

IDEAS: INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING FOR EQUAL AND ACCOUNTABLE SOCIETY

**A case study on how a disability lens
was applied to an international project
on inclusive decision-making**

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.
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IDEAS, Inclusive Decision-making for Equal and Accountable Societies' is a European Commission co-financed project led by the British Council. It increased disabled people's active involvement in decision-making processes and supported government, civil society, and media to apply a disability lens in the context of their work.
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CONTENTS

Foreword	03
Introduction	04
A cultural relations approach to inclusive decision-making	04
Equality, diversity, and inclusion	04
Drawing reference to the social model	06
Drawing reference to the UN convention	06
The IDEAS project	09
Objectives: a two-pronged approach	09
Overview	10
Project stages	10
What we achieved	11
How we did it	12
The role of a non-disability organisation	16
Reputational leverage	16
Mediator and convener	16
Process and framing role	17
Modelling institutional change	17
Closing thoughts	19
Armenia	22
Azerbaijan	24
Georgia	26
Jordan	28
Lebanon	30
Ukraine	32
Acknowledgements	34
Endorsements	35



The partnerships which were formed are the legacy of IDEAS. We have united disability communities across many spheres and countries. We have created links and pathways of influence with government, media, and civil society organisations which will continue and strengthen.

May Abuhamdia, Deputy Director British Council, Jordan



FOREWORD

If we harness the potential of everyone in our society and ensure they have an equal opportunity to achieve positions of influence, we will become better and fairer countries.

Disability is an everyday part of society. An estimated one billion people, or 15 per cent of the world's population experience disability.¹ Yet, disabled people are largely excluded from society and experience significant barriers to being able to realise their rights and to being able to play an active role in society.

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is the first legally binding instrument in history to set out obligations to promote, protect, and ensure the rights of disabled people across the globe. As of May 2016, 163 countries have ratified the UNCRPD, which means that the governments in those countries have committed to ensuring that disabled people are able to participate fully in society and that they make societies accessible to and inclusive of disabled people.

The UNCRPD was created by and for disabled people, and represents a hugely powerful legal framework for disabled people's organisations to support governments to put progressive changes in place and to hold governments to account. Central to the UNCRPD is the article that states that disabled people have the right to actively participate in political and public life and to have the right to make independent choices and decisions regardless of their impairment or the context in which they live.

Inclusive decision-making is an approach to considering options and making a decision that actively involves all those who would be directly affected by the outcome of the decision. It values disabled people and places disabled people within society not outside it. It upholds disabled peoples' rights and gives disabled people equality of voice, choice and control.

The British Council, in conjunction with the European Commission, partnered with disabled people's organisations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Lebanon, and Jordan on IDEAS; a project to promote an inclusive approach to decision-making. Since 2013, the IDEAS partner teams have worked with civil society, media, and government to increase disabled peoples' participation in decision-making processes, and to enable decision makers to apply a disability lens in policymaking and within the work of their organisations.

This case study sets out the British Council's experiences of working in very diverse contexts on the IDEAS project. IDEAS showed that working towards disability inclusive decision-making is a process where everyone has something to learn. It requires an appreciation of our different perspectives and can lead to shifts in attitudes and behaviours and real changes that benefit disabled people and wider society alike.

1. WHO, Disability and Health Factsheet, December 2015, www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs352/en/

INTRODUCTION

A cultural relations approach to inclusive decision-making

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Four principles underpin our cultural relations work; **participation and inclusion, deep understanding, collaboration, and trust.** Our approach combines building partnerships and networks with a knowledge and understanding of the countries and communities in which we work. We develop initiatives that are locally led and contextualised to local culture. Our work is centred on building meaningful, enduring, and respectful relationships across different cultures and countries – we cannot do this without an appreciation and proactive approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all countries in which we work.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

