

CBID in Nicaragua

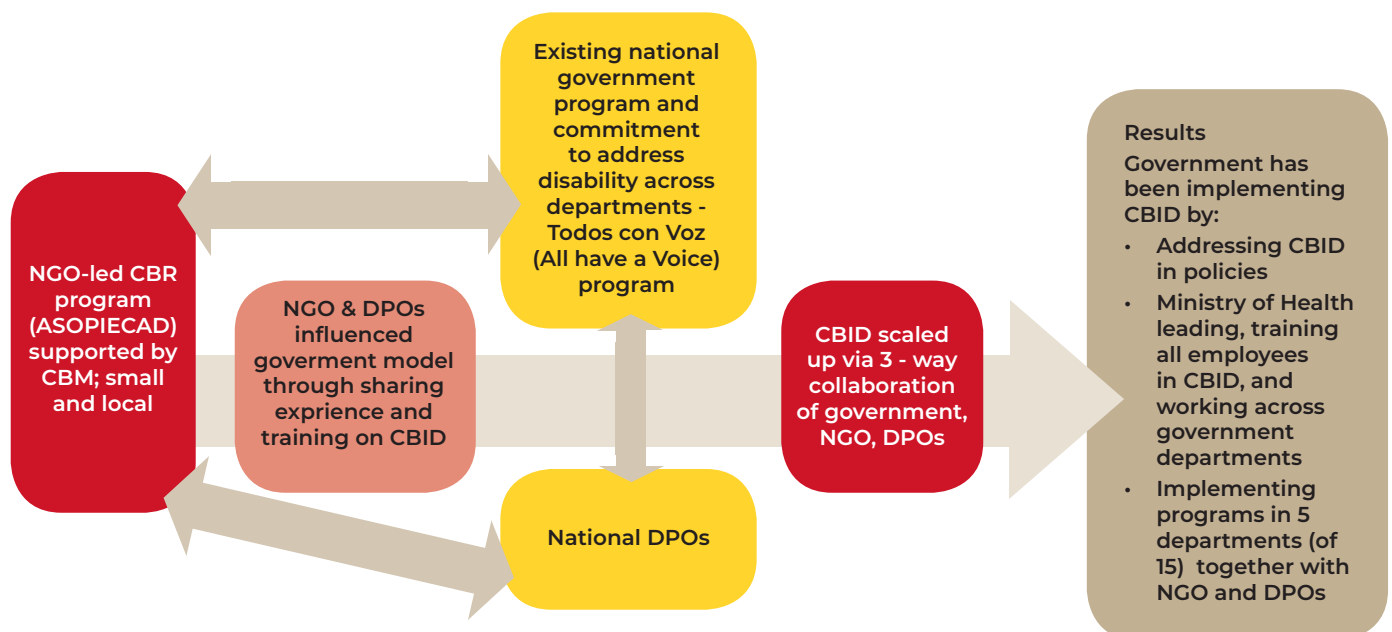
A strong example of participation in inclusive development

Community based inclusive development (CBID) practice focuses on the creation of inclusive societies where people with disability have access to social and development benefits like everyone else in their communities. The rationale is that no one should be excluded from development for any reason, and that the inclusion of marginalized people in development processes reduces poverty, builds community resilience and benefits the whole of society. CBID uses a twin track approach in which people with disability, governments and community based organisations work together to address barriers to meaningful participation and inclusion experienced by people with disabilities. At the same time, it ensures specific services and supports required by the diverse population of people with disabilities are provided to enable full participation and the movement's capacity to engage effectively with government and other development stakeholders.

CBID in Nicaragua

NGO program using government opportunities to drive a CBID approach to scale in low resource setting with a strong Political commitment and understanding of civil society approaches.
NGOs & DPOs engaging locally with contextualized advocacy and advice.

**National Government already looking to address inclusion.
History of strong civil society engagement.**



Quick snapshot

Nicaragua provides an example of CBID in a context where an NGO has been able to use the opportunity of an existing government program and commitment to disability to, together, bring a CBID approach to scale. This is a low resource setting with strong political commitment and understanding of civil society engagement.

What does CBID look like in Nicaragua?

The Nicaraguan government adopted CBID as a policy principle at a national level and CBID is currently established at departmental level in five departments (provinces) of Nicaragua (there are 15 departments and two autonomous regions). The initial establishment of CBID at departmental level and the resulting commitment by government to CBID nationally, has been via the strong collaboration of the non-government organisation ASOPIECAD and the Nicaraguan Government's Todos con Voz (All have a Voice) program, coordinating with disabled people's organisations (DPOs).



