

Debbie Kauna Foundation

Endline Evaluation Report

Empowering Persons with Disabilities through Livelihood and
Mentorship



A circular watermark logo containing the text "MENTORS INNOVATION HUB NIGERIA" around the perimeter and "July 2025" in the center.

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Mentors Innovation Hub Nigeria
July 2025

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Executive Summary

This comprehensive report presents the findings from the endline evaluation of the Debbie Kauna Foundation project supported by UN Women through the National Humanitarian Fund (NHF), focusing on advancing the economic and social empowerment of persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) across 8 communities in Michika and Madagali LGAs of Adamawa state Nigeria. With a special focus on women who constitute 98% of participants. The evaluation sampled 256 beneficiaries to gauge outcomes across multiple dimensions, including mentorship effectiveness, vocational skill acquisition, financial inclusion, digital literacy, and gender-based violence (GBV) awareness.

The data reveal that participants benefited greatly from mentorship initiatives, which equipped them with critical business skills, increased their confidence, and enhanced their ability to navigate challenges. Vocational training empowered them to engage in various value chains such as Animal Husbandry, Tailoring, Shoe Making, and Tie & Dye, helping many start or expand income-generating businesses.

However, the evaluation also highlights several key constraints, notably limited access to capital, equipment, and essential animal health services that restrict business growth. Digital literacy remains an area for improvement