

PNG Inclusive Communities Project

Participatory evaluation report summary

The *Inclusive Communities Volunteer-Led Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Project* was a three-year project implemented between July 2017 and June 2020 by the Inclusive Education Resource Centre (IERC) in Vanimo, PNG, and Mary MacKillop Today. It aimed to ensure people with disabilities enjoy a high quality of life and inclusion in all aspects of their community. Callan Services for Persons with Disabilities (CNSU) and Mary MacKillop Today were supported by Motivation Australia to complete an evaluation of the project.

Motivation Australia's team completed a desk review of the programme documents (such as work plans and reports), to understand more about what the project planned to achieve. Motivation Australia and CNSU worked together to speak with local project participants, including staff of Vanimo IERC, CBR volunteers, clients and parents, to learn more about their experience of the project, what the project achieved, and what we could learn from the project. We recommend reading the full report for more information about the process, detailed recommendations, and lessons learned.

Key outcomes and lessons learned

- **The “PNG way” is a strength of the project:** A strength of the Project has been the community's ability to adapt, that supported the project through a challenging year of changes in service strategy and COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The project supported more connections and relationships between the formal and informal systems and services that can support people with disabilities, their families and communities.
- **The project was successful in achieving its goals.** Project partners learned a lot about what works and what could be done differently in future projects. Key achievements of the project include:
 - **Increased engagement of people with disabilities:** The most significant changes in the target communities have been the commitment to the rights of individuals with disabilities and engagement in public activities to better include them.
 - **Disability inclusion awareness:** 46 community awareness events successfully held in ten communities.
 - **Disability awareness training:** 102 family members participated in four training events in ten communities; 11 Ward counsellors participated in six training events; 525 community members participated in 16 training events.
 - **Improving health outcomes for people with disabilities, screening:** 6,943 people were screened to identify and assess needs (52% male and 48% female). Of those screened 992 (14%) people received a direct service and 285 (4%) people were referred for services from other community sources.
 - **Improving health outcomes for people with disabilities, services:** For those people who received a direct service, 60% were children, and 48% were women and girls, 52% men and boys.
404 (41%) had received assistive technology and 123 (12%) were waiting to receive their approved assistive technology.
 - **Improving education outcomes:** 486 children were enrolled in the early intervention programme, and 95 children were enrolled in the inclusive education programme.



- **Volunteers are key to positive outcomes for the project:** The Project currently supports 32 volunteers across ten community locations, and these volunteers and their networks were of key success to the project; especially during the COVID-19 community stresses, including local and national lockdown measures. Volunteers increased the visibility and status of people with disabilities in the community, and increased positive attitudes and beliefs about people with disabilities in their families and communities. **Throughout this project, volunteers have been supported, recognised and respected for their knowledge and skills.**
- **Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) principles support positive outcomes,** and are valuable in shaping future projects like this one. Existing project outcomes include:
 - Increased local input into service delivery, increased participation, and strengthened collaborations with government.
 - Increased family capacity to provide care and support.
 - Increased self-esteem, optimism, and motivation of people with disabilities – supported by expanding roles in their communities.

Key recommendations

- **Empower more individuals, families, and Disabled Persons Organisations to participate in all aspects of planning** to support more community ownership of and commitment to project goals, and ensure projects apply the principles of CBID.
- **Use a clear, evidence-based approach to program development** that supports advocacy efforts for sustainable funding. Evidence-based practice with a strong cost/benefit argument will also support the case for disability-specific services. Partnering with other organisations and initiatives that are focused on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) may increase their responsiveness to and inclusion of people with disabilities, and open up opportunities for increased and streamlined funding opportunities from the government.
- **Build community support networks** that bring advocates, consumers, practitioners and government stakeholders together to collaborate for ongoing commitment to providing services and support to people with a disability in their families and communities. This includes working with local and national government organisations and people to build support, commitment, and funding for CBID programmes in the medium to long term.
- **Attract and retain volunteers for long-term success:** Volunteers and volunteer development need special consideration in the next phase of this project.
- **Deepen connections with government and other service providers.** The connection with governance through ward reporters was a good start that deserves further development. Many who collaborated became advocates.



Motivation Australia would like to thank and acknowledge the hard work of staff and volunteers at the Inclusive Education Resource Centre (IERC) in Vanimo, Callan Services for Persons with Disabilities (CSNU) and the Australian-based team at Mary MacKillop Today in delivering this project; and in supporting this participatory evaluation under the challenging context of the Coronavirus. Please read the full report for more information about the process, detailed recommendations, and lessons learned.