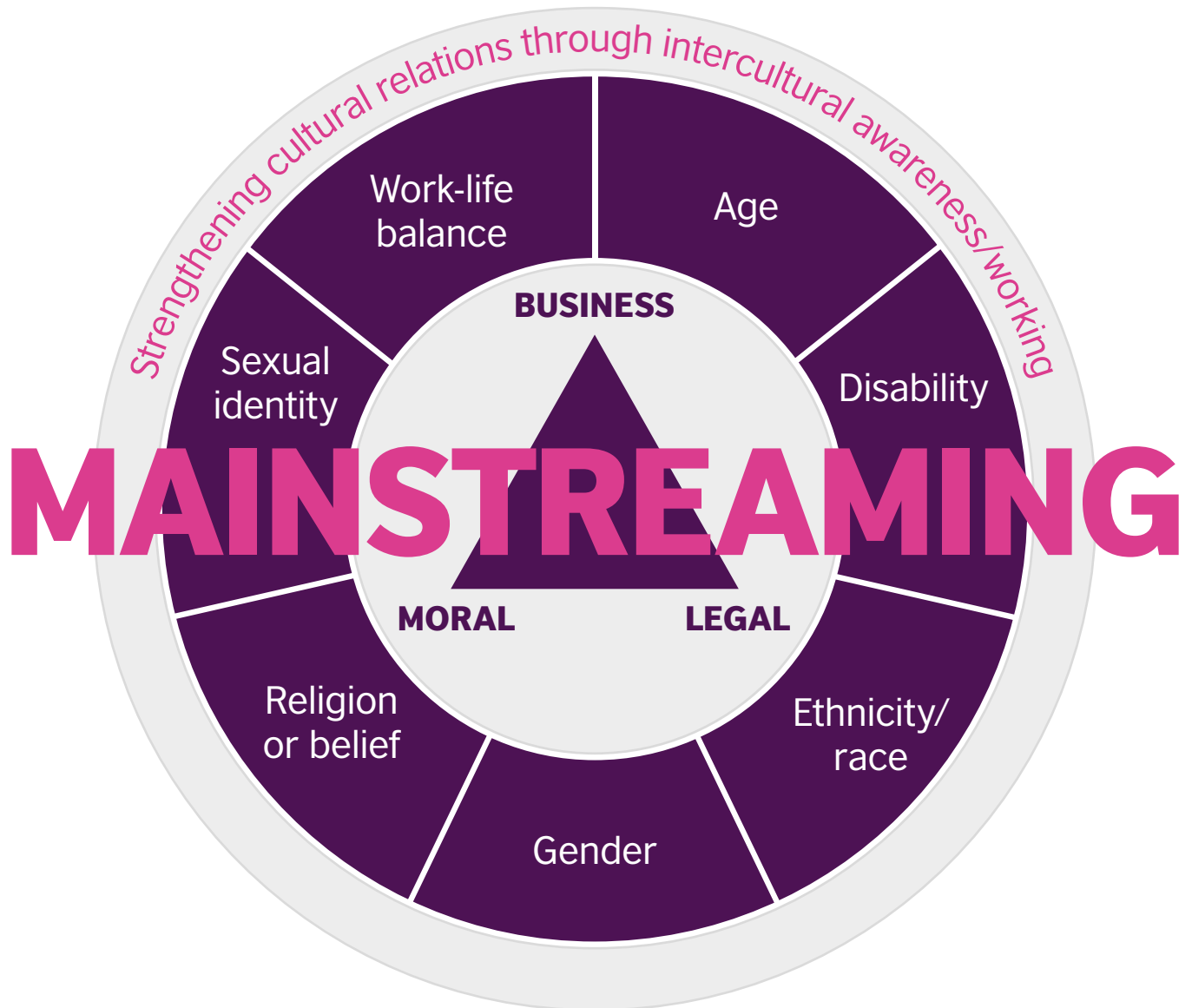
Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are at the heart of our values as an organisation and we have a strong commitment to our EDI policy.² Over the last 16 years we have pursued a strategy which supports us to embed or mainstream EDI into all of our work, our internal practices, as well as through the way in which we run our programmes and projects. We view this as an ongoing process.

The British Council's EDI framework reflects seven main areas of focus, they are: gender, disability, religion and belief, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and work-life balance. We recognise three different but connected cases which support EDI. These are the legal, moral, and business arguments.

The British Council works closely with our Disability Advisory Panel to seek advice and support so that we can better understand and promote disability equality across the work we do. The panel is a group of external specialists with significant personal and professional experience of different aspects of disability.

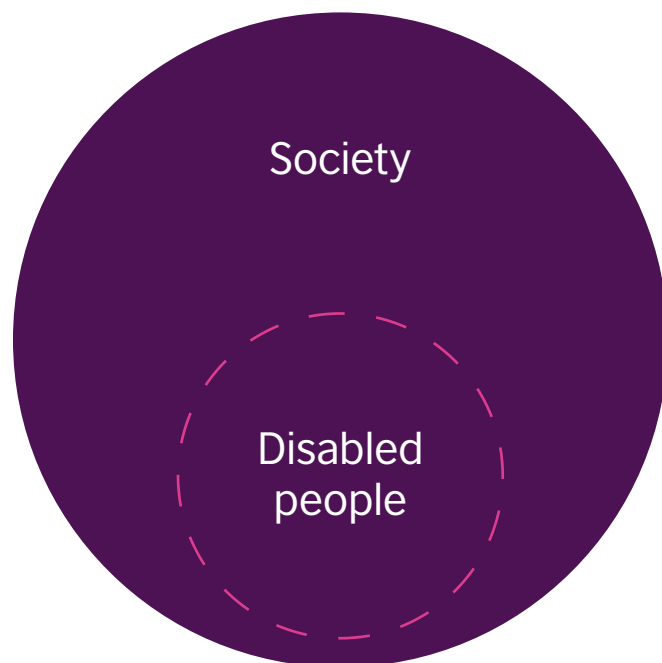
Our global diversity strategy has three objectives: to develop capability and leadership in EDI, to foster inclusion, and to measure metrics. We also have a global network of staff who work to champion EDI; either as appointed EDI regional leads, national co-ordinators, or as self-selecting individuals. This helps us foster inclusion, engagement, and develop intercultural dialogue. We conduct equality monitoring of staff and each country and UK-based team use a Diversity Assessment Framework which is a tool to measure and evaluate our efforts to mainstream EDI throughout the organisation.

2. British Council EDI Policy; www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/how-we-work/equality-diversity-inclusion/about



Drawing reference to the social model

The British Council promotes the social model of disability which is outlined in the World Vision publication *Travelling Together*.³ This model was created by disabled people in response to systems which made many individuals feel socially isolated. Through the social model, disability is understood as an unequal relationship within a society. It advocates that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by an individual's impairment. The charity and medical approaches are called individual models, whereas the social model is seen as an inclusive or rights-based approach.



