

Charter Webinar - Summary

“How can we live up to our promises of inclusion and non-discrimination?” 28 May 2014

Topic experts:

Wambui Kimathi, Independent Review Panel Member and County Secretary, County Government of Nyeri (Kenya)

Diane Mulligan, Deputy Director of Advocacy and Alliances, CBM International, and Co-Chair of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) United Nations task group

Please see the presentations of the experts as well as additional readings uploaded on the [Charter website](#). Below is a summary of the key issues highlighted in the presentations and the following discussion:

Why is inclusion critical to success of civil society organisations?

Inclusion is key to delivering upon our human rights based approach. Actively including those who are potentially marginalised due to e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, race etc. will strengthen their rights and empower them to speak for themselves. Amnesty International stresses that inclusion is key to their human rights focus and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) highlights the inclusion of marginalised groups as a means of promoting rights and empowering people. Ignoring such exclusions will on the contrary further entrench negative power relations which are a reality that must be acknowledged. Quite apart from the fact that inclusion is central to a human rights based approach, it simply helps to deliver better results as it: enriches implementation strategies by inviting different views, allows tapping into more networks thus broadening the basis of acceptance, and fosters a resilience that monocultures do not tend to possess.

Who is potentially excluded?

Charter reporting shows that most organisations restrict their focus on gender and geographical representation when addressing diversity. Other criteria to look for should include sex, disability, race, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, color, religion, belief, culture, dress, sex orientation, access to (digital) information, language or birth. We also need to be mindful of constantly new emerging issues for exclusion. The initial question should not be: “How can we include a certain group?” but: “Who is potentially excluded from what our organisation does?” Broadening the perception for the great many challenges and opportunities of inclusion will lead to greater sensitivity and better decisions.

What are the greatest challenges to meaningful inclusion?

While there is great commitment to inclusion on paper, most CSOs do not live up to their promises in practice. They conduct surveys and collect data on diversity, but fall short of meaningfully integrating people from marginalised groups in the design, implementation and evaluation of their work. Similarly these groups are underrepresented in CSO governance bodies. The challenges are obvious: they do not speak the same languages, have different cultural backgrounds, poor access to the internet etc. Inclusion is a very conscious decision which requires time, money, resources, and embedded organisational tools, such as monthly meetings and notes, regular evaluations, or Charter reporting.

How to move inclusion up the internal agenda?

- Start by looking at all different functions within an organisation (recruiting, resource allocation, monitoring, programming etc.) asking questions like: Who is likely to be left behind? Who are we procuring from? How do we simplify processes that marginalise certain people?

- Use the systematic mapping of potential exclusions to create an organisational awareness. This is critical to moving inclusion up on the internal agenda.
- It is then important to understand why active inclusion of certain groups would help the organisation reach its strategic objectives.
- Once this relationship is established, it has to be identified what kind of support is needed to include those potentially left behind. This is often particularly challenging in cases of multi-discrimination or intersectionality, e.g. being a woman from the Global South without education.
- Without a strong political will from the top and effective policies and processes to follow up, this agenda will not be moved forward.

Examples of what has worked well for Charter Members to date?

The national Board of Directors from Amnesty International Turkey made a very conscious decision to include relevant marginalised groups, such as ethnic minorities (e.g. Kurdish), or socially excluded groups (e.g. LGBTI) in their governance body. This helped to mainstream some inclusion issues within Amnesty Turkey, but also posed challenges with regard to full participation of the national Turkish Board in the International Amnesty Board for the reasons given in the paragraph on challenges above.

CBM took a decision to invest in recruiting disabled people and creating a workspace that works well for them and the organisation. 7 out of 8 staff members at CBM's international Advocacy and Alliances department in Brussels are persons with disabilities. This has allowed them not only to exemplify that inclusion of disabled staff is possible in a very professional work arrangement, it also helped to underpin the credibility of their lobby activities.

Further recommendations:

- Mainstream and strengthen inclusion as a key strategic objective helping your organisation to achieve its mission at the local, national and international level of the organisation;
- Reflect inclusion targets in budgets – specifically allocating resources to achieve them;
- Ensure processes and policies which allow for inclusion in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes;
- Hire people from marginalised groups – from interns, to regular staff and Board members – to expose people in your organisation with their views and help shape attitudes and culture accordingly;
- Ensure recruitment practices do not exclude marginalised groups (e.g. social media recruitment excludes those who have a lack of access);
- Look for diversity sensitivity as a quality criteria when employing new staff;
- Make sure the work environment allows for potentially excluded groups to actively participate - e.g. access to translation, barrier free access, cultural sensitivity etc.
- Use language and images that help staff to use appropriate terms (e.g. “marginalised” instead of “vulnerable”) and train fundraisers in using empowering images.

[“Inclusion Made Easy”](#) by CBM Australia is a quick programme guide on how to include disabled people in development programmes. It can be easily adapted to all sorts of other potential forms of exclusion.

Many thanks to the presenters and participants for this interesting and highly relevant discussion. We look forward to seeing you at the next webinar in August 2014 on “What is at the core of effective stakeholder engagement?”.