ASOPIECAD (Asociación de Programas Integrales de Educación Comunitaria Astrid Delleman) is a community-based NGO that works together with community members and leaders, families, government institutions, and other civil society organisations for the rehabilitation and inclusion of people with disabilities. With support and funding from CBM, ASOPIECAD has worked with government to raise their awareness of and commitment to the CBID strategy and has partnered with government for implementation. The Government's Todos con Voz program is tasked with coordination of all work regarding disability, across sectors, in Nicaragua. Together these organisations have been implementing a Government and CBM funded initiative called "Empowerment and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities". The CBID process in these five departments has been highly participatory, based on the human rights of people with disability. This has been a strong point of the project, ensuring engagement of people with disabilities, structures, institutions and organisations.

Self-assessment process as a starting point

The process of establishing CBID in each department via this joint initiative has begun with a self-assessment process with each of the communities where the CBID process is operating. Developed through ASOPIECAD's previous work, this process involves mapping and planning conducted at three levels together with future participants (people with disabilities, family, community members, leaders and representatives from various organisations):

1. Individual mapping (participatory assessment in the family group to assess resources, needs and develop an action plan);
2. Family mapping (interviews and group process to learn about family resources and goals and assess needs);
3. Community mapping (workshops about the current status of the rights of people with disability in the community, community needs, how and with whom responses are to be developed).

These three levels of mapping are summarised in an inclusive community action plan, monitored by CBID committees that are established in each community as part of the CBID process (made up of people with disability, families, community leaders, representatives from various organisations), and evaluated and updated each year. These plans are then consolidated and serve as the structure for a joint three-year plan developed in a participatory way at local and national level.

This planning process is facilitated by either Government funded CBID fieldworkers, ASOPIECAD staff or a community leaders (in some cases a person with disability who leads the CBID committee). These plans are monitored by a national CBID committee that forms part of a government initiative to improve the quality of life of people with disability. Through this process it has been possible to include the rights of people with disability in the work plans of community organisations and governmental institutions. At the same time, it has been important for DPO development to be supported if it is needed.

Twin track approach

Using this mapping process at individual, family and community levels means the project can effectively take a twin-track approach to disability inclusive development. Needs for disability specific interventions are identified and can be addressed at the same time a focus on what the broader community and government can do to be inclusive of people with disability in their programs and services. For example, where the project has involved improving inclusion of children with disability in education, there has been a focus on early detection and intervention through community workers and family members and development of individual learning plans. At the same time teachers and community members have been engaged in understanding the basic features and benefits of inclusive development and education and teachers given training in inclusive approaches. This means that efforts for inclusion are understood and supported from within the community rather than being initiated from outside forces.



Achievements

Using this approach has led to over 21,000 people with disability engaging with CBID across five departments of Nicaragua. Stakeholders have really engaged as expected. This collaborative approach means people with disability are now included in local health care, educational services, livelihood opportunities and social activities. Some specific examples of what has been achieved include:

- Increased awareness about the rights of people with disability amongst key government personnel and organisations of people with disabilities, through communications using local resources, media and allied agencies with national reach.
- National CBID committee established and engaging with government planning and people with disability have been organising themselves in both local and regional DPOs that are now included in local committees.



- Engagement of the health system from national level, in training in the use and application of the CBR Guidelines. Health workers and CBID promoters at all levels in all the municipalities involved have participated in training to enable better and safer access to health services. This has resulted in improved access to general and specialised health care services by people with disability. Strengthened referral systems mean people are accessing services, with the costs assumed by government authorities.
- Early detection of disability through CBID promoters and preschool teachers, involving effective collaboration between Ministries of Health and Education. In the past two years this has included screening of almost 3,500 preschool aged children and support to 872 children with disability and developmental delays to access education. This means detailed individual planning is in place and used for more effective inclusion in preschool and school. Inclusive education has been strengthened within teacher training including training in Braille and sign language.
- Piloting of labour inclusion and income generation through collaboration with a microfinance organisation, TrickleUp. This program involves formation of solidarity groups where savings and the creation of a social fund are fostered, enabling development of business initiatives that generate income for the person with a disability and their families.
- Over 4,000 people with disability, who are eligible, are now accessing social security entitlements and social security institutions are interacting with self help groups of older people with disability.

What frameworks, structures and events have been important to have in place?

Ratification of the UNCRPD

Nicaragua ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007. This has provided an important foundation for the significant commitment towards inclusion that has been seen in the work of the Government with DPOs and NGOs. This was followed by Nicaragua adopting a new Act on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Act 763) in 2011, in line with the Convention.

