a result of differences in organisational structures, as expressed by the respondent below:

“Different organisations have different structures, which means that the work on anchoring the models introduced will be different in each organisation. It is also clear that decision-making processes/structures are different, which can be a challenge when many decisions have to be made in collaboration with others (often at short notice), and it is unclear who to address.”

Country leads and the project country.

The role of the country leads in relations to the project countries varies. While some organisations were set to go at the start of TOFI, others needed significant support and had very limited experience in working with international development partners. For some countries, much time has been spent on efforts to encourage country partners to work together.

Communication between country leads and country coordinators are in most cases on a weekly or even daily basis. Some country leads meet with the project country thematic groups. Some respondents say that when information is sent from Atlas to country leads in Norway, to NGOs and DPOs in partner countries, it is sometimes hard to get all information out to everyone and then back to Atlas.

In brief, planning processes begin in the project country, the draft plan is sent to the country lead in Norway, and subsequently the country group in Norway meets up. The reporting process varies across countries. Compiled and edited reports are submitted from some countries, whereas from others a lot of the editing is done in Norway, and yet again, for other countries, compilation and editing is done by the Norwegian country lead.

Relations between consortium members in Norway and the Atlas Secretariat.

Members in Norway appreciated the hard work and the ambition of the Atlas Secretariat, but at the same time had concerns. While criticisms were raised there was also a strong appreciation of the enormous effort made by the Atlas Secretariat to ensure the take-off of TOFI. The survey results presented above revealed that the area that respondents from Norway are least satisfied with is monitoring and evaluation. The Atlas Secretariat also receives a relatively low score on general communication. The same respondents are, however, ‘rather satisfied’ with capacity development and training conducted by Atlas, communication during work on the annual report, handling of the annual reporting process, and the general coordination of TOFI.

Below are quotes from various NGO and DPO respondents in Norway conveyed in the narrative part of the survey and capturing the more detailed views of the consortium members:

Strengths of the collaboration:

“For general programme management and narrative reporting, there is good and timely communication. There is also good coordination and communication with Norad on behalf of the consortium. The TOFI ExCom and Country Lead forum are valuable arenas for communication and coordination between the organisations and Atlas...overall there has been a gradual improvement in coordination during the TOFI programme period, as the consortium structures have developed, and partners have become more familiar with them and as both Atlas and the TOFI organisations have learnt what works and what does not.”

“What I think works well is that Atlas is quite good at turning around whenever there are issues and they usually come up with solutions. The problem is that the frustration and confusion is already out there among Norwegian AND partner organizations.”

“Atlas has done an amazing job when it comes to training and webinars over the past six months. The media and interviews they have produced have been highly relevant and engaging. Moreover, their events have been wonderful.”

Challenges

The quotes below have been gathered from the survey and encapsulate the concerns of the TOFI organisations in Norway. They represent views shared by several respondents.

Short and changing deadlines:

“Atlas oftentimes provides us with extremely short and limited timeframes to either complete a task with partners or communicate with in-country consortia. They appear to have a rather unrealistic idea of how "easy" communication and organisation across countries are, especially when partners lack internet connection, are in the field, or go through periods of unrest and insecurity. Often meetings and webinars that partners are expected to attend are also announced only a week in advance. This is not enough time for partners to reschedule other activities or commitments, organise travel from the field, their own replacements, etc. Receiving information and instructions on expected tasks longer in advance would be highly appreciated. Even if the "Årshjul" indicate when larger tasks are due, often important instructions are given very late, and tasks have already been started with CL providing instructions to the team. If Atlas then decides to change the format, process, or requirements, confusion among partners often ensues. Having a Country Lead forum, which started up recently, is very helpful. Furthermore, Atlas is open for feedback on new tools and ideas, which is highly commendable. Overall, Atlas does a fantastic job. Short deadlines, late information, conflicting instructions, etc. are possibly due to certain individuals having a rather heavy workload at times and juggling many tasks at once.”

Advanced systems for monitoring and reporting:

“Atlas is producing and following up quite advanced systems within reporting and monitoring. These seem to be good, but there are many challenges related to these systems; the systems are quite complex and complicated, and it is difficult to ensure that everyone understand the systems and how to use them despite digital trainings, poor internet connection and challenges of establishing Microsoft accounts that work.”

Lack of appreciation of the situation in some of the project countries:

“It seems to me that Atlas doesn't understand the challenges and problems faced in the project countries, and that they are implementing rules and systems that don't work locally, which we are then asked to figure out ourselves. Decisions are slow and seemingly ad hoc, and we have to nag to get answers. I feel there is little interest in the actual situation/needs on the ground ... Atlas needs staff that understand actual project implementation in developing countries, and who use the actual situation as the starting point for their decisions.”

Inadequate time to plan with project countries at the outset of the programme

“One of the main challenges has been to have common understandings of the activities that require joint implementation at the local level. This can be a consequence of low participation of local partners at the planning level of the project, as well as the short implementation period, which has caused organizations to feel "rushed" in implementing and there has been little time for common kick-offs, meetings to go over the plans in detail and strengthen the possibility to have common understandings.”

Inadequate channels for bottom-up inputs to the Atlas Secretariat

“The Atlas Alliance staff has also not been very good at listening to the concerns and feedback from TOFI organisations. Numerous times there has been moments for input (often at very short notice), but our experience is that the feedback and input has had limited if any impact on decisions and adjustments made. “

Outcomes

Those interviewed and survey respondents noted several positive changes in the work of their own organisations as a result of the TOFI collaboration. The survey results showed that effects seem to be particularly great in terms of learning, but also the organisations' capacity to improve the rights of persons with disabilities, and their capacity to work with other organisations. Adoption of TOFI tools and models are somewhat less common, but even here there seem to have been rather strong effects. The points summarised below provide some more detail as reported by interviewees and in the narrative part of the survey.

- TOFI had inspired NGOs to become disability inclusive in projects beyond TOFI and opened up new, innovative ways of thinking about approaches to disability inclusion/equity, and new methods of achieving disability inclusion in projects, for instance on approaches to capacity development of DPO in IE projects. TOFI technical tools such as for capacity assessment have been adopted by organisations and used in TOFI, and beyond. Some also suggested that the TOFI model itself might be used in other contexts.
- The TOFI collaboration, as intended, has enabled new, broader, and deeper collaboration between NGOs and DPOs. Barriers between small and large organisations have been broken, and new possibilities for collaboration across the NGO-DPO divide beyond TOFI has emerged. TOFI members stress that new networks have been created and existing ones have become extended, and that they cut across the DPO-NGO divide. Using new networks, TOFI organisations do more advocacy together, and in this field DPOs collaborate more with NGOs than previously.
- DPOs have been able to expand their staff, both in Norway and in partner countries, and have strengthened their organisational and technical capacity, for instance, NAD has employed several new staff for the programme, including a country coordinator, a regional technical advisor on IE, and a technical advisor on economic empowerment. (There are also

synergies with the NAD framework agreement with Norad as technical advisors work for both programmes.)

- Routines have also been improved.

The quote below from an NGO respondent in Norway, is illustrative of changes in the DPO-NGO relationship:

“DPOs are invited to engage with every stage of the project cycle, and actively participate in planning and implementation. Moreover, DPOs are a part of lesson sharing and trainings. In turn, DPO partnerships have been formed in non-TOFI programs and disability inclusion is being mainstreamed to a much larger degree than previously. Furthermore, partnerships with DPOs such as XX have been invaluable. The expertise it provides is highly important and helps us more effectively target, reach and involve persons with disabilities. Furthermore, our programs have become increasingly inclusion aware with universal infrastructure in schools, provision of access, referral to a wide range of services, training of lay counsellors, and a greater focus on accommodating for mental and cognitive disabilities within society and education systems. Further, we have seen great success in using community-based identification of out-of-school children, actively engaging DPOs in the process.”

Recommendations

The bullet points below summarise the recommendations from DPOs and NGOs in Norway on how to improve collaboration in Norway. Most recommendations are to the Atlas Secretariat:

Collaborative processes:

- Focus on completing the roll out of the systems and tools that have been developed, do not introduce anything new, and carry out the necessary training to ensure that systems will be used.
- Consult the TOFI stakeholders and listen to their feedback on how to improve the mode of collaboration.
- Consortium participants would benefit from being informed early on about new initiatives by the Atlas Secretariat
- The Atlas Secretariat should communicate honestly in the challenges they face, and processes that do not develop according to plan.
- Process leadership and clear communication need to be further strengthened.

New or expanded role for the Atlas Secretariat

- Atlas should have closer links with the project countries, so ways of linking up should be identified.
- Some would like the Atlas Secretariat to play a stronger role as a competence centre and/or broker in coordinating the capacity development based on needs in project countries and available competence among the 16 consortium members.

Training

- Members argued that more training was needed, particularly hands-on training, whereby the project country group could meet and work in real time with digital support. DPOs often do not have the required infrastructure or the skills.
- Training needs in project country and the training offered by the Atlas Secretariat should be aligned and planned well ahead.
- Especially small organisations with less capacity require more training and follow-up for the effective use of the M&E tool, as well as more time to test it.

- More training on disability inclusion

Meeting for all TOFI members

- One annual meeting to allow members the opportunity to discuss, pose questions, get clarifications etc., and to discuss technical issues of common concern.