The social model recognises the importance of language and the role it has had in reinforcing society's assumptions about groups of people and perpetuating discriminatory behaviour.

The social model also focuses on addressing and removing barriers that block an individual's full and equal participation in society. These barriers are sometimes categorised as attitudinal, environmental, and institutional. It emphasises the independence of disabled people once barriers are removed and empowers disabled people to take advantage of their rights and have choice and control over their own lives.

Drawing reference to the UN convention

The UNCRPD was designed by disabled people for disabled people on the basis of 'nothing about us, without us'. The Convention was used to frame the IDEAS project alongside the social model.

Article 29 of the UNCRPD requires governments to guarantee to disabled people their full and effective participation in politics and public life on an equal basis with others. Article 32 also obliges ratifying countries to ensure that all of their international development programmes are inclusive and accessible to disabled people.⁴

Additionally in the UK, the 2010 Equality Act⁵ makes it a legal requirement that organisations not only ensure non-discrimination, but also actively make reasonable adjustments to remove the barriers that prevent or restrict disabled people from being full and equal participants in society. In this regard, disability equality takes on a specific dimension within UK legislation. As a UK organisation, the British Council has a statutory duty to adhere to UK legislation.

3. *Travelling Together* (2010) World Vision, www.wvi.org/disability-inclusion/publication/travelling-together

4. UNCRPD (2006) www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml

5. UK Equality Act 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

Thinking about disability:

- Disabled people are the world's largest minority group and the only one that anyone can join at any time in their life.
- Disabilities may or may not be visible. They may be present from birth or occur during a person's lifetime.
- Disability is not all of someone's identity. Disabled people cross racial, gender, educational, socio-economic and organisational lines.
- Disabled people are not a homogeneous group. People may have physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, or developmental impairments or a combination of these.
- Eighty per cent of disabled people live in developing countries.
- Disabled people are at a greater risk of poverty and inequality all over the world. They may be treated as people in need of welfare, they may not have the right to vote, they may be excluded from employment or education systems.
- Disabled people are at a greater risk in conflict and natural disasters. They may be left behind when people flee or be unable to access services or resources. Many people become disabled as a result of conflict itself.
- Language and terminology surrounding disability can vary by country and culture. For example, the UK uses 'disabled people' to reflect the social model approach, but many countries use 'persons with disabilities'.



I am so grateful for this chance to improve our knowledge and enhance our school life. They [IDEAS] provided the key strategies for overcoming procrastination in this area. I am really pleased with the training and will put it into practice.

School Director, Baku, Azerbaijan





THE IDEAS PROJECT

Inclusive Decisions for Equal and Accountable Societies (IDEAS) was a three-year British Council project which was co-funded by the European Commission. It ran in six countries from 2013: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Ukraine. The UK acted as the seventh country; sharing a history of leadership in inclusion and disability politics.

The British Council partnered with a disabled peoples' organisation or civil society organisation in each country to support government, civil society, and media to think about disabled peoples' inclusion and to take practical steps to ensuring disabled people are represented and can take part in decision-making processes.

The British Council carefully considered who to work with, and who to partner with, as the disability arena can often be sensitive, politicised, and financially competitive. The partnerships and cross-sector approach of consultation and collaboration was crucial to the success of the IDEAS project.

Objectives; a two-pronged approach

From the outset, the IDEAS project team set out to work towards objectives that reflected priorities in each of the countries in which we worked. We also wanted to reflect the principles of the social model and ensure we could be supportive of different groups in society who influence and have a stake in political and policy decision-making processes. Our project objectives were:

1. To increase disabled peoples' active involvement in decision-making processes.
2. To support government, civil society and media to apply a disability lens in the work of their organisations and in their decision-making processes.

This design is sometimes referred to as the 'twin-track approach' in development. It sees poverty and disability as intertwined and combines specific interventions to empower disabled people along with mainstreaming interventions to help remove barriers disabled people face in society.

Overview

The six project countries all have unique histories and different political, social and cultural norms. Their disability movements and equality policies were also at different stages. Lebanon, for example, has not yet ratified the UNCRPD. One element which was present in each country was momentum, a drive for change, and a will to think about inclusive decision-making on many different levels. With the aid of translators and sign language interpreters, project plans and ideas were shared at international meetings and formed on consensus.

Critical to our approach was considering the different actors, systems, and channels present in each country. To understand how government, civil society, media, (business indirectly), and disabled people think, and how they relate to each other. To understand how decision-making happens and how decisions can be influenced.

IDEAS co-designed an international framework which set out the principles that would underpin our approach to promoting the social model and to supporting our partners and audiences to take positive steps towards inclusive decision-making. Each country team tailored the framework and set out their own priorities and action plans in response to their local context and needs.

A strong project foundation built inclusivity into the plans and budgets. The teams engaged with diverse branches of society, and worked with local communities as well as nationally and internationally. IDEAS also worked directly with disabled people across different institutions at all levels of the project, including working with disabled professionals as advisers and project experts, trainers and participants, and establishing an International Project Steering Group to monitor progress and challenge us in our thinking.

Project stages

Participatory needs analysis and priority setting

Generating ideas about barriers to disabled peoples' participation in decision-making.
Bringing multiple perspectives together to understand the barriers.

