EQual Access Monitor

Applied Research: Translating evidence into humanitarian action

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What is Evidence based programming?

There is a common belief that research is something undertaken by academics who talk to each other in an exclusive, strange language that is often disconnected to the realities of humanitarian action on the ground. However, research can offer the evidence base needed for effective decision making and to inform programmatic priorities and planning, to be more innovative and to increase efficiency. The purpose of research is to understand situations better, to understand what makes a difference, to improve present practice and to provide concrete recommendations for implementation.

HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL

Outraged by the injustice faced by people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, Handicap International (HI) aspires to a world of solidarity and inclusion, enriched by our differences, where everyone can live in dignity. Fulfilling this mission requires evidence; about the underlying causes of discrimination, about the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in participating in society on a full and equal basis with others and about the most effective strategies for overcoming these barriers. This issue of the Equal Access Monitor will explore the issue of translating evidence based research into action. By way of example, it will also highlight how the results of one piece of research, a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Survey, conducted in September 2016, is now being applied in practice, in a community awareness raising programme in the Dulail district of Jordan.

Why is research important and how can it be used?

Using research is necessary to understand problems, their nature, root causes and consequences. Research also helps to know what policies and strategies will be most effective in addressing problems, and how best to engage stakeholders in the process. Furthermore research helps us to build bridges between knowledge, values and practices, in the short and longer term.

Building an evidence base, through conducting assessments and evaluations helps expand our knowledge and opens up new ideas to what could be possible. Having a solid evidence base on which to design programmes and services also puts organisations in a more credible position when it comes to seeking the support of donors or other external audiences. Research can also provide an important evidence base for advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Despite the potential benefits in adopting an evidence based approach to programming, research is often not prioritized. It is often seen as too costly, too time consuming or too technical. As a result, evidence about the best ways to achieve programmatic objectives or the ultimate impact of interventions in target communities is often lacking.

A practice example: Making use of a KAP Survey to design a community awareness raising programme

Recognizing the valuable role evidence based practice can play in programme design, Handicap International (HI) commissioned a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Survey for the purposes of gaining an understanding of prevailing knowledge and attitudes among the general population of the Halabat and Dulailsub-districts of Dulail in Jordan regarding persons with disabilities.
This area was selected for the piloting of a community awareness raising initiative which aims to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities. It was furthermore envisaged that the study's key findings would be used to inform the development of the awareness raising strategy, including key messages and the most appropriate means of their dissemination with community members. At the same time, the study was also designed to provide a baseline against which an end-line survey, conducted upon conclusion of the activities, would allow for the evidence based measurement of progress over the course of the initiative.

A KAP survey is a representative study of a specific population to collect information on what is known, believed and done in relation to a particular topic. In most KAP surveys, data are collected orally by an interviewer using a structured, standardized questionnaire. These data then can be analysed quantitatively or qualitatively depending on the objectives and design of the study. (1).

In particular the survey sought to identify the various types of barriers persons with disabilities in Dulail face, in order to then design a strategy to help overcome these barriers. Persons with disabilities include women, men, girls and boys with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) (2).

Why is disability an important issue to conduct research on?

Background about disability:

The global prevalence of disability, according to WHO (3) is about 15% of the world's population. In Jordan, according to the Higher Council for Affairs for Persons with Disability, 13% of Jordan population are persons with disability (4).

World Humanitarian Summit Survey 2016 – views from people with disabilities

484 persons with disabilities, including 400 directly impacted by a humanitarian crisis were interviewed, as well as 118 DPOs in 28 countries, including 109 that worked in a crisis setting (78 in the context of natural disasters and 60 in the context of conflicts).

27% reported that they had been psychologically, physically or sexually abused.

75% of respondents reported that they did not have adequate access to basic assistance such as water, shelter, food or health.
50% had no access to specific services they needed as a result of their impairment, such as rehabilitation, assistive devices or access to social workers or interpreters, further impeding their access to mainstream assistance (5).

Three categories of barriers are generally faced by people with disabilities, whatever the context (development / emergency) or the culture. They are important to understand as removing existing barriers will constitute a key step towards inclusion and access to services. In times of crisis these barriers are exacerbated as movement becomes more complex and social networks are disrupted.

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS encompass both structural barriers and communication barriers

- Structural Barriers - are obstacles in the natural and manmade environments that prevent access or moving around independently.
- Communication Barriers – occur when communications, such as written and spoken information, including media, flyers, internet and community meetings are not designed in such a way as to take into account the needs of persons who experience difficulty in seeing, hearing, speaking, reading and writing, thereby impeding interaction and partici pation.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS including negative stereotyping of people with a disability, social stigma and other forms of overt discrimination. People with a disability often report that attitudes are the most disabling barriers of all.

INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS refer to all laws, policies, and regulations that govern the way our societies work. Barriers can result from the absence of institutional frameworks providing for an enabling environment as well as from limited awareness about supportive or inclusive frameworks that do exist, which results in their limited enforcement.