The project country presentations

The section on collaboration in the project countries presented below represents the views, opinions, and assessments of those interviewed individually and in groups, and those that responded to the narrative sections of the survey. When direct quotes are used, they are drawn from the narrative responses from the survey. The team held individual interviews with the country coordinators, and one group interview with DPOs and one with NGOs in each country. For the group interviews, on average between five and eight persons participated.

The assessment team (OsloMet) has systematised the list of strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and recommendations provided by the interviewees. The assessment team has not added its own analysis in the country sections as developing an independent analysis would have required more extensive work than permitted within the time frame of this assessment.

Ethiopia

Representatives from ADRA, The Development Fund (DF), SOS Children's Villages, Fikir - Ethiopian National Association on Intellectual Disabilities (FENAID), Natanim, the Ethiopian National Associations of the Blind (ENAB), and the country coordinator from the Federation of Ethiopia Associations of Persons with Disability (FEAPD) participated in interviews and group discussions.

TOFI Ethiopia has been operational for around six months, as the country joined the partnership in the second year and spent the first six months setting up consortium structures, conducting the baseline study and getting acquainted with new project partners.

Coordination mechanisms

There are two coordination bodies in Ethiopia, the Country Technical Committee (CTC) and thematic working groups in human rights advocacy, inclusive education and economic empowerment. The roles of these bodies sometimes overlaps because both CTC and thematic groups engage in planning, implementation and reporting of the project activities.

The CTC is made up of representatives from each of the project organisations and meets quarterly. It edits and prepares quarterly and annual reports according to the template before reports are sent to the coordinator in Norway. Decision-making in the CTC is done jointly. CTC draws on the diverse and complementary areas of expertise that DPOs and NGOs have. Types of decisions made include CTC deciding on a common per diem for TOFI participants to ease tension on this issue, and the requirement that organisations should share their activity plans. The CTC through the country coordinator also monitors the work of the working groups and supports them in their planning, trying to ensure they work in the same area.

Three thematic working groups have been established in human rights advocacy, inclusive education and economic empowerment. Each group has its own leader. They prioritise activities, plan, and set up implementation schedules. Plans are shared across the groups. The working groups meet at the same time to share experiences across the groups, discuss action plans and implementation. The thematic working groups start work on the reports, which are subsequently forwarded to the CTC. Challenges are resolved at the level of working groups. (CTC becomes less important as a result). Members have frequent informal communications.

- The inclusive education working group meets monthly. It formulates plans and attempts to align implementation schedules. Members organise training activities together (share

resource persons, trainers, training material and ToRs and discuss methodologies) and they have jointly developed a strategy document on advocacy.

- The economic empowerment working group has developed one comprehensive thematic plan where all activities are included, joint activities as well as the member organisations' separate activities. Based on this tool, the aim is to align schedules.
- HRA. Participants try to align themselves, plan together and report together.

Collaboration in project implementation and other activities

There was little planning for joint implementation from the outset, resulting in organisations mainly working in their individual capacities. This means that most organisations do not work in the same geographical areas. Yet, there are some exceptions.

- Economic empowerment: ENAB, FEAPD, We-Action, ADRA and SOS worked together for identification of persons with disabilities (prepared checklist and criteria). Project implementation has been severely affected by the war. FENAID works informally with ADRA and DF on how to include persons with intellectual disabilities
- Inclusive education: ENAB and NGOs (SOS, ADRA) work together in implementing the NAD/EENET model. Examples of collaboration are the following:
 - SOS and ENAB work with the same schools and the same communities in two locations. They have similar targets and activities and collaborate in identification, planning, assessments, monitoring, and training. They have shared experiences with several TOFI implementing partners. ENAB has recruited staff to enable the partnership. SOS and ENAB are working on an MoU.
 - ADRA collaborates with ENAB in pilot schools. ENAB worked with ADRA to identify trainers for the NAD/EENET training and to select participants. They share human resources.
 - SOS provided their staff member for free for training ENAB staff on child protection.
 - Natanim and ADRA developed awareness raising material on mental health and psycho-social support, followed by a validation workshop with TOFI members, and external stakeholders. In general, Natanim has shared its material with TOFI consortium members.
- Human rights advocacy: Awareness raising material on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was developed and subsequently discussed by consortium members. ENAB translated awareness material developed by Natanim into braille. FENAID participates. SOS shared their Child Ethics Code with FENAID. They have established a human rights advocacy network, with SOS as chair.

Strengths of the TOFI collaboration

When assessing the collaboration, it is important to keep in mind that the Ethiopian consortium brings together a relative high number of members, it has only been operational for six months, and it started out having to resolve tensions among members. The points below summarise the views of interviewees and survey respondents.

- Members work towards a common goal
- The coordination body works well in sharing information, planning, reporting, budgeting, and coordination.
- Information sharing is quick and clear, and information is shared on activities, decreased duplication of efforts.
- TOFI participants attend meetings and are happy to share experience and best practices.
- NGOs have strong bureaucratic procedures, which DPOs can learn from.
- NGOs have implemented capacity development for DPOs

Challenges

- Mostly, the organisations implement in different geographical locations, effectively hindering joint implementation.
- The level of commitment among members varies as some organisations focus on their own organisations and their own activities, and sometimes there is a conflict of interest among partners.
- Differences in organisational structures and strengths. DPOs tend to find it difficult to recruit competent staff. DPO staff receive lower salaries compared with their NGO counterparts. Some DPOs have capacity gaps. Joint implementation may slow down NGOs and threaten their organisational performance. NGOs are perceived by DPOs to be very busy. Access to NGOs and practical collaboration may be difficult due to their hierarchical structure. Certain routines and policies are not unified, so that they are equal for all consortium members, for instance per diem policy.
- Regarding the collaboration mechanisms, challenges are observed in the areas of steering, decision making, monitoring and evaluation. At management level the mechanism to monitor and follow-up if partners fail to implement is weak/missing.
- There is no legal framework for TOFI, there are no common rules, and roles and responsibilities within the consortium are not clear.
- TOFI is not known by the government as the TOFI consortium, and this is a key issue that needs to be resolved.

Collaboration with Norway

In their day-to-day work, the country coordinator meets with the Norwegian country lead every Friday and communicates by WhatsApp or email every day on issues such as monitoring, reporting, budgets. The Norwegian counterparts are perceived to be flexible and supportive.

The two quotes below from respondents in Ethiopia, summarise the views held by Ethiopian respondents on the support they have received from Norway:

“The Norwegian partners have strengthened the leadership and coordination capacity as well as system building of Ethiopian Consortium. They enhanced our financial management, monitoring and evaluation skills. They are able to understand the real capacity of each Ethiopian implementing partners and the country real situation and respond to the situations accordingly. They provided constructive inputs to our baseline survey, project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. They further enhanced inter-consortium collaboration during planning, implementation and reporting of TOFI project activities.”

“Norway offers proactive coordination, clear and timely communication and close technical support. I do believe that collaborative working culture among back partners will teach us a lot. I appreciate their effort to do things smoothly and friendly. They provide expertise, capacity building, knowledge and organizational planning and management.”

Moreover, Norway has facilitated experience sharing platforms and had carried out several training programmes, such as on disability inclusion and M&E.

Problematic areas that were highlighted by respondents were:

- Ethiopian partners have struggled with the new M&E tool because it is not adapted to the context in Ethiopia that has a weak infrastructure.

- Sometimes messages from Norway are not consistent across organisations, for example, different deadlines are given for planning and budgeting with individual partners in Norway.

Outcomes

The outcomes below were reported by the persons who were interviewed individually or in groups.

- Members are getting to know each other, and it has become easy to approach other members. The following quote testifies to the complementarity and learning potential between DPOs and NGOs:

“There is complementarity between the organisations, which translates into learning opportunities. DPO strengths are mobilisation and beneficiary implementation and inclusion more generally. NGOs have the opportunity of learning from DPOs on these issues. NGO strengths are project formulation and implementation, project management, and monitoring. These are areas where may DPOs need strengthening.”
- Participant organisations address inclusion in other projects as well and have learnt to identify, mobilise and empower persons with disabilities.
- DPOs have expanded their networks to other DPOs that have enabled them to share and learn across DPOs. DPOs that traditionally didn't work together have been implementing activities and achieving goals together. This in itself is strengthening the DPOs specifically as they learn from each other, as well as bringing the disability movement in Ethiopia closer together. TOFI thematic group on Human Rights Advocacy is linked up with a national advocacy network to ensure changes are sustainable.
- Implementation capacity has been enhanced through the collaboration with Norway, and frequent interactions with country lead.

Respondents' recommendations

There is a need for consortium members to coordinate more closely.

- The targets and location of the implementing partners should be the same. It is necessary to plan together from the initial stages.
- There should be an organised learning and discussion event quarterly for project implementation.
- There should be stronger monitoring and follow-up on of project partners.

Ethiopia-Norway relations could be strengthened.

- It would be better before the implementation of the project to jointly meet all the consortium members and plan together (Norway and Ethiopia).
- Deadlines set by Atlas for project partners in planning and budgeting should be aligned.

Capacity development in several areas:

- DPOs need to recruit more staff and to develop their capacities.
- Training on consortium project management
- M&E
- More technical capacity building in the thematic areas of the project is required.
- The onboarding process for new participants in TOFI needs to be more comprehensive

Finally, there is a recommendation to strengthen the legal basis of the consortium in the following way as stated by one DPO respondent:

“The consortium lead of Ethiopia (FEAPD) should have signed contract agreement with Atlas by representing the consortium because FEAPD has no legal ground to solve challenges of

consortium members at grassroots level (especially issues related to project implementation/permission with government etc.). There should be a legal framework for TOFI, MoUs with partners, to ensure a common framework.”