UK study visit

Sharing findings and experiences across all seven countries.
Inspirations and lesson learning.

Developing tools

Agreeing on an international framework.
Creating a facilitator development programme.
Writing three toolkits for media, civil society, and government.⁶

Cascade training

Workshops and action planning with a variety of actors from across the sectors.

Pilot initiatives

National and local pilot activities to increase disabled people's participation and to mainstream disability and inclusion.

Evaluation

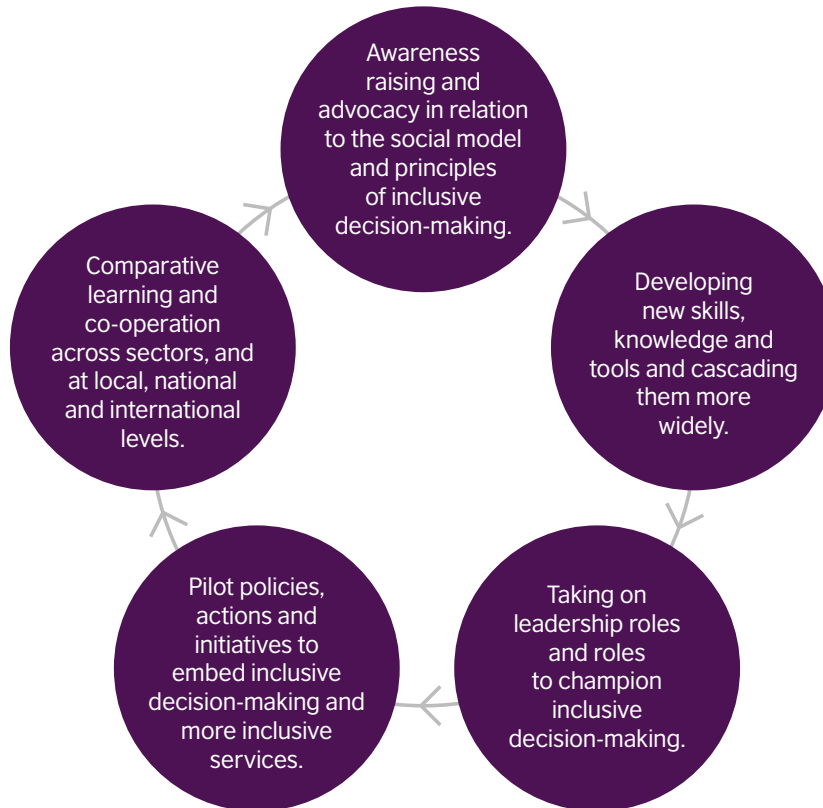
Review of pilot initiatives, sharing of lessons learned and project evaluation.
Sharing good practice with colleagues and partner organisation.

6. IDEAS toolkits www.britishcouncil.org.ua/en/programmes/society/ideas

What we achieved

The project stages helped us to understand the changes we were making in the project from the perspective of the individuals and organisations we worked with directly as well as amongst wider groups, including disabled people, and the public.

The IDEAS project has helped disabled people to play increasingly active roles in decision-making processes. It has also contributed to a lessening of the barriers that prevent people from being able to play full and active roles in society. A few of the many achievements of IDEAS are given below and others are expanded in the country case studies that form the appendix of this report.



Examples of impact

- 17 ministries in Lebanon were trained on the social model by disabled trainers.
- 25 schools which attended training in Azerbaijan have piloted inclusive education content and practices.
- 250 disabled people have been employed in private sector companies in Lebanon.
- A health centre in Ukraine has employed a full-time sign language interpreter.

Policy and political participation

- Georgia elected a mayoral adviser on disability for the capital of Tbilisi.
- The government of Armenia has incorporated an inclusiveness assessment checklist into the draft legislation on local self-governance.

- Disabled members of Parliament elected to Ukrainian parliament.

Leadership and influence

- Young disabled leaders ran an advocacy campaign in Azerbaijan.
- First disabled woman took part as a panelist on prime time television in Jordan.

Levering investment and resources

- First independent living centre was resourced in Ukraine.
- A new tourist area in Armenia was designed to be accessible and inclusive.
- International hotels in Kiev and Beirut and an international airport in Baku undertook access audits and made adjustments.

How we did it**Creating a shared understanding**

All countries believed in and followed the same principles, and ‘nothing about us, without us’ was upheld. The concept of inclusive decision-making was unpacked alongside terminology related to disability, and the use of the UN convention and the social model was reinforced. A shared language about our understanding of these underpinned all activities, materials, and communications.

Providing inspiration

IDEAS provided open spaces for discussion and worked to build the confidence of partners and stakeholders. We had to think about people’s understanding, attitudes and behaviours. An appreciation and respect for difference was built into our ways of working. We also provided inspiration from the UK’s leadership in inclusive decision-making by offering a study tour which shared examples of how removing barriers can allow disabled people to participate actively in all aspects of life.

Involving disabled people in every stage

IDEAS had sessions with the British Council's Disability Advisory Panel from the offset, and recruited disabled specialists as project advisers and facilitators. The content and activities of IDEAS was co-designed with disabled and non-disabled groups from each country. Disability consultants were involved in the project evaluation and shared learning with the British Council and our partners. Disabled participants were also ambassadors for the project in government, in civil society, and in the media.

