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# Synthesis Evaluation of 11 Country Plan Mid-Term Reviews (2020): Key recommendations and CBM's response

## Quick Facts

**Countries:** Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, Togo, Vietnam, Zimbabwe

**Date of Evaluation Report:** April 2020

**Type of Evaluation:** Strategic Synthesis Evaluation

**Keywords:** Accountability / Learning



## Background of the Synthesis Evaluation

In past years, CBM has made substantial shifts in its strategy, programmes and partnership work toward disability inclusion. In response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), CBM has increased efforts to put the rights of people with disabilities at the centre of its approach, as outlined in its Strategy and its newly developed Programme Quality Framework (PQF).

Also, in 2014 CBM had begun to systematically develop five-year Country Plans (CPs), aiming to align country work with CBM's global strategy and the provisions of the CRPD, and to more effectively contribute to national level outcomes that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in the country. By 2015 a total of 19 Country Plans had been developed and were in the process of implementation. By 2018/19 a total of 11 Country Plan Mid-term Reviews (MTRs) were conducted, mainly with the intention to review progress and to adjust to new priorities and changes in context.

In 2019 an external synthesis evaluation of the 11 MTRs was commissioned by CBM to learn from experiences and to identify potential for improvement of CBM's country planning process.

## Summary Result

The synthesis evaluation has generated important insights and recommendations on how to further strengthen CBM's approach to country planning and operationalisation of strategies. Important adjustments have since been initiated, or already implemented, in the areas of process adaptation, increased coherence and agility in planning, capacity building, empowerment and learning. Key findings and recommendations from the evaluation, and actions taken by CBM, are outlined below:

## Key Findings, Recommendations and Actions taken

### Process and planning tools

- 1. Finding:** Most of the reviewed country plan (CP) evaluations confirmed their overall relevance to CBM and national strategies, and the importance of an effective three-way collaboration between CBM Fundraising, Technical Initiatives/ Advisors, and the Country Offices.

**Recommendation:** The CP process needs reshaping to further optimise synergies across CBM and replace external Mid-term Reviews (MTR) with annual Country Plan reviews, led by the Country Office. Further, peer-exchange during planning and review exercises should be encouraged.

**Action:** In 2020, CBM has adjusted its country planning process and tools to foster globally coherent, locally relevant, and more agile plans, including more explicit links to CBM Strategy. As well, CP objectives and technical Initiative objectives will be better aligned in the future.

### **Capacities in Disability Inclusive Development**

**2.** Finding: Country Offices (COs) are becoming increasingly disability-inclusive. However, CBM CO staff require further training to better translate relevant organisational policies into practice and programming reality.

Action: A capacity development programme of the CBID (Community Based Inclusive Development) initiative is under development. Based on its modular structure, it will support tailoring of contents to the knowledge level of the respective audiences / trainees.

### **Capacities in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

**3.** Finding: The existing Country Plan (CP) M&E frameworks focus on high level goals and detailed activities. However, there is a “missing middle” at outcomes level. Further, monitoring of CP progress has been challenging due to the complexity of plans.

Action: Various activities have been carried out to enhance competence of Country Office staff in planning at outcome and output level, defining related indicators, and developing of appropriate monitoring mechanisms. This will continue going forward. Further, it is expected that the ongoing definition of core indicators will support staff and partners and ultimately contribute to strengthened M&E capacities at country level.

### **Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities**

**4.** Finding and Action: Country Offices (COs), central to CBM’s operating model, need more autonomy in programming leadership and agile programme adjustment. In the spirit of localisation of aid, COs and Regional Hubs together with Initiatives have now increased decision making power to define portfolios, adjust budgets and decide on staffing. Opportunities for local funding can be pursued, albeit limited to institutional funding and in agreement with relevant CBM departments.

### **Sustainability and learning**

**5.** Finding: Learning from Country Plan (CP) implementation is occurring, but learning processes and responsibilities are often not clear or consistently followed to translate learning into practise.

Recommendation and Action: The recommendation to establishing a learning culture in CBM, by investing in opportunities for learning and knowledge management has been taken up. Regular peer-learnings are conducted, both at country and regional level and via remote sessions coordinated globally. Country Offices meet regularly with partner organisations to reflect on what went well and why, and what needs to be done to further improve. In addition, CBM will further develop its platform where good practices and lessons learnt in programme work are shared.

**6.** Finding and Recommendation: Country Plan Mid-term Reviews identify a range of sustainability mechanisms implemented by COs, but little has been studied about their effectiveness. Prioritise learning around sustainability, including conducting a review to draw out lessons on sustainability, regional consolidations and experiences from operationalisation of

partner exit in CBM. Further, strengthening COs' capacities to increasingly consider key sustainability dimensions in planning and implementation of project work.

Action: Targeted webinars and peer learning have been implemented and are further planned in the future. Focus is on sustainability and its interconnectedness with ownership and participatory approaches along agile processes and competence in project management end-to-end.

## Methodology of the evaluation

This Synthesis Evaluation was conducted by a team of two evaluators, with expertise and experience in disability inclusion, respectively quality standards and strategic planning approaches in International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). The evaluation employed a mixed method approach including quantitative and qualitative methods; findings gained from document study, key informant interviews and written surveys were triangulated. The analysis followed the OECD DAC evaluation criteria and the following principles:

- Appreciative: the surveys sought to identify what is working well in CBM's planning and MTR processes, as well as identify areas for improvement. The recommendations constructively contributed to CBM's organizational change process to become even more disability-inclusive.
- Inclusive: while the scope of the synthesis-evaluation did not include sources from partners or target groups, the analysis paid particular attention to the participation of partners such as disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) and people with disabilities in CBM's planning and mid-term reviews.
- Collaborative: the evaluation was guided by CBM's Evaluation Steering Group, from the kick-off session to the Lessons Learnt session, and closely accompanied by CBM's Programme Standards and MEAL functions to ensure a utilisation focus.
- Ethical: because the synthesis-evaluation was desk-based, supplemented by surveys and remote Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with CBM staff, risk to sources was minimal. Nevertheless, the evaluators respected confidentiality, and comments and quotes have not been associated with specific sources.