Summary of the Ethiopia collaboration. The CTC and the three working groups have been formed, and have worked to align and share plans, also across the working groups. The assessment of the working groups are mixed, some say they function smoothly, others say they need to be more active. There was little planning for joint implementation from the outset, resulting in organisations mainly working in their individual capacities. Yet, there are some exceptions. In IE, SOS and ADRA collaborate with ENAB on the NAD/EENET model, where ENAB collaborates with the NGOs at the school and community level. In EE, DPOs work with NGOs in identification of persons with disabilities for inclusion in EE. The assessment of in-country strengths and challenges described is mixed, on the one hand, respondents are pleased with the coordination mechanisms, on the other they point out that steering and monitoring of organisations that fail to deliver, need attention. A major challenge is that partners operate in different geographical location, so joint implementation is a challenge. Added to this, is varying levels of commitment among partners, and differences in organisational structures and cultures. All these challenges reflect that the formation of new, collaborative relationships is at an early stage. Ethiopian respondents were very positive regarding the support they had received from Norway, such as with the baseline survey, project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation – and Norway had encouraged sharing platforms and implemented training programmes. Yet, they struggled with the M&E tool due to weak infrastructure in Ethiopia. Recommendations focused on the need to start planning early - if there is a next project phase - in order to ensure joint implementation, and strengthening of DPO capacity, and M&E capacity.

Mozambique

Participants in individual interviews and group discussions were country coordinator, and DPO representatives from The Association of Blind and Partially Sighted of Mozambique (ACAMO) and The Mozambican Federation of Disabled Persons’ Organisations (FAMOD), and NGO representatives from Livaningo, Adel Sofala, and Kulima.

Collaboration mechanisms

The country coordinating committee is responsible for planning, strategy, monitoring, follow-up, and conflict resolution. It is made up of representatives from each organisation and the leaders of the three thematic working groups. The committee holds meetings every three months to review progress, and to discuss emerging issues. They have decided on issues such as using a common logo where several organisations work together, for example in schools. As the lead of the country coordinating committee, the country coordinator’s role is to coordinate the consortium, to promote joint initiatives, ensure information sharing, establish linkages between the working groups, and to monitor activities.

The following quote explains the buy in by member organisations and the importance attached to the country coordinating committee:

“All the organisations send senior staff or management as representatives, and this gives the leadership buy in and a profound understanding of the project. This is essential for the organisations to support the project and project staff, both in planning, implementation and learning in the individual organisations. And also for the management to understand the essence of what TOFI is, the shared learning that the partners offer through the project and

the positive impacts on learning from joint implementation. Further, the committee oversees the country level reporting and monitors the work of the thematic working groups. In an internal evaluation last year, the partners expressed the wish for the committee to be more involved in the follow-up and advise of the thematic working groups and to provide inputs to support for improving the quality of project activities. A budget was allocated to support more frequent meetings of the committee in 2021, and this has worked well.”

Thematic working groups meet monthly. They work with the quarterly and annual report. All TOFI organisations are members. The country coordinator attends the monthly meetings. The working groups strive to plan activities together and to develop common implementation plans, and to report. Twice per year there is a joint planning and experience sharing meeting for members of all the working groups. Members assess progress towards target, information flows, and how linkages with other networks may be established. When groups encounter problems, or fail to function well, the country coordinator tries to find ways of supporting them.

- The economic empowerment working group. The group meets at the beginning of the year to develop plans of the individual organisations, to identify common activities and develop a joint plan. At the monthly meetings, they monitor and follow-up. On respondent said: ‘We rely on each other. We all keep learning’. NGOs received training on how to work with DPOs. According to group members, reporting often runs late.
- The inclusive education working group. The group prioritises and develops a joint plan. The plan is adjusted every three months. The group coordinates with relevant networks, including with the government.

Collaboration in project implementation and other activities

Collaboration happens in identification, follow-up, and monitoring of target groups, and in methods development, and in addition they do joint training or support each other through training. Below are examples:

- Economic Empowerment. FAMOD, ACAMO and NGOs work together to identify, follow-up and monitor target groups. FAMOD and ACAMO provided training on inclusion to the economic empowerment working group. They participate in methods development for new projects. Naturvernforbundet’s partner, Kulima, implements with MNABP, in a collaborative effort whereby Kulima holds training in production while MNABP ensures the training is inclusive. They monitor jointly.
- SC, ACAMO and FAMOD collaborate in inclusive education using the NAD/EENET model. There are three facilitators, one from ACAMO and two from SC. They travel together to schools, monitor, and do joint reviews, and share costs and materials. ACAMO trained SC on disability inclusion.
- Human rights advocacy. This area is mostly run by the DPOs. As the umbrella for DPOs, FAMOD leads this area. SC and FFO have worked together on developing processes for reporting on the Convention.

Best practice case. Representatives of relevant organisations and the government have worked together to develop common criteria for identification of children with disabilities. This process started with a review of practices used by government and organisations, and after a comprehensive and long process, resulted in common criteria.

Strengths of the TOFI collaboration.

Below are some quotes from the survey that highlights the strengths of the consortium:

- “It is innovative to bring together organisations in the way that TOFI does in pursuit of a single objective. TOFI has brought focus to the work on inclusion.”
- “The group is committed, united and work according to plans (as opposed to early on when they were unable to align), there is a spirit of team work to achieve the recommended goals.”
- Respondents were of the view that TOFI is well structured, there is planning together and information sharing works well. This situation is illustrated in the following quotes:
 - “The consortium/definition of tasks, priorities and responsibilities by area, information sharing, sharing and internal technical advice between organizations works well. Good coordination. Currently everything is working fine.”
 - “At the level of the technical committee there is good collaboration between the elements.At the level of thematic groups, the circulation of information between the groups and the country coordinator has worked very well.”
- “It works well: the communication and level of debate for a consensus that contributes to the program's success.”
- “NGO-DPO working relations are very good. Organisations have established focal points. “

Challenges

The section below summarises the challenges reported by interviewees and survey respondents:

- Overload of planning, reporting and tasks, and short time frames lead to stress, it is difficult to harmonise internal organisational processes with planning and reporting (aggravated by Covid 19). Late submissions of reports. Lack of joint budgeting between the consortium members in the country
- Monitoring and evaluation: we do not have an M&E officer in TOFI. The Coordination Committee does not have the insights nor the quality data to monitor.
- Some organisations are still struggling to share information within the consortium.
- Time availability of partners to carry out common activities and involvement of everyone at different level is limited. The members are not able to spend enough of time to really be steering the country program. There are relatively few employees in the implementation of TOFI.
- There are different HR rules across the consortium membership, and this creates tension. This situation comes across in the following quote:

“TOFI as a consortium has uneven salaries of employees hired for the same position in the TOFI program, thus creating dissatisfaction in the collaboration of organizations. There is no standardization of the cost allowance table in the consortium, this creates a bad environment in the joint activities in the field”.
- Human rights advocacy:
 - There is a lack of technical coordination at the national level, such as for writing CRPD shadow reports, where training in methodology is needed. The programmatic focus dominates.
 - DPOs see a challenge in collaboration with NGOs in the human rights advocacy area. There is a lack of structure in the collaboration.
- Limitation in conducting training sessions and face-to-face meetings
- Political issues sometime produce conflict

Collaboration with Norway

According to the country coordinator and the country lead, weekly meetings are held between the country coordinator and NABP Norway. They communicate openly and frequently on various channels. Support and guidance are very good, the relationship is productive and there is a fruitful dialogue on issues that arise.

Norway provides technical support (strengthening members' capacities: training and development), technical assistance in the planning, budgeting and implementation of project and reporting activities, and share tools. This is one quote from a survey respondent:

“Strengths: excellent technical support; Optimal monitoring and coordination; good communication, good technical support. In short, follow-up has always come whenever requested and has helped a lot in planning, coordinating and implementing.”

Some problem areas are highlighted such as “slowness to decide some processes, due to the lack of contextual knowledge” and sometimes a lack of consistent messaging to partner as “There are several interlocutors for communication with partners”.

Outcomes

Survey respondents and interviewees reported that learning had improved and capacities had been strengthened, below are more details.

- Learning between DPOs and NGOs
 - NGOs have learnt methodologies for consulting with persons with disabilities, and for including person with disabilities in decision-making and projects, and for collaborating with DPOs.
 - DPOs have learnt from NGOs, for example on child rights.
 - Sharing and using digital instruments/tools to facilitate information, communication and monitoring. Mozambique staff has received a lot of training in monitoring and the use of monitoring tools from Atlas. The tools enabled them to do monitoring. (NGO)
 - Some organisations have expanded their scope of work to include more groups of persons with disabilities.
- Capacities of the members of the consortium have been strengthened, and the finances of the organisations have improved. FAMOD has grown considerably in terms of staff and capacity, and salaries have been increased.
- One DPO said the following:

“It was better to work in a solid consortium. As a consortium we are more listened to by the Government in relation to advocacy. We learn from each other and when one does not have funds to carry out an activity, another partner can help, especially among the DPOs.”