Applying a flexible methodology

The framework provided commonality and collaboration and allowed ideas to be applied if and where appropriate. IDEAS often saw a 'snowball effect' where an activity would prompt someone to think differently which in turn led to new ideas and initiatives. Our flexible approach allowed us to adapt our project and put organisations in touch with the network of champions of the social model we established for advice and support to take ideas forward. The project was participatory and all partners and stakeholders (including the British Council) were actively learning. Individuals and organisations shared their successes and supported others to embed these into their work. For example, the British Council shared our EDI strategies and tools, worked with suppliers to carry out access audits, and briefed interpreters on the social model terminology.

Outlining barriers to inclusive decisions

The international group identified six barriers which they believed restrict disabled people's inclusion in decision-making processes. They are; institutional or strategic, attitudinal, physical, inadequate information and communication, financial, and absence of research and data. These are based on the perspectives of the many individuals involved. This allowed IDEAS to be more explicit about what adjustments each sector group could make. For example, when working with politicians we were able to talk in terms of the leadership role they could play. People were also able to describe the adjustments they had made in terms of how it contributed to greater inclusion and better decision-making.

Understanding roles

Each partner organisation and stakeholder group had different strengths and experiences, and could play different roles in promoting inclusive decision-making. All voices and roles were taken equally. This also applied to the different elements of the project. For example, the same level of consideration of inclusivity was given to procuring a hotel for an event as designing a pilot initiative.





THE ROLE OF A NON-DISABILITY ORGANISATION

The British Council's society team has a mission of 'building more inclusive, open and prosperous societies'. We support citizens, civil society and state to work more effectively in the interests of all of society. In the IDEAS project, this meant opening up decision-making processes so that disabled people participate on equal terms. It meant thinking about inclusion along a spectrum from information to consultation to active participation to leadership and ownership over decisions and actions.

Often, disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs) primary role is advocacy, or they may focus on a particular impairment. DPOs and civil society organisations are strongly encouraging an approach based on inclusion, but it is the mainstream organisations like the British Council that can and need to enact it. Being a neutral actor (non-disability expert) allowed the British Council to add value to IDEAS in unique and unforeseen ways.

Reputational leverage

The British Council has a strong historical legacy and is very highly regarded around the world and within the six IDEAS project countries. Local DPOs or civil society organisations have the disability expertise, but may not have the neutrality, networks or brand awareness which the British Council can bring. During the evaluation interview our partners shared that they felt attendance rates were higher when members of the public saw that an IDEAS initiative was run in partnership with the British Council. The British Council was also able to use its existing relationships to open communication channels to local and national governments.

Mediator and convener

The IDEAS project worked with DPOs to influence three main stakeholder groups; government, media, and civil society organisations. Each actor, including the DPO partners, had their own areas of expertise and their own agendas. The British Council was able to connect people and act as a mediator between different interest groups to build understanding and co-operation between the different sectors. The British Council also strengthened its own relationships with new or existing organisations and used different techniques to articulate the IDEAS objectives to each group. The convener role also helped to build the confidence of everyone involved as each individual voice was listened to on an equal level and a single organisation or individual was not able to dominate discussions.

Process and framing role

The British Council and partners used the UNCRPD as our common framework under which IDEAS initiatives were implemented. We viewed practical examples from the UK around the role that disabled people and DPOs play in decision-making processes and explored relationships between the different actors. We used this as a foundation to provide a neutral context for sharing and listening to ideas and issues, and to support the movement from theory to practice. We created a platform which did not previously exist for all of the actors from the six countries to come together to discuss and jointly design the project. Through this platform consensus was reached on the projects' plans and framework which included a common set of terminology and tools. This improved efficiency, encouraged co-operation and equality of voice, and stimulated the active participation and leadership of people with disabilities in the process.

Modelling institutional change

The British Council worked to increase the understanding, confidence, and capacity of every organisation involved in IDEAS – including our own. The British Council was able to contribute its expertise in participatory methodologies, bespoke cascade trainings, policy influence, system reviews, and knowledge of how to adapt this to local contexts. Many partners and stakeholders have reported that they are now operating differently. The British Council has also taken the learning from IDEAS to improve our own internal processes and strengthen our EDI work. We have integrated what we learned around inclusion into our organisational project management processes including devising mainstreaming guidance for projects and for visits and events. In the six IDEAS delivery countries we also now have a wider range of partners within the disability and inclusion sector and have developed new content within our education and society projects. Internally, we have improved our approaches to recruitment, interpretation provisions, and completed access audits. We have also improved our continual professional development programmes for colleagues.



When we are thinking about change, we have to start with ourselves, then the institutions, and then the wider groups. IDEAS feels like a big family, all working together on an important subject.

Larysa Bayda, National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities, Ukraine



CLOSING THOUGHTS

The British Council is not a disability-expert organisation but maintains a strong commitment to our EDI values. We recognise the important contribution that we, as a cultural relations organisation, can make to inclusive decision-making and the promotion of the social model of disability. We increased our own understanding and knowledge through the experience of designing and implementing the IDEAS project. We are continually working to progress EDI institutionally, and integrate it into all of our programmes. This process requires openness and an acceptance that we may not get it right at the first instance.

