

ONE YEAR ON: Reflecting on the Deployment of an Australia Assists Disability Inclusion Specialist to the World Food Programme

Summary:

The deployment of RedR Roster Member Vivienne to the World Food Programme in Rome as a Disability Inclusion Specialist, from May 2018 to April 2019, was the first disability-specific deployment supported by the Australia Assists program. Now more than one year since Vivienne finished her deployment, RedR worked with disability inclusion advisory partner CBM Australia to look back at the deployment and learn what has happened subsequently.

The objective of the reflection was to understand what factors help or hinder efforts to better integrate disability inclusion in the day-to-day work of a mainstream humanitarian actor, and use learnings to inform future disability-specific deployments. We also wanted to look at the specific example of Vivienne's deployment, and consider what impact it had on disability inclusion knowledge and practice within WFP.

To conduct this reflection process, we reviewed key documents and reports from Vivienne's deployment and conducted a series of eight interviews with Vivienne herself and key WFP stakeholders at HQ, regional bureau, and country office level.

Key Findings:

- The deployment of the disability inclusion specialist had an **important awareness-raising effect**. The deployee provided concrete support to help country offices **take forward disability inclusion actions**, as well as **providing broader recommendations** for the organisation as a whole.
- The **momentum for disability inclusion** within WFP **is continuing** even after the deployment ended. Recommendations made by Vivienne on the way forward for disability inclusion across WFP have been taken on board and moved forward **within Protection Policy and Disability Roadmap processes** now underway.

Key Lessons:

- The most important element needed to ensure a successful disability-specific deployment is **matching the profile and skills of a deployee to the deployment objective**. For example, a deployment focused on building awareness and getting organisational buy-in to the idea of disability inclusion would require a different skillset compared to a deployment focused on providing technical support to a country office to implement a disability inclusion action plan.
- Success also depends on the deployee **having an in-depth understanding of their host organisation's mandate and internal systems** in order to ensure the support provided is tailored to specific operations.



Vivienne's deployment provided concrete support direct to country offices

During Vivienne's deployment, she undertook field missions to seven WFP country offices (Laos, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Turkey and Uganda), in which she:

- held focus groups with older people and people with disability to discuss their lived experiences;
- initiated partnerships between WFP staff and organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs);
- supported staff to identify barriers and enablers for better disability inclusion practice;
- identified case studies of existing good inclusion practice;

Having a deployee dedicated full-time to disability inclusion was seen an important contribution to WFP. Staff who were working at country office level when Vivienne was deployed indicated that having her support was essential to help them progress actions. **Many interviewees pointed to the increased agency-wide attention on disability inclusion with Vivienne in the specialist role.**

"Without Vivienne there I wouldn't have been able to do anything on disability inclusion. Having a dedicated resource on disability inclusion is crucial; it doesn't work otherwise."

– WFP country office stakeholder

Vivienne created relationships between WFP and the local disability movement in order to sustain the focus on disability inclusion beyond the duration of her deployment

Brokering relationships between WFP and local disability movement stakeholders was a key part of Vivienne's efforts to ensure the sustainability of disability inclusion objectives after the completion of her deployment. She aimed to offer recommendations for continued implementation, and establish relationships through which WFP could continue to engage with people with disabilities, and, in turn, be held to account.

"I hope that my deployment will inspire [WFP country offices] to initiate partnerships with DPOs [also known as OPDs] and people with disability – and older people, and strengthen national and local leadership to apply 'nothing about us without us', to involve people with disability in all decisions that affect them."

– Extract from Vivienne's deployment reporting

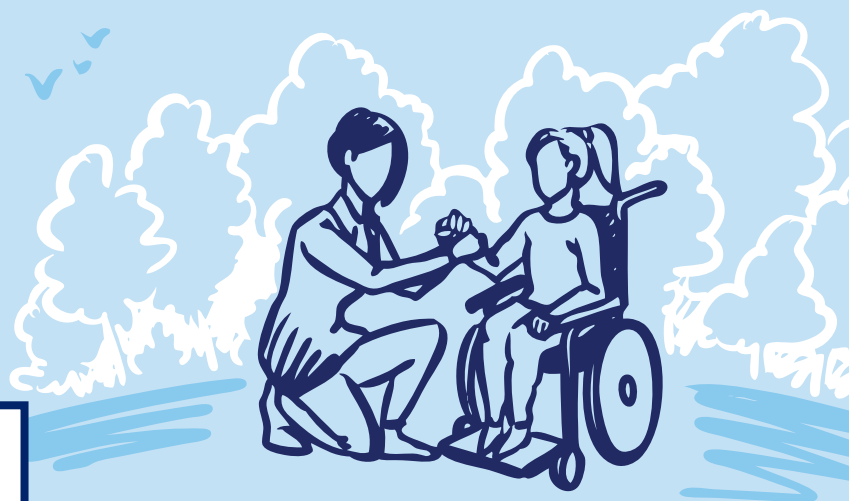
Momentum has continued in the year since

Indications from interviewees within WFP HQ show that Vivienne's recommendations on the way forward for disability inclusion have slowly been taken on board and progressed by WFP in the year since the deployment.

"One year on, a lot of the work Vivienne put into her report did come to the fore when we started updating our protection policy. Within that process there is now very dedicated focus for disability inclusion and it is now much more embraced by the organisation as something to take seriously. So what Vivienne started saying in her reports we have now picked up after a bunch of consultation at field level with government, donors and partners. Unfortunately, it took a while to flick that switch on for us, and for us to understand how her work was valuable and able to be used. We had to go through an internal process to get to this point."

– WFP HQ stakeholder

WFP is now **embedding disability inclusion considerations into the new Protection Policy**, which is close to approval. The organisation has also developed a **Disability Inclusion Roadmap** which sets out the multi-year plan for how WFP will put the commitments of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy¹ into practice. Part of the Roadmap will be to 'pilot' approaches to disability inclusion in programming within the Asia-Pacific regional bureau. The momentum for disability inclusion within WFP is continuing.



1. <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>