Respondents' recommendations

- Synergies should be created by coordination across technical working groups in order to provide more holistic support. There should be more regular meetings between the three thematic groups so that each group knows what the others are doing.

- Process recommendations:
 - Improve the monitoring process, improved information recording and sharing with members
 - Ensure timely implementation of actions in coordination with members.
 - Less pressure on planning and reporting, and more advanced notice.
 - More sharing of tools and protocols in inclusive education is required
 - More in-service training and more focus on development
- There is a need to adjust the opportunities in the consortium (salary, subsidies and health insurance and others). There is a huge disparity for the same scopes of work. Need to create a psychological support center with a view to support the consortium's employees, taking into account the demand that promotes exhaustion and stress at work.
- Opportunity to exchange experiences with other countries that implement the TOFI program, as well as to get to know the partners in Norway. Annual meetings, in person, with Norwegian partners to allow time for in depth discussion
- Working group members would like the coordination committee to share the report before it is sent to Norway

Summary of the Mozambique collaboration. “There is not much to complain about at the level of internal coordination...”. This statement represents the view of most respondents on the coordination mechanisms. The shared objective contributes to unifying the participants. The national committee and the thematic working groups meet regularly to discuss **technical** issues, in addition to planning and monitoring. The groups develop joint implementation plans, they share information, and roles and responsibilities are clear. Collaboration between ACAMO, FAMOD and NGOs happens in identification, follow-up, and monitoring of target groups, and in methods development. In IE, the NAD/EENET model is used for the collaboration. NGOs and DPOs do joint training or support each other through training. Respondents found the support from Norway to be good in all areas, with the exception for slowness in some processes and a heavy process workload (planning, reporting, M&E etc.). Outcomes were mutual learning, inclusion of persons with disabilities in NGO programmes, and strengthening of the capacity of DPOs, especially FAMOD. Process and administrative capacity has become stronger as a result of the support from Norway. The areas that respondents single out for strengthening is advocacy, M&E and reporting, and HR policies and practices. Respondents said that the HRA area lacked technical inputs and a good collaborative structure, so this area needed strengthening. In addition, some wanted stronger coordination between the thematic working groups (despite the finding that respondents were overall pleased with the functioning of the working groups.) Several wanted more training and more cross-country sharing. There were also recommendations for process improvements in M&E, planning and reporting, sharing of tools.

Niger

Participants in individual interviews and group discussions were the country coordinator and representatives of ADRA, Strømme and Plan. The Nigerien Federation of Persons with Disabilities (FNPH) was not interviewed, but representatives of the organisation responded comprehensively to the questionnaire.

There are three Norwegian NGOs that participate in the consortium: ADRA Norway, Strømme Foundation, and Plan Norway, in addition to DPOs FFO (Norway) and FNPH (Niger).

Coordination mechanisms

The National Steering committee chaired by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Primary Education should ensure collaboration between ministries and NGOs. According to survey respondents, the National Steering Committee does not work very well and meets rarely/not at all.

The technical coordination committee has representatives from the Norwegian NGOs. FNPH is formally a member. In addition, there are regional technical committees. The technical committees make an overall action plan for consortium activities in Niger. The committees meet quarterly to share information, plan and to report. Activities include review of progress, challenges, planning, decision-making, training, and team orientations.

There are no thematic working groups in Niger.

Collaboration in project implementation and other activities

- The TOFI consortium has organised advocacy and training activities with FNPH. For example, they came together to organise a workshop for powerful actors in the justice sector, where training was done by DPO trainers, and funding was provided by TOFI Niger.
- ADRA collaborates with DPOs at the community level. DPOs are engaged in various activities, they organise community meetings, and meetings at school level.
- Plan works with FNPH on sensitization and advocacy, for which planning is done jointly. Plan has DPO implementing partners.
- Strømme collaborates with the FNPH in advocacy. Strømme also trains DPOs and FNPH members at the local level.

Strengths of the consortium

The following quotes are from respondents in Niger:

- “The coordinating body is dynamic in that it manages to hold quarterly meetings with all members of the consortium.”
- “What works well is the implementation of activities we do it together, and we meet often to do the planning.”
- “Capacity building of staff works well.”

Challenges

- Several respondents pointed to challenges in bringing together consortium members in an effective manner: The situation is described in the quote below:

“There is a lack of experience sharing meeting between the NGOs members of the consortium in Niger. It's true that people are very busy with the implementation, but it takes time to share experiences. Sometimes it is even difficult for people to come to an agreement on the date of the next meeting of the consortium. In Niger, for example, we had spent six months without meeting the consortium due to a lack of time for certain structures. In any case, arrangements must be made to facilitate the meetings of the consortium” and the “the unavailability of certain members of the consortium, insufficient information often between the members, the non-participation of certain members of the consortium during the meetings”.
- Another respondent expanded on this and said:

“The role of the Coordination Committee made up of the Country Directors of the three organizations has not been clearly defined (role, responsibility, frequency of meetings).”

- Weakness in the involvement of the administration and finances in the periodic meetings.
- The collaborative process:
 - Establishing the baseline occupied a lot of the time in 2020, at the expense of other activities.
 - Operating the M&E system and downloading the app is a big challenge
 - Deadlines are too many and too short

Collaboration with Norway

The TOFI coordinator meets every Friday with the country lead in Norway to plan short term and to report. TOFI Niger is starting to work on the M&E tool.

Norway provided guidance, coaching and technical support throughout the process of implementing the activities of the TOFI Project in Niger, and they provided support in planning and reporting. Norway also provided M&E training. Norway strengthens the capacities of the consortium staff. The following are statements from survey respondents. “They are always listening to our problems.” “The added value by the partners in Norway are training, flexibility and above all trust, which is one of the values to be saluted.” “It is a very participatory contribution, full of exchange and coordination which constitutes a climate of aid and improvement approach.”

Nevertheless, one survey respondent described the situation in the following manner: “There is a backlog of work tools in the field to better conduct activities; connection tools are very neglected”.

Outcomes

The following achievements were reported by interviewees and survey respondents:

- This quote is from an NGO respondent who reported about: “The inclusion of disability and people with disabilities in projects and programs; consultation meetings, integration of the various regional working groups (clusters) and collaboration with state technical services.”
- For DPOs, TOFI made it possible to strengthen the technical and organizational capacities of several organizations of disabled people.
- Much knowledge has been gained on inclusion and M&E, data collection and processing tools, and reporting. The method for disaggregating data in reporting has been adopted by other projects.

Recommendations

- The Federation needs to be strengthened. Coordination meetings should be regular and communication and experience sharing between the members of the consortium strengthened. Collaboration is good but it is better to give the DPOs more power in decision-making, budgeting, and others.
- More training is required on the M&E system
- Fewer and longer deadlines
- Cross country learning. Make a project journal that reflects the success stories in the different countries

Summary Niger. There is a technical coordination committee that has representatives from the Norwegian NGOs, and FNPH is formally also a member. There are no thematic working groups in Niger. FNPH appears to be only partially involved in the consortium as survey respondents do not refer to FNPH as a full member of the consortium. Several respondents pointed to challenges in bringing together consortium members in a collaborative manner. ADRA and Plan collaborate with FNPH at the community level and in advocacy. In terms of outcomes, NGOs have made progress in disability inclusion. For DPOs, TOFI made it possible to strengthen the technical and organizational capacities of several organizations of disabled people.

Much knowledge has been gained on inclusion and M&E, data collection and processing tools, and reporting. Yet, respondents said that the M&E system is difficult to access, that the baseline displaced other activities, and that deadlines are too many and too short.

Somalia

Participants in interviews and group discussions were the country coordinator from Save the Children, ADRA, and DPOs, including the Disability Aid Foundation, which is implementing partner for ADRA.

The Somali TOFI programme is small, and partners in Somalia are SC and ADRA, while NAD supports Uganda from Oslo. The objective of the programme is to build the capacity of DPOs and the DPO sector. There are no DPO members of the consortium in Somalia.

Collaboration mechanisms

There is no national coordinating body in Somalia, but technical working groups for inclusive education, economic empowerment and human rights advocacy have been established. Meetings are held on quarterly basis to discuss the project implementation progress and challenges. The groups plan together and revise the detailed implementation plan to make it relevant and updated in accordance with the context and programme objectives.

The country coordinator's tasks are to organise monthly and quarterly meetings for the partners, SC, ADRA and NAD, oversee the implementation plans and compile reports that are to be sent to Norway. Although based in Oslo, NAD staff participate in quarterly meeting on HRA and IE. NAD also contributes to quarterly and annual reporting

Collaboration in project implementation and other activities

TOFI consults with DPOs in inclusive education and human rights advocacy. The ambition of TOFI is to assist DPOs in capacity development, and to build sufficient capacity that DPOs are enabled to manage small grants.

- ADRA works with the Disability Aid Foundation (not a TOFI partner, but an implementing partner for ADRA) in inclusive education community mobilisation and sensitisation, implementing teacher training in braille for high schools and universities, and in identifying youth and monitoring work streams for a training centre for youth. They travel to the field together. They organise training programmes for each other's staff. Activities related directly to persons with disabilities are led by Disability Aid Foundation.
- SC has done training of DPOs in inclusive education, child protection and psycho-social support.

- SC and ADRA work on online training in inclusive education, NAD provides guidance in capacity development, and in training of independent observers from the Ministries.
- In the human rights advocacy sector, ADRA and SC work together to train DPOs. NAD/Atlas have done inclusion training for SC and ADRA staff in Somalia.