As a non-disability organisation the British Council is uniquely positioned to impartially contribute towards international inclusion agendas. We see this as an evolving and potentially cutting edge role for us, and other non-disability organisations. We are always looking to widen the range of organisations we can work with and learn from and appreciate the experience and insight other organisations can share to promote the social model and inclusive practices.



The willingness of disabled peoples' organisations and policymakers to work together in this project is very positive. In the UK we know this is extremely critical as an ongoing process.

Nick Goss, Goss Consultancy





People with disabilities often find that their voices are not included in the processes in which decisions are made. That their wishes or their needs are predicted by other groups but not by the people themselves that know best what the situation is.

Elizabeth White, Director Azerbaijan, British Council







The British Council succeeded in establishing links with long-term stakeholders and government ministries. The British Council's role is important, it opened doors and helped us be more effective in our relationships with stakeholders and regional administrations.

Armen Alaverdyan, Executive Director, UNISON, Armenia



A TOURIST VILLAGE IN ARMENIA IS THE FIRST TO ADOPT 'UNIVERSAL DESIGN'

ARMEN

In Armenia the IDEAS project has been instrumental in ensuring that accessibility is considered in planning infrastructure projects and in decision-making about use of space. What started as a pilot project to design an accessible park has led to national reform and innovation in the leisure and tourism sector.

The British Council in Armenia and their local partner UNISON piloted an ‘inclusiveness assessment checklist’ in conjunction with the municipality of Artik in Armenia. The checklist includes accessibility guidance in relation to infrastructure planning, project planning and methods, recruitment and procurement procedures, and financial and decision-making processes. Community residents were given an opportunity to exercise their political rights through public discussion which resulted in an unprecedented re-allocation of public funding. By vote, the checklist was applied to redesign a park and a cultural centre to make them more accessible. This also began a major change in the communities’ perception of disabled persons and their role in decision-making.

Artik’s experience was shared nationally with the Ministry of Territorial Administration, as well as in roadshows in other municipalities. In 2015 the inclusiveness assessment checklist was incorporated into draft legislation and is currently in the process of official ratification by the Ministry for becoming a mandatory tool for local administrations to complete within the quadrennial planning process.

Tourism makes up 12.7 per cent of GDP in Armenia’s economy, but there are no accessible tourist locations in the country. The Initiatives for Development of Armenia Foundation, an influential investor that works on large-scale infrastructure projects, was brought into IDEAS. In 2015, the foundation embarked on the Tatev Gateway Project; a substantial initiative to revive the Tatev Monastery and surrounding area of outstanding heritage and develop an entirely new infrastructure for leisure and tourism in the Syunik region.

‘At least seven per cent of people in Armenia have disabilities, so they [the Initiatives for Development of Armenia Foundation] are missing a significant group of people in all of their projects. They saw the business case – it could increase the profile and number of both local and international visitors.’

Norayr Yerznykan, Project Co-ordinator, British Council

Through IDEAS, the foundation worked with disabled people and UK and Armenian universal design professionals on the master planning of Tatev. Universal design is an approach which considers accessibility, inclusivity, and the perspective of people with diverse impairments from the start of an infrastructure project. The foundation realised the benefits and moral reasoning of universal design, and saw that it would enable them to develop the first accessible tourist area in Armenia.





Another main barrier is the moral one. Society is not well informed about disabilities. As individuals everyone is different and diverse, but eventually, irrespective of ethnicity, sex, and physical limitations. All people will have equal rights.

Murad Memmedov, motivational trainer and blogger, Azerbaijan



**HOW AN EMPOWERED YOUNG DISABLED PERSON
IMPROVED PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

AZERB

In Azerbaijan, disabled young people are particularly unrepresented or even excluded from mainstream society. Many disabled people who participated in IDEAS have had to address stereotypes they had about themselves and about the role they feel they can play in society. Several IDEAS participants have since become involved in lobbying activities and are more active in the promotion of their rights.

When Orkhan participated in an IDEAS training course he learned about Article 9 of the UNCRPD and he decided to do an experiment on the street to see if bus drivers would assist him on and off public transport. Many refused to help and others were rude to him.

With inspiration and a new-found confidence, Orkhan embarked on a social media campaign to challenge the Ministry of Transport about the accessibility of public buses. Many people followed Orkhan's Facebook and YouTube pages, and other young persons with disabilities in Azerbaijan learned about their rights through his blogs. This sparked a wider discussion in the media and across the whole country.

‘When Orkhan joined IDEAS his self-esteem was low. Now he will speak in front of big audiences – he couldn’t do that before.’

Sabina Guliyeva, British Council Project Manager, Azerbaijan

Because of Orkhan's advocacy work, the buses in the capital of Baku have been upgraded and the drivers received training on inclusion. The Ministry of Transport changed the terminology used on public transport bringing it into line with the social model of disability and included pictures of diverse member of society in their marketing materials. They also screened an awareness raising video which was created by IDEAS in all bus station monitors in Baku (over 600) for two months. The video was so successful that European Union representatives saw it and asked for permission to place it on their website.

Employees from the Ministry of Transport have delivered a formal presentation to their board about the actions they took to improve the inclusivity of buses which influenced the Ministry's employment team to review its recruitment practices. Now, two people with disabilities are full-time employees at the organisation and Orkhan, who plays an active part in his community, has become a role model for other young people.

BAIJAN



Communities and nations must implement *nothing about us without us*. Frequently we face projects with no involvement of disabled people – not in idea, design, or implementation. Then after everything is completed, then disabled people [are] asked to express gratitude.