Jordan has ratified the UNCRPD (6), thereby committing to provide protection and safety to people with disabilities, including in time of crisis.

Disability and Social Inclusion:

Inclusion in humanitarian assistance is a way to ensure that interventions are non-discriminatory and protect of all groups. Inclusive humanitarian response aims to promote equity and the rights of all vulnerable people, so they may benefit from humanitarian aid on an equal basis with others.

Disability is about participation in society and ability to perform daily tasks. Disability is not about individual characteristics which are naturally part of human diversity.

THE KAP Key findings:

Data collection was carried out in the Dulail community during the month of September, 2016, in collaboration with a consultant. The KAP findings were based on analysis of household (HH) surveys, conducted with a controlled, random sample of 283 people (M: 50%, F: 50%). In accordance with available population data, 11% of those surveyed were of Syrian origin. Five focus discussion groups (FGD's) were also conducted with both Jordanians and Syrians, with and without disabilities as well as with community, youth and religious leaders.

The key findings of the KAP Survey were as follows;

- Knowledge of different types of disabilities appeared was relatively low
- Most respondent believed the cause of disability to be health related, with 20% also citing that it could be related to religious beliefs (the will of God, Evil eye etc.).
- Many respondents expressed a higher level of discrimination towards persons with psycho-social disabilities, as compared with persons with other disability types.
- Respondents expressed largely positive attitudes regarding the rights of people with disability to; have an education and to express their opinions. However, supportive attitudes decreased when questions referred to the rights of people with disabilities to work and make a living.
- Respondents showed a high level of comfort in interacting with people with physical or sensory disabilities, but less so with persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.
- Focus group discussion participants also reported a high degree of verbal and physical violence towards persons with disabilities, by both adults and also a high number of children.

KAP survey recommendations:

- Reluctance to admit existing negative or discriminatory attitudes towards people with disability, or tendencies to deny them, should be taken into account in any awareness-raising or behavior change initiative in the area.
- That awareness raising activities be designed to inform the general public about the international legal instruments and national laws promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.
- That community messaging be designed to counter negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities being "a burden" and instead to promote their capacities to care for themselves, to work, to marry, to rear children, raise families and to actively contribute to their communities.
- That community messaging be designed to specifically counter fear, judgement and negative attitudes regarding persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.
- That opportunities for bringing together adults with and without disabilities in awareness sessions and community events be facilitated as a way of breaking down barriers and building understanding.

- That opportunities for children with and without disabilities be facilitated and that awareness raising sessions be conducted with parents on educating their children about the need to be respectful of children and adults with disabilities.
- That a mixed range of communication methodologies be employed, including social media, WhatsApp, Facebook, text messaging, together with the use of community events and face to face sessions. Brochures and other materials could also be developed and disseminated portraying well-known persons with disabilities who have been successful in their chosen fields, in family life or in their contributions to society.

The study's key findings were used to develop an awareness raising strategy, including key messages and the planned means of dissemination with community members.

The purpose of the awareness raising programme is to highlight the abilities of people with disabilities and sensitize community members in Dulail about the barriers they encounter to their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others, through 9 specific objectives.

The intervention is composed of five different phases. The sequencing of the intervention phases was designed for each phase to build upon the other, with each objective addressing particular issues highlighted in the KAP survey Report.

How will HI sustain results?

Handicap International will take action to sustain the project results through building the capacity of the concerned community members and ensuring their active participation and building their sense of "ownership" for organizing and implementing awareness raising activities. People with disabilities will also be actively engaged throughout the different phases of implementation, as guest speakers, presenters and participants.

HI will ensure the involvement of key decision makers in Dulail, police officers, sheikhs and makhateers (clan leaders) by inviting them to attend special awareness sessions and consulting them about the methodology of intervention. HI will also aim to sustain results by building the capacity of local stakeholders and ensuring the community participation and ownership of local people in the awareness raising intervention.

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HI community mobilizer experience

Waseem Janazreh is the community mobilizer at Handicap International who has been working on the community inclusion project. He agreed to share his experience in translating the results of the KAP survey into practical action in his community awareness raising work in Dhlail. He is working to raise the awareness of local men, women, youth and community leaders about the rights of persons with disabilities, through the dissemination of key messages and awareness raising sessions and through engaging local people in film and interactive theatre projects.

"Self-motivation, using interactive tools, a participatory approach and a careful and sensitive selection criteria for participants were key to the success of the initiative"" according to Waseem Janazreh HI-community mobilizer.

Participant Experience

Ahmad is a founder of the National Unified Registry and Outreach Worker Program and participant in the Handicap International community inclusion project in Dulail. He talked to us about how the sessions had changed his understanding about persons with disability. After attending the awareness raising sessions, Ahmad had this to say;

"I feel myself as a burden to my community when I learned how many persons with disabilities are very productive throughout the history. I have the sense I haven't done anything special for my community and my society. Meanwhile many persons with disability make many changes for their community ". He added;

"We all need to make sure that we do our social responsibility toward inclusion of persons with disability".

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