Strengths of the collaboration

The following strengths were reported by interviewees and survey respondents:

- SC and ADRA have extensive knowledge of Somalia, having worked together in Somalia for a long time. This also means that staff in the two organisations understand each other.
- Roles and responsibilities are clear and coordination among partners are guided by the ToR. Coordination for learning and planning purpose work well.

Challenges

- The capacity of DPOs is weak, both in inclusive education and human rights advocacy
- DPO networks are fragmented on a regional basis.
- There is a high turnover of staff.
- TOFI has not joined the online M&E system, there have been technical problems with access. The previous officer received some training.
- Coordination does not work so well for implementation of day-to-day activities
- Working groups have not exploited their potential. For example, most key decision-makers may not show up for such meeting and thus decisions could be made on the spot due to the absence of key project manager.

Relations with Norway

One NGO describes the working relationship with Norway in the following manner:

“Norway based partners participate effectively with country partners in setting realistic and effective plans for programme deliverables. Yearly and quarterly plans are good examples and without them would be hard to plan effectively. They technically support in-country team to have skills and resources of the trainings including inclusive education training and HRA for organizations of people with disabilities and school staff as well ministries. On quarterly or monthly basis, they fully and actively discuss and provide recommendations to adjust programme activities in line with programme objectives. In budgeting, they coordinate in-country partners and donors to know which area require more funding and which area needs revision.”

Another NGO says:

“Norway partners provide technical expertise that is essential for country level staff to execute their duties in effective and efficient manner. Norway partners contribute to high level coordination among different partners, and they facilitated partners to maximise available human resources as much as possible. They also provided their expertise, they organized coordination meetings at different levels which informed each other. They regularly follow up whether implementation of activities is on track or not, they ensure activity implementation is harmonized by In-country implementing partners.”

Regarding the work on the baseline and M&R, one respondent in Somalia commented that “We have worked with the ATLAS team during the baseline, they have strong technical knowledge and are very committed to the work... they were not very flexible with online trainings, but they sent us videos which we used for areas without internet connection. I think that was job well done.”

Outcomes

Much has been achieved in mainstreaming disability inclusion in the school sector. For example, ADRA adopted innovative ways, including in training of principle trainers from teacher training colleges, universities, and head teachers in inclusive education.

Respondents' recommendations

- Continue to support DPO capacity development. There are huge gaps in Somalia, and support in all areas are required, such as setting up offices, fundraising with Development Partners, advocacy, developing an information strategy for blind and hearing impaired persons, networking, establishing a baseline on disability. NAD was meant to start work in-country in Somalia, but due to Covid-19 has not been able to establish presence or have a formal relationship with a DPO partner there. One respondent reflected the idea that the presence of NAD in-country would be very useful:
“I would like to see some changes or improvements and presence of NAD in the country for us to get full support, now we have some activities on behalf of NAD since it has no presence in the country, those activities are not clear enough and would need to spend a lot of time to understand and have clear idea on those activities as well budgeting for the said activities.”
- This respondent stresses the need for agreed timelines.
“My recommendation for the future is for Norwegian partners and Atlas to agree on the necessary deliverables and timelines ahead of schedule so colleagues in the country offices are able to execute them with quality while also implementing the program. Eg. We have been offered MEAL training but we have staff in the field who would normally like to participate. We only had a week to plan the training and the fieldwork has been planned for weeks.”
- Add economic empowerment as a focus area
- Exchange visit of TOFI staff among countries to learn from each other
- Setting specific ToRs for collaborating partners to clarify roles and responsibilities

Summary Somalia. There are no DPO members of the consortium in Somalia. The objective of the programme is to build the capacity of DPOs and the DPO sector. There is no national coordinating body in Somalia, but technical working groups for IE, HRA and M&E have been established. SC, ADRA and NAD have trained NGOs in inclusive education and human rights. NAD has focused specifically on organisational capacity development. ADRA works closely with the Disability Aid Foundation in community mobilisation and sensitisation, as well as identification and monitoring. The Disability Aid Foundation also does training. DPOs in Somalia have weak capacity, are regionally fragmented, and there is a high staff turnover. Support from Norway is very positively assessed. NGOs have made progress in mainstreaming in the school sector. Recommendations were that the capacity development of DPOs should be continued, and that the planning horizon needs to become longer to allow people to take part in for example training.

South Sudan

Participants in individual interviews and group discussions were country coordinator, NGO members of the Consortium (ADRA, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Strømme and NCA). DPO implementing partners (these DPOs are not consortium members and participants were South Sudan Deaf Association, South Sudan Union of Persons with Disabilities). ADRA is the consortium lead.

Background

The partners work in different geographical locations, with only some overlap. It is also important to note that the DPOs in South Sudan are not consortium members. The aim of the collaboration with DPOs in South Sudan is to contribute to the capacity development of the DPO sector by enabling the formation of new DPOs, training of new and existing DPOs, and bringing them together in networks.

Collaboration mechanisms

There is a Steering Committee made up of country directors (ADRA, YCWA, Strømme and NCA), which looks at strategic issues such as areas of implementation and security issues. The consortium has set up a seven-member Technical Committee with participation from programme staff from NGOs. The Technical Committee (working on HRA, IE, and EE together rather than in separate groups) and Steering Committee have been unable to meet much due to Covid 19. The Technical Committee shares information regarding the project, reviews project implementation, and reviews and collects data for reporting for the quarterly and annual reports. Reports are sent to the Steering Committee for final review. It also encourages linkages between NGOs and DPOs. The M&E technical working group was established but unable to physically meet due to Covid(?) restrictions, and the baseline technical working group took over for it across most of 2021, with weekly meetings during the data collection period (in South Sudan, Baseline lasted until June/July). The DPO technical working group is now restarted, led by FFO, with monthly meetings taking place. Everyone was gathered for the inclusion training where most met physically in Juba.

Collaboration in project implementation and other activities

Training activities for DPOs were in income generation, the legal framework on disability rights, the running of radio shows, advocacy, and organisational development etc. Some examples of collaboration between DPOs and NGOs are presented below:

- The South Sudan Union of Persons with Disabilities as such had not received any training, which had been focused on member DPOs. However, they had been established as a legal entity and was planning their first general assembly next year. They led the international day of the disabled. The Union had received some funding/material support from Light of The World and NCA. Their most significant funder is CBM who had funded their new office (moving in soon) and most of their activities. Until recently, the Union had no office, no computers, no smart phones, and no travel budget.
- ADRA did training of DPOs in several areas: the legal framework, school monitoring, community dialogue, identification, training of parent teacher associations and school management committees, and school children, radio programmes. The South Sudan Deaf Association has received a lot of support from ADRA and has also been an implementing partner in teaching sign language in ADRA supported schools. YCWA and ADRA train DPOs in economic empowerment and provide them with start-up capital.
- YCWA assist in setting up DPOs, registration and capacity development. They do training in governance, organisational management and accounting (having received training from Atlas). YCWA funds them for celebrations and awareness building.
- Strømme has done teacher training in disability and have enrolled Children with disabilities in the two schools they run. Strømme and Light for The World have a contract for Light of The World to teach sign language in schools. However, Strømme does not support DPOs directly.
- NCA prioritises human rights advocacy. NCA did capacity assessment of DPOs and signed short term agreements with three of them. The organisation trained DPOs in advocacy.
- The development of the baseline was a huge collective effort among the NGO partners.

Strengths of the collaboration.

There is a good collaborative spirit among members of the technical committee. Consortium members are pleased with the reporting and planning process, as reflected in this statement from a South Sudanese:

“The templates for planning, budgeting, and reporting work well, and the timeline is acceptable. The monthly and quarterly review meetings in planning and conducting joint activities works very well. The report consolidation and review process with the technical committee works very well.”

Challenges

Interviewees and survey respondents reported the following challenges:

- The geography and level of connectivity in South Sudan:
 - Consortium members do not work in the same geographical areas, and access to each other’s areas is difficult.
 - Some areas lack mobile network providers.
 - Travel distances are very long due to the vastness of the country and inaccessibility of some areas.
 - Remoteness of some locations where the project are operating. Limitations challenges created by the COVID 19 that has hindered most of the activities including social mobility.
 - Poor communication
- Challenges with collaboration mechanisms:
 - Lack of common forum or platform that can bring all together to share the achievements, challenges, and forge way forward. DPOs have few opportunities to meet with NGOs at the national level. There is some interaction at the local level between DPOs and NGOs.
 - Delays in project implementation, some partners in the collaboration not turning up for some events, and some consortium members not implementing what has been agree upon, limited dissemination of information, limited will to implement.
 - Planning across organisations has not been aligned.
- The differences in each organizational policies regarding management of resources and work has been a challenge in the planning of some activities.
- TOFI has not yet started to use the online system for M&E but have recently hired and M&E person for this task.

Collaboration with Norway

Communication between the Norwegian consortium and South Sudanese consortium occurs on a daily to weekly basis via emails, Skype, and WhatsApp. Meetings and calls with respective partners also happen nearly every day, of course depending on internet connection and availability due to field visits. Moreover, the Norwegian consortium decided to have quarterly meetings. There were also meetings held across the two countries, around Covid adaptation and Target Setting with multiple virtual meetings. In addition, halfway through the year, the two consortia met again, while partners in South Sudan presented their achievements thus far in 2021.