Armen Alaverdyan, Director, UNISON, Armenia



**ENSURING THAT THE UNCRPD IS
IMPLEMENTED IN RURAL AREAS**

GEORGE

Around the world disabled people in rural areas are disproportionately disadvantaged and excluded; essential services are limited or nonexistent, hospitals or medical centres are further away, infrastructure and transportation are less developed, and there are more challenges to accessing education or employment. They may also experience greater social, cultural and economic prejudice and discrimination from their families and communities.

Georgia has a well-established disability movement which began in the 1990s. There are currently over 100 DPOs and NGOs working on disability issues in the country.

The IDEAS team and their partner, the Academy for Peace and Development, decided to take their work to less urbanised areas. They selected the Kakheti region in the East of Georgia which covers a quarter of the country but had hardly been reached by disability organisations. They conducted an evidence-based inquiry with disabled people, municipality workers, village commissioners, social workers and doctors in Kakheti. The assessment and discussions showed that the needs of Kakheti were different from the general situation in Georgia.

The British Council recruited and convened a cross-sector working group to review Georgian policy documents relating to persons with disabilities. This included the UNCRPD, the equal rights national action plan, and municipal legislation and budgets. The group produced a concept document and a three-year action plan for the local government on inclusive decision-making. The Kakheti municipality committed to implement the changes laid out in the action plan.

One element has already begun; to monitor the implementation of the UNCRPD and the local action plan in Kakheti. This exercise is being completed by a committed group of volunteers from NGOs, municipal workers, and disabled people – all of whom received training on monitoring, evaluation and reporting from IDEAS. A disability issues council has also been created at Tbilisi city hall office which is chaired by a disabled person who was a participant of the IDEAS project.

‘The most important change has been the point of view of national and local authorities. Most are not exposed to disability issues. The [IDEAS] project opened their eyes to many people and they are now seeing persons with disabilities as equal members of society’

Irina Sukhinina, Manager of IDEAS, British Council

Georgia



Because of the UK study visit I understand the spectrum of provisions that allow you to provide inclusive education for all children with all types of impairments. I will go back to the Ministry of Education in Jordan and tell them and all of the teaching community that this is possible.

Alia Zureikat, I am Human, Jordan



**JORDAN'S FIRST DISABLED
TELEVISION PANEL HOST**

JORDA

In Jordan the engagement with the media was very significant. Due to the activities of IDEAS, Asia Yaghi, president of I am Human Association for People with Disabilities, the British Council's local partner, was asked to participate on a talk show alongside one of the main national figureheads on television. Having a female disabled person on national television raised the profile of the inclusivity agenda and presented a challenge to many viewing members of the public on their own beliefs and understandings which surround disability.

'We need to make disability more visible and transform the experiences of the disabled community – in all its diversity'
HRH Prince Mired Bin Ra'ad Bin Zaid

The response was largely positive but unfortunately Asia also received some negative comments. Asia continued to speak twice a week on 'Donya ya Donya' Ro'ya TV and now has a regular slot – making her the first television presenter in Jordan with a disability. This was a remarkable achievement and Asia has covered topics that raise awareness about the rights of persons with disability and the fact that they should be treated equally in a society that is inclusive of all its citizens. This was a real milestone for IDEAS as the television show reached approximately 90,000 people.

This impacted the entire media sector. For the first time in Jordan, journalists were active participants in activities in the field of disability, rather than passive observers. Representatives from the media also attended IDEAS training sessions which had an institutional impact on the sector. Disability coverage became more comprehensive and tied to policy development issues. The style of the coverage reflected disability issues in a rights-based manner, and the understanding of the role of the media in awareness-raising has increased.

The IDEAS team has also been directly approached by HRH Prince Mired Bin Ra'ad Bin Zaid, and asked to review the new disabilities law which Jordan is proposing to increase the rights of persons with disabilities in political life. When complete, this will be the first ever anti-discrimination law in Jordan. HRH Prince Mired Bin Ra'ad Bin Zaid and Alia Zureikat (adviser to the president and a consultant on the IDEAS project) both attended the UN Conference on Disability in New York where they advocated for the adoption of the social model of disability in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.





It has been beneficial working with the British Council. UK organisations have a different way of working which we admire a lot. They don't impose, it's a real partnership. This project has sowed the seed for bringing people together.

Sylvana Lakkis, President of LPHU, Lebanon



**CHANGING PERSPECTIVES BY
WORKING WITH MINISTRIES**

LEBAN

Lebanon is the only IDEAS project country which has not yet ratified the UNCPRD. Civil society organisations in Lebanon are often politically aligned which also influences financial flows. It was important to the British Council that we maintain neutrality and work with the right organisations; we partnered with the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU) who are part of an activist movement.

The British Council supported LPHU to develop a new strategy of influence and they now have an important role in working with ministries to explain the social model, the UNCPRD, Law 220, and inclusive criteria to staff. Lebanon delivered training courses using the IDEAS toolkits to the Ministry of Social Affairs; the department which is in charge of implementing Law 220 (Rights of Disabled People). To meet demands, IDEAS completed a 'train the trainer' course and recruited trainers from each sector (media, civil society and government) including four members of ministries. This meant government workers became part of the project – they were internal advocates; showcasing the toolkits and nominating senior colleagues for the next round of training. Of the 27 ministries in Lebanon, 19 have participated in the cascade training, as well as the directors of 20 social development centres across Lebanon.