National reflections and training

An important contribution towards CBID was Nicaragua's first national reflection on rehabilitation for all and equal opportunities, in 2010. This involved the government organisations and Cabinets of Citizen Power of People with Disabilities (a DPO umbrella organisation that advises government), and was initiated and facilitated by ASOPIECAD and CBM. There was strong government interest in CBID and recognition of the need to implement this strategy as a multi-sectoral strategy, drawing on the fundamental principles of inclusion, participation, self-determination and accessibility. ASOPIECAD and CBM then facilitated the first national training in CBID in 2012, with the launch of the CBR Guidelines in Nicaragua. More recently, ASOPIECAD has trained 10 facilitators in the CBID Guidelines and have trained many different groups from the Ministries, local government and non-government organisations.

A national program for coordination of all disability related work – Todos con Voz

The Todos con Voz (All have a Voice) program is a Nicaraguan Government initiative tasked with coordination of all work regarding disability, across sectors, in Nicaragua. Todos con Voz, founded under the Ministry of Health, started off with a national assessment on disability that involved visiting over 150,000 people over a two year period and developing a database. The program draws together the work across government departments including Ministries of Health, Education, Social Welfare, Local Government etc. Todos con Voz has involved the appointment of a program coordinator in every department and in every one of the 150 municipalities and has provided an important point of engagement for CBID including through providing human resources and transport for programming in the five departments where CBID is established.

Existing community structures for and culture of engaging with government at different levels

There is an existing structure in Nicaragua of Citizen Cabinets of Power that are in place for civil society to engage with government. This already familiar concept has provided a way that people with disability can engage with government, through becoming part of all cabinets of power at a local level. There is also a national Cabinet of People with Disability that acts as a consultant to government. This Cabinet is a national umbrella organisation with representation from all disabled people's organisations.

What ways of working have been most important?

Engaging with existing government programs and structures

The Todos con Voz (All have a Voice) program overseen by the Ministry of Health has acted as a key entry point for CBID with all of the other institutions, as this program is already linked with different government departments. Coordinating all new efforts with this program has been essential to its success and cross-government engagement.

Nicaragua has civil society representation parallel to government at each level and this structure has also provided a strong opportunity for people with disability to have a voice into the different levels of government. CBID committees have been developed to match up with the political structures in Nicaragua, giving them a voice into the different levels of government and development. This means there are local neighbourhood level CBID committees, who send representatives to municipal committees. It has been these civil society structures that have also helped enable some work in more rural and remote areas, such as the Mosquito Coast in Nicaragua.

Working in a highly participatory way

An important part of the CBID process has been to work in a very participatory way, and only work on what local people have identified as needs. The bottom-up individual and community mapping process has enabled this and the approach has been crucial for working in more remote locations, rather than using a top-down "cookie cutter" approach and expecting to do things the same as in urban areas.

Working in a genuinely community based way

ASOPIECAD, as a key partner in developing CBID has worked in a community based way in a true sense. ASOPIECAD has not built centres or buildings, instead visiting people in their homes and communities and working through existing structures and departments.

What are some of the ongoing challenges/ learning?

The importance of ongoing training and follow up of training

There is a need for development of a more formal training body or consultancy and to more formally systematise a way of looking at the outcomes of the training that has been done, such as monitoring more specifically of the outcomes of training of members of different government ministries.

National and local level actions are both needed

Prior to their involvement together with Government and DPOs in development of the national approach to CBID, the NGO ASOPIECAD worked in a small-scale way with people with disability and their families, working for involvement in education and training. The national level engagement and commitment to CBID meant a big leap to work at a higher level. There have been great achievements with engagement of local government and national Ministries with CBID. In some cases, this meant fewer NGO resources were put into working with families and at the grassroots level, especially in smaller and more marginalised communities. An evaluation provided a reminder of the importance of taking a twin track approach - ensuring efforts continue at the individual, family and community level at the same time as a municipal, departmental and national level, although this can sometimes be resource intensive in more remote areas.

Further strengthening of inclusive education is needed, with some significant success

The approach to early childhood education through CBID in Nicaragua has been recognised as cost effective, sustainable and replicable, particularly due to its use of existing local resources¹. Community workers of local institutions and organisations have accessed support and training in detecting disability and developmental disorders, enabling children to access the necessary care and early intervention they need. Parents and families have participated in training and support their children in early stimulation activities at home and in community child development centres (like Kindergarten). This then links with access to mainstream education starting with pre-school.



¹ Innovative Practices 2016 on Education and ICT: Creating communities for early childhood interventions. <https://zeroproject.org/practice/nicaragua-asopiecad/>

Despite these successes, there are still many gaps to address in inclusive education in schools and long-term engagement of the Ministry of Education can be further strengthened in some regions where the project has been operating.

Further information

CBM has developed this series of case studies in collaboration with in-country partner organisations. For further information contact programs@cbm.org.au