TOFI members in Sudan receive a lot of support from Norway especially in the annual planning process, and on the budget. The support on the baseline was well received, the online M&E tool is good, and timely information is provided by Atlas. Consortium members receive technical guidance, capacity building and access to networks with other Norwegian consortium partner. As one South Sudanese put it:

“Atlas is very strong and committed to supporting the consortium members in South Sudan. Atlas is also focused on capacity building its partners in South Sudan and other countries. For example, recently Atlas organized two days Disability Inclusion training (November 22nd to 23rd, 2021). Also, there is ongoing monitoring and evaluation training online. I see perfect coordination between Atlas and the consortium partners in South Sudan.”

This is how a South Sudanese NGO representative describes the collaboration:

“In my opinion, the value added/ contribution of the partners in Norway are several but I would mention a few. First I would start with technical support which the partners in Norway are rendering to their partners in South Sudan, especially in IE. Second to the technical support is the provision of resources in terms of fund to capacity build the TOFI staff through trainings to enable them to fully understand the project implementation also funding activities for the inclusive practices as agreed and assigned to each consortium member organization. Thirdly, there is strong synergy between the partners in Norway and the partners in South Sudan. I can substantiate this with the frequent online meetings which the partners are involved in. This gives opportunity for learning, correction, adjustment and improvement besides, consultations on project activities, targets and outputs. It has also built free atmosphere of trust among the partners in South Sudan and those in Norway. Precisely, free and cordial relationship that allows individuals to inquire what is not clear without any restrictions. Fourth, the partners share great ideas on empowerment of persons with disabilities based on successes of the Organizations for People with Disabilities in Norway.... Five organizations for people with disabilities were formed. The members of the organization received trainings on the CRPD and CRC which to me is informative when such people could now talk while quoting to is supposed to be done by duty bearers to fulfill their obligations. In conclusion, I would say that there is great contribution of the partners in Norway towards the success of the partners in South Sudan based on the few areas mention above.”

Monitoring and financial guidance are still weak areas that requires improvement.

Outcomes

Several NGOs report they have begun to mainstream disability in their organisations. They include persons with disabilities as participants and beneficiaries in events, activities, and projects. They have become more inclusive in their recruitment. NGOs have strengthened their relations with the government in the disability area. DPOs have received training intended to strengthen their organisational and technical capacities in the three thematic areas.

On the objectives and the efforts of the Technical Committee in HRA, here is one representative:

“The coordination body has worked very well in South Sudan especially in advocating for launching of the South Sudan Inclusive Education policy which was draft since 2014 until this year in August when it was officially launched with efforts from the coordination body and other likeminded partners implementing inclusive education. The coordination body is also struggling towards ensuring the South Sudan joins the membership of the countries that have ratified to the UNCRC/CRPD.”

Respondents' recommendations

- There should be regular meetings among consortium members at the national level to strengthen national collaboration, meetings should be held quarterly. Joint planning among the TOFI consortium members, at least at country specific level, with the support of the

country lead agency and Atlas Alliance should be achieved. There is need for the partners in Norway to create a platform for collaboration of DPOs so that they could have synergy among them to share experiences independently.

- The Steering Committee should be revitalized to have regular meetings
- There should be continued capacity development, especially for DPOs, also with access to online training materials offline. This could also be done through field exchange visits.
- Increased physical meetings, joint monitoring, more reflection workshops
- Members should carry out more activities jointly especially during special events.

Summary of the collaboration in South Sudan. The partners work in different geographical locations, with only some overlap. It is also important to note that the DPOs in South Sudan are not consortium members. The aim of the collaboration with DPOs in South Sudan is to contribute to the capacity development of the DPO sector by enabling the formation of new DPOs, training of new and existing DPOs, and bringing them together in networks. The partners are very appreciative of the wide variety of capacity building initiatives that have been carried out by Norwegian partners. Because the DPOs are not consortium partners, they do not participate in the collaborative mechanisms. Mostly, the collaboration involves training of DPOs by NGOs, on technical issues such as IE and EE, as well as on organisational governance and organisational development. On the other hand, DPOs have implemented training in sign language in schools. The material support for DPOs have been very limited, and for example furniture has been given for the Federation's new office. The difference in capacity, means that there is a more limited scope for exchange and learning between DPOs and NGOs. Nevertheless, several NGOs report they have begun to mainstream disability in their organisations. They include persons with disabilities as participants and beneficiaries in events, activities, and projects, and they have become more inclusive in their recruitment. The geography of South Sudan and the weak technological infrastructure makes connectivity and communication a big challenge. The absence of DPOs as formal consortium partners, limits national level collaboration between NGOs and DPOs.

Uganda

Participants in interviews and group discussions were the country coordinator, DPOs: National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), Inclusion Uganda, Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association Uganda (SHA-U) and NGOs: Association of Microfinance Institutions of Uganda (AMFIU), Strømme Foundation and SC.

Coordination mechanisms

The national coordination mechanism coordinates, addresses emerging issues, and members report at its quarterly meetings. The committee reviews reports produced by member organisations. In addition, there are thematic working groups in IE, EE, HRA and M&E. All committees have representation from all consortium members and work as equal partners. Joint meetings among the working groups include the quarterly reviews for report writing and annual planning and review meetings, which are also sharing and learning arenas.

The country coordinator's role is to support TOFI members, guide implementation, monitor, carry out site visits, participate in joint activities, and arbitrate in case of conflict. The country coordinator coordinates planning, monitoring, and reporting.

The thematic working groups plan, meet to work on the quarterly and annual reports, share, problem solve and learn. They are led by NAD and NUDIPU technical advisors. NUDIPU leads the HRA working group. Participants are project leads. The working groups are vital in coordination and planning of the activities. Project leads and the NAD technical advisor meet to assess progress, context and milestones. Milestones are interdependent, so if one organisation struggles, it affects the others. Any significant change happens in the working groups, such as for example work on new methodologies. TOFI members all work together and share the same goals. Roles are clear.

The M&E thematic working group was borne of a need to share skills in using the M&E system, as SC had 'figured it out'. And other wanted to learn.

Collaboration in project implementation and other activities

- Inclusive education: NUDIPU, SC and Strømme, through its partners, implement the NAD/EENET model. Joint implementation was planned at the outset of the collaboration, which participants think explains why it has been possible. NUDIPU and SC jointly train trainers on disability inclusion in education, they supervise, advocate, and build awareness. NUDIPU works in the same schools as Strømme and SC, in school inclusion teams, learning from each other and supporting each other. NUPIDU 'goes where SC and Strømme goes'.
- Economic empowerment: Strømme Foundation through its NGO partners mobilise saving groups, where the aim is to include persons with disabilities. Strømme partners and NUPIDU members collaborate at the district level DPOs, and this collaboration has evolved through a learning process for both parties. They work to raise awareness among financial institutions and existing service providers. On this work they make use of the Disability Inclusion Assessment Tool.
- Human rights advocacy. Inclusion Uganda is supported by NAD. NUDIPU collaborates with SC. SC has developed the capacity of DPOs in child protection and advocacy and has mobilised DPOs for advocacy in the local areas in which they work. Consortium partners implement joint advocacy programmes, and share contacts, for example with Government Ministries, and networks.
- Monitoring and evaluation. Consortium partners work on M&E together. They travel on joint M&E missions to the field together with the Ministry of Education for learning and support. SC has supported DPOs in M&E.
- Consortium partners worked jointly in the baseline and supported each other.
- Joint learning visit to Northern Uganda to visit the SC initiated by consortium members and funded by the consortium. The visit was intended as a learning visit on how SC works with local communities, and how they collect data and monitor. The learning visit was coordinated by NAD.

Strengths of the TOFI collaboration

The two quotes testifies to the innovation and strength of the Uganda programme.

"Innovation is usually driven by outside consultants but in TOFI we innovate together".

"The collaboration among partners is as good as it could be. Team spirit and a willingness to learn and share has supported organisations to grow and benefit, facilitated by continuous meetings to support joint implementation."

- There is a clear structure where each partner can learn and share based on complementarity among the organisations. The participants draw on each other's strengths, and TOFI benefits the participants.
- "Everyone is a teacher and a student". Partners learn and borrow from each other's in many areas.

- Participants share a common goal. There is strong internal and external unity.
- Joint planning helps a lot. There is sufficient resources and partners know each other's plans.
- There is a high level of participation in joint events and activities (training, meetings, evaluations)
- There is open communication by various means, such as email, WhatsApp (WhatsApp for thematic groups)
- Separate budgets for each participating organisation, means less tension.
- Digital Monitoring and Evaluation system has eased the entire process.
- We have as country group stronger leverage with Norway compared to our individual voices

Challenges

- There is bureaucracy in planning and reporting process. Timeliness regarding reporting has been a challenge for some.
- Organisations are configured differently due to differences in structures, for example some NGOs implement themselves whereas others implement through partners.
- Participants are extremely busy, struggling to deal with urgent issues, so joint action is a challenge.
- Senior management in the large organisations have been less visible in the consortium, as it has been operational at the programme level.
- Too little engagement of the grassroots organisations in national level activities.
- There are few events that bring together the entire consortium.
- DPOs sometimes we feel left out on issues regarding the consortium.
- There are disagreements/failure to agree in some areas.