'I am now convinced that disabled peoples' organisations know the needs better and know what can be done'

Samar Ramadan, Higher Council Urban Planning Lebanon

Participants from each ministerial department subsequently submitted proposals for pilot actions that would make their workplace more inclusive or that would promote disabled people's involvement in decision-making. The IDEAS disability trainers reviewed the pilot initiatives and monitored how pilots were taken forward. To date, at least 15 proposals are under consultation or in process. They include access audits, revised use of terminology, and a review of recruitment, selection and retention policies.

Some social development centres have worked with municipalities to secure accessible parking spaces in public places. One particular centre will be fully made accessible and will be looked at as a model to replicate in other centres. The pilot has also impacted the social workers at the central prison where they submitted a proposal to make the prison's hallway and facilities more accessible.

In a context where the UNCPRD has not been ratified, there is now a critical mass of government staff whose attitudes in relation to disability have changed and who are better able to apply a disability lens in the context of policymaking and service provision. The IDEAS's team's deliberate approach to recruiting and working with disabled people as experts and advisers has also led to greater consultation and a more influential disabled voice in government decision-making in Lebanon.

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We've not only changed national agendas and changed minds, but we've also changed hearts. We have become a beacon of confidence around inclusive decision-making and accountability.

May Abuhamdia, Deputy Director British Council, Jordan



**INDEPENDENT LIVING
IN VINNYTSIA**

UKRAI

As in many countries, financial resources for disability are stretched in Ukraine. In the year running up to IDEAS the concept of independent living was being highlighted in the media in Ukraine. The British Council and its partner, the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities, along with other disability groups and disabled leaders recognised that there was an opportunity to test a new approach for independent living.

The region of Vinnytsia was already open to thinking about disability differently. The regional government joined a study visit to the UK and took part in forums involving disabled people and public, private, civil society, media and community groups in the region. By acting as the convener the IDEAS team encouraged different interest groups to share experiences about barriers disabled people experience in the municipality and to challenge assumptions and attitudes in relation to disabled people. They considered what independent living represented and how it could benefit disabled residents as well as the wider population.

'We have done a lot for people with disabilities but I have never thought about or had involvement of working with disabled people. I was doing things without them not with them. Now I will introduce a new strategy of working with disabled people.'

Head of Social Policy and Labour,
Vinnytsia Regional Government, Ukraine

The Municipal government took a strategic decision to think about using resources differently. Working with the IDEAS team, they agreed to allocate funding and to plan for two independent living pilots. A proposal by Open Hearts, a DPO, outlined a plan in partnership with 'Obriy' (a social-psychological rehabilitation centre) to turn a former municipal institution into a training centre. With considerable assistance from volunteers, the training centre was opened in September 2015.

The second initiative involved the installation of accessible lift in the Vinnytsia Health Centre implemented by a DPO called Harmony. The health centre provides medical services for 20,800 local communities with 3,700 children and 515 disabled people (41 of whom are wheelchair users). The technical issues discovered during implementation of the initiative forced Harmony to re-scope works and undergo rounds of negotiations with the city council to amend the budget. Eventually the council agreed to cover four-fifths of the budget and local businesses provided a video system and signs in Braille.

As a consequence, the municipality is paying for five employees at the centre and provides three training courses free of charge to disabled residents from the Vinnytsia region. As a further development, the municipality is also planning to contract civil society organisations to provide social services in partnership with municipal institutions.

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British Council, Armenia

UNISON, Armenia

British Council, Azerbaijan

British Council, Georgia

Academy for Peace and Development

British Council, Jordan

I am Human

British Council, Lebanon

Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union

British Council, Ukraine

National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities, Ukraine

British Council, UK

The British Council is enormously grateful to the wide range of UK disability professionals, disabled peoples' organisations, government, civil society and media groups who provided inspiration and shared their experiences with participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lebanon, Jordan and Ukraine.

In particular, thanks go to Agnes Fletcher and to Nick Goss who worked with disabled practitioners in participating countries to develop international IDEAS toolkits and training of trainer workshops in inclusive decision-making for civil society, media and government.

Endorsements

‘Because we had them [British Council] with us the public sector was more responsive and attended better the activities and got more involved. The British Council is [a] very respected entity in Lebanon and had a good influence on government and civil society.’

Sylvana Lakkis, President of LPHU, Lebanon

‘IDEAS indeed intends to bring positive changes into the lives of people with disabilities. We see it in our life, in society, and there are considerable changes. The British Council even attracted us to jobs, we do not feel segregated.’

Oxran Adigozel, student blogger, Azerbaijan

‘The framework enabled the project team to bring together a large and diverse constituency allowing them to not only deliberate matters of direct concern to them [disabled people] but also to do so with their peers without disabilities. The framework also facilitated the process of breaking down the decision-making process previously deemed complicated and difficult.’

Alia Zureikat, I am Human, Jordan

‘IDEAS taught me how to communicate with people with disabilities. It taught me to use correct terminology. It taught me to fully understand that it’s not about physical limitations, it’s all about the provision of accessibility and equal opportunities.’

Sabina Guliyeva, IDEAS Project Co-ordinator, Azerbaijan





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