Relations with Norway

Norway provides technical support in the coordination, implementation and management of the project and its resources. Atlas has made reporting easy through coming up with different reporting templates and sharing them with members. Norwegian partners provide technical guidance and capacity strengthening to local partners. They are an effective sounding board of disability inclusion related ideas with in TOFI. They have enabled exchange of ideas amongst TOFI. Norway contributes team building skills through learning to work in teams to achieve specified targets. NAD has increased capacity of the implementing partners to conduct action research, data analysis and reporting for evidence-based advocacy. By hiring consultant services for the inclusive education project in Uganda, NAD has enabled the consortium to utilize virtual training methods in the covid-19 new normal situation. They share a range of information on basic practices, experiences, and methodologies from other countries where the project is similarly implemented to realize better results.

Weaknesses in the relationship with Norway were the following:

- Communication from Atlas is late or last minute, which means we must work overtime to deliver. There is need for improvement in timely communication and setting of realistic deadlines.
- Online trainings have not been handled well. Trainings need to be real-time and not recorded.

Outcomes.

- National level advocacy has been strengthened, and relations with the Ministries have been developed. Interaction with the government was strengthened, and TOFI was consulted by the government.

- Each member has expanded their own networks, for example small member organisations have been able to share information and raise awareness of their disability group among member organisations, and the first symposium on Inclusive education in Uganda was organised.
- NGO partners have gained competence on disability and have begun to apply it in their own organisations, beyond the TOFI programme. They have been challenged to work in disability in practice.
- New, innovative practices have been developed, for example in economic empowerment
- DPOs receive funding for other donors as a result of TOFI

Respondents' recommendations

- More joint activities within and across countries. The consortium should do more joint activities as a consortium (this has been hindered by the pandemic), such as in policy influence and advocacy.
- Learning
 - There should be a budget for learning and sharing internally and cross-country, for example NUDIPU is engaged in a learning programme with DPOs in Somalia.
 - Atlas should consult with country teams regarding the best learning methods. Online learning such as for M&E is very challenging and does not jell with our way of learning which is to learn from each other in a group.
 - More support on the M&E system that was rolled out, improved communication and training on use of Atlas tools and systems that were created for TOFI.
 - Members should continue learning together by joint implementation and meetings. Learning at the local level should be strengthened
- Improvements in joint project implementation:
 - Keep the flexibility in implementation
 - Let's always have quarterly or yearly workplan. This will enable implementing partners plan early and dedicate time to participate in the planned activities.
 - The level of expectation among the DPOs is high and therefore requires clarification of their role, the lead partners role and expected benefits in to minimize over-expectation during project implementation.
 - There should be a MEAL lead from NAD at the country level, in the same way as NAD has a technical advisor in economic empowerment and inclusive education.
 - The M&E system needs deliberate efforts to support its functionality.
 - Strengthen consortium feedback mechanism
- Clearer instructions and guidelines for deliverables.
- Increased investment in team building activities.
- Include other DPOs that are specializing in other disabilities for example the deaf.
- There seem to be a gap in communication between the Norwegian partners. This is manifested in the delay for support/approval from the Norwegian members. Often times, they delay to share feedback got from Atlas.

One respondent captured how the Uganda programme works, reflecting the essence of the TOFI theory of change: "Innovation is usually driven by outside consultants but in TOFI we innovate together". There is a sense of a common goal, a strong team spirit and high levels of participation in joint events. There is a clear structure where each partner can learn, and share based on complementarity among the organisations and continuous meetings to encourage sharing. Planning is done jointly. The participants draw on each other's strengths, and TOFI benefits the participants. The strength of the Uganda programme, is its joint implementation in all the three thematic areas,

including in advocacy, where other countries do little systematic joint advocacy. In IE, the DPO federation, NUDIPU, and SC and Strømme implement the NAD/EENET model. Joint implementation was planned at the outset of the collaboration, which participants think explains why it has been possible. Joint implementation means that NUDIPU works in the same schools as Strømme and SC, in school inclusion teams, learning from each other and supporting each other. NUDIPU has the flexibility to 'go where the NGOs go'. In EE, Strømme Foundation through its NGO partners mobilise saving groups, where the aim is to include persons with disabilities, and they collaborate to raise awareness among financial institutions and existing service providers. NAD and SC work with NUDIPU in advocacy. Consortium partners implement joint advocacy programmes, share contacts, and networks. Consortium partners work on M&E together. They travel on joint M&E missions to the field together with the Ministry of Education for learning and support. Consortium partners worked jointly in the baseline and supported each other. Norway provided process support as well as technical guidance and serves as a sounding board on inclusion issues. Respondents said that the Digital Monitoring and Evaluation system has eased the entire process. Uganda would appreciate more timely information, and a review of how to adapt the online training model to the national learning culture. Outcomes of the collaboration were extended networks, stronger advocacy, disability inclusion by NGOs, for example through innovative practices in EE. As for recommendations, the emphasis was placed on continued learning (online, M&E, across countries), and further refining of joint project implementation.

Concluding observations on the TOFI collaboration

Overall assessment

Respondents and interviewees are overall positive to the collaboration and there is a lot of enthusiasm around the model. This comes out clearly in the survey as well as in the interviews and group discussions. Respondents basically feel that the concept on which the consortium is based is exciting, and that the consortium model benefits the participating organisations, and where the model works, it is an effective way of achieving inclusive development and of fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities. After a bumpy start, respondents think the consortium is on the right track, it is heading in the right direction. TOFI is a promising model for bringing together the commitment and lived experiences of DPO members, the competencies of DPOs that have long worked in the disability field and the development professionalism of large and small NGOs. TOFI in this way connects the DPOs as grassroots-based membership organisations, where the foundation of the organisation is the membership and volunteers, and very small secretariats, with professional development organisations, some of which have large professional administrations and staff. TOFI also connects Norwegian DPOs with project country DPOs, where the intention is that project country DPOs may learn from the experience of the development and progress made by the disability movement in Norway, and more specifically the Norwegian DPOs contribute knowledge on organisational capacity development, and networking.

The TOFI model in practice

The key to achieving results in TOFI is that members collaborate in a way that enables members to strengthen their capacity to promote and enhance the rights of persons with disabilities, and that they develop models of working together that combine the competence and skills of each organisation in ways that lead to inclusion of persons with disabilities. DPOs and NGOs work collaboratively in several ways in the project countries. The most demanding model for working together is to do joint project implementation because this requires partners to be located in the same geographical area, to plan their work together from the beginning, and to be aligned throughout the process of planning, implementation and reporting. DPOs and NGOs that pull this off seem to have used an existing model of collaboration that assigns roles among the collaborating partners and builds their capacity to implement the model through training (such as the NAD/EENET model). The NAD/EENET model is being implemented in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Somalia. Another typical model for NGO-DPO collaboration is where DPOs work at the community level with children with disabilities and persons with disabilities to identify, mobilise, and build awareness so they may participate in inclusive education and economic empowerment projects run by NGOs. DPOs and NGOs collaborate on training that take different forms. NGOs may train DPOs, DPOs may train NGOs, or they do training as a joint effort.

The idea of DPO-NGO collaboration cannot be fully implemented as intended in TOFI's theory of change in countries where DPOs are in a nascent phase, where they do not have the organisational structures in place to manage project funding, or where they for other reasons are unavailable to become consortium members. Being only implementing partners, they are not members of the national coordination committees or the technical working groups. Consequently, they cannot take on the role as country coordinators in the project country or as country leads in Norway. They miss out on these spaces for learning and sharing (in particular, the technical working groups) among a larger group of organisations. The operating mode of the consortium is based on mutual learning between NGOs and DPOs whereas in countries with a nascent DPO sector, training is mostly one

way, from NGOs to DPOs. The TOFI strategy for countries like Somalia and South Sudan is to build the organisational capacity of DPOs.

Outcomes

In terms of strengthening of each organisation's capacities, the survey results show strong, positive effects on learning, but also the organisations' capacity to improve the rights of persons with disabilities, and their capacity to work with other organisations. Adoption of TOFI tools and models are somewhat less common, but even here there seem to have been rather strong effects. NGOs are increasingly becoming disability inclusive as they expand their target groups to include children with disabilities and persons with disabilities and they learn from DPOs about approaches and methods for identification, mobilisation, and monitoring. The network DPOs have outside of the disability movement, and the dialogue they have established with allies, has improved through the collaborative approach of TOFI. Organisational capacities in administration have improved for NGOs and for DPOs, such as planning, reporting, budgeting and monitoring have improved, and the capacity to make use of new tools have been strengthened.

Project country respondents report more positive effects of the collaboration, and especially for adopting innovative ways of working and for the usefulness of the training and capacity development.

DPO-NGO relations

At the core of the TOFI model is the idea that rights-based, inclusive development will be achieved as a result of the creative and productive processes that are expected to happen in places and spaces where DPOs and NGOs meet. In addition, the TOFI model aims to ensure that DPOs take the lead in the collaboration. Placing persons with disabilities and DPOs in the lead role is a crucial component of the collaboration. Structurally, this has been achieved by placing DPOs in the roles of country leads and country coordinators in three out of the six countries. DPOs are country leads in Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Uganda. In these countries there are relatively strong, DPO organisations or federations. In countries where DPOs are not in the lead, this reflects the relatively weaker institutional structures of DPOs in these countries.

In interviews and group discussion, the picture that emerges is of harmonious relations between DPOs and NGOs. Initially, problems may have been encountered and working with DPOs may slow the project implementation, but with time the principles of DPO participation has become accepted, and the role of DPOs in the collaboration appreciated. Interestingly, the answers that respondents offer in the survey paint a different picture. Respondents were asked whether they feel that DPOs and NGOs are equal partners in the consortium. Between half and just above two thirds of the respondents believe this is fully the case, less than one in ten think it is not the case, the rest opting for 'partly'. When asked about who are in the driving seat of the collaboration, in Norway, out of NGO respondents, 50% said the leadership is shared, while 13% said NGOs are in the lead and 13% felt DPOs are in the lead. A clear majority of DPO respondents (77%) report that they are in the lead. In project countries the picture is different, but also here DPO respondents are more likely to assign themselves to the driving seat than are NGO respondents. Around one third of DPOs and NGOs say that they are both equally in the driving seat. Respondents were also asked who in their opinion *should* be in the driving seat. DPO respondents in Norway are the most insistent that this should be DPOs; in the project countries the majority of respondents in both DPOs and NGOs agree that this responsibility should be shared by both types of organisations. The survey results show that the idea of assigning DPOs to the driving seat is only fully accepted among Norwegian DPOs and that in the

project countries a majority of both DPO and NGO respondents think the leadership *should* be shared.

The level of influence of DPOs in various aspects of TOFI operations was asked in a battery of questions presented earlier in this report. DPO respondents in Norway give a maximum, or close to maximum score on four of the six items and by far estimate DPOs' influence to be greater than what NGO respondents in Norway do. Project country respondents are more unified across regardless of type of organisation but DPOs tend to assess their influence as stronger compared with NGOs. They give a lower score on DPOs' influence on finance and budgeting than on the other listed items.

The TOFI structure

As suggested above, the consortium structure works well overall. The country lead role in Norway and the country coordinator role in the project countries are important nodes for effectively coordinating within countries and bilaterally between Norway and partner countries. The communication between country lead and country coordinator takes place practically daily, the dialogue is open, and few problems have been reported. Country leads and country coordinators play a crucial role in planning and reporting processes. The establishment of the country lead forum was a response to the need for more regular and closer dialogue between the country leads, representing the viewpoints and challenges felt in the project countries, and the Atlas secretariat. In this sense, it was a step in the direction of a more bottom-up structure.

The technical working groups in the project countries are critical drivers of the collaboration process, and the groups were given a very high rating in terms of usefulness and importance by survey respondents in the project countries. The basic role of the groups is to align the planning and reporting processes of consortium members, and for this purpose they meet quarterly to discuss progress and challenges, and to share experiences and give advice. Generally, the IE working groups appear to be more consistent in their work, while HRA groups are less so. There have been initiatives to set up M&E groups in some countries. Despite their positive role overall, working groups in some countries do not meet regularly and/or attendance is poor, or the country does not have working groups but a country technical committee only.

The Atlas secretariat has multiple roles in the collaboration. It manages the grant and relations with Norad and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so is responsible for external relations. The Atlas board decides on allocation among consortium members, on the advice of the Executive Committee (which have representatives from two DPOs and two NGOs and three for the Atlas secretariat, including its Executive Director). In this decision-making model, there is an inherent expansive bias. The focus in the following is on the Atlas secretariat's role in the programme implementation. Carrying the responsibility for the implementation of a very large programme, with many consortium members, based on a novel collaboration model, with no inception phase, in a short space of time, across several countries, and with strict requirements regarding monitoring and reporting decided on in part by Norad and in part by the Atlas secretariat, the Atlas secretariat opted for a comprehensive system of M&E and reporting. This is complemented by an M&E software to aid programme implementation (after the decision had been made by members that M&E would be centrally driven). This situation effectively placed the Atlas Secretariat in the role of 'super controller'. The challenge faced by the Atlas secretariat in managing TOFI had repercussions throughout the TOFI implementation chain, where it created pressure to deliver inputs to the management systems, while staff simultaneously worked on project implementation. All this happened in a context of Covid 19 that impacted mobility and thus project implementation, and Covid also led to school closure and economic hardship for target groups.

The collaborative process

The large picture emerging from the survey is that there is a strong spirit of collaboration, members have got to know each other, strong mutual trust has been built, and respondents say they have learnt a lot and that they have been inspired by the work of TOFI. The results show some frustration that is higher in Norway compared with the project countries, and especially among Norwegian DPO members (yet overall levels of frustration are low). The survey results also show that respondents in the project countries are considerably more satisfied with the collaborative process than are respondents from Norway. Respondents are particularly pleased with information flow, communication, planning and reporting, but less happy with training and capacity development and M&E activities. Noticeably, many respondents in Norway, and DPO respondents in particular, are dissatisfied with the latter.

Participants in interviews and group discussions gave more detail. A common concern from most interviewees throughout the implementation chain is that they have struggled to find the time to learn all the new process tools, timelines have been shifting, and there have been short, and too many, deadlines, as well as lack of advance notice for important events, such as training. The survey respondents single out M&E as the most challenging area. From interviewees, we learnt that the roll out has taken time, and the work on the baseline displaced implementation activities in the project countries. Members in several project countries have found the technology platforms difficult to access, and members report they have not yet accessed the app.

On the other hand, the ambition and hard work of the Atlas Secretariat is appreciated. Organisations in Norway and in the project countries report that they find the tools useful, and that they have learnt a lot, both from learning the tools and participating in the work on the baseline. The best practice baseline work served as another collaborative effort, bringing the members together. There is a sense that the collaboration tools are in place now, finally, and that the collaborative effort is set and ready to go, in earnest, and that members will benefit from the comprehensive tool sets. Members appreciate the huge task that has been accomplished in rolling out the systems, and respondents hope that the collaboration will continue to really reap the benefits of the investments that have been done.

Many of the challenges stem from the lack of a preparatory, or inception phase, for the TOFI consortium and the short time frame for implementation of the TOFI programme.

Recommendations

Recommendation to Norad and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The programme should be extended beyond 2023 in order to reap the full benefits of the investments made in the consortium and in view of the importance of disability inclusion for the sustainable development goals.

Justification: The TOFI collaboration holds a lot of promise, the concept is valuable and effective in achieving disability inclusion, and the collaboration has already begun to deliver results. Very significant investments have been made in developing the concept, establishing the structures, employing staff, establishing the M&E system and developing software, and in developing connections and working relation among organisations.

Recommendations to the Atlas Secretariat:

- 1) Focus should be on the implementation of existing process tools, and on training. New tools should be avoided. Special attention must be paid to countries where the technological infrastructure and technological competence among consortium staff is weak, so they have access to the required technical support (for example bought in-country).
- 2) Annual timelines and milestones should be agreed, and changes only made if absolutely necessary (this is probably already happening at the Atlas Secretariat as activities and events are falling into place).
- 3) Information regarding activities, information requests and events should be clear and timely (provided well in advance)
- 4) Be selective in the tasks that are assigned to the project countries, explain for what purpose tasks are being assigned, and allow adequate deadlines.

Justification: The collaborative process has overall been friendly and open, characterised by mutual sharing, learning, and support – and teamwork. The roll out of process management tool has been a huge challenge but has also resulted in a strong foundation for planning, reporting, and monitoring.

Recommendations to the Atlas secretariat and Norwegian consortium members:

- 1) Ensure that the monthly meetings between country leads and the Atlas Secretariat becomes an effective forum for understanding each other's perspectives and for sharing of information.
- 2) Consider joint annual meetings between the Atlas Secretariat and all the country groups for discussion of progress and challenges, issues of concern to the Secretariat and to project countries (one or two meetings per year)

Justification: Country leads in Norway are an important node in the collaboration, and a frequent and open discussion between the country leads and the Secretariat where the bottom-up perspective from the project countries meets the top-down perspective of the Secretariat is likely to resolve emerging issues productively.

Recommendations to consortium members in Norway and in project countries:

1) Ensure all organisations have a role in the thematic working groups, including distributing the lead roles among members

2) Consider whether there should be more exchange between the experts on IE, EE and M&E in Norway, and the thematic working groups in project countries

Justification: The technical working groups are crucial drivers in TOFI at project country level. It is therefore important to focus on ensuring that these groups are effective.

3) More in-person meetings and learning visits to strengthen relationships between the organisations, in-country and across countries.

Justification: To inspire and ensure learning, practically all countries recommended more in-country and across-country learning visits.

4) Attention should be paid to identifying effective ways for consortium members to continue to share and learn in all areas (on the topic of inclusion, methods, tools, administration etc.)

Justification: This recommendation emerged from the discussions in the project countries, which saw many opportunities for learning within TOFI and experienced a continuous need for learning.

Recommendation for everyone – DPOs in the lead?

1) Consider how DPOs in countries where DPOs do not participate, or only partially participate, in national level coordination mechanisms, how their participation at the country level could be facilitated.

Justification: In three of the countries, DPO participation is weak or non-existent on country level coordination mechanisms. It is unclear how much headway has been made in ensuring their path towards membership in the consortium.

2) Convey with clarity the principle of DPO leadership where this is not clear to participants.

Justification: Opinion among DPOs and NGOs differ on whether DPOs or NGOs should be in the leadership, and the extent to which they are in the leadership. It is not clear why this is so or how much of a problem it is in practical terms. Nevertheless, this is an indication that foundational principle of DPOs in the leadership needs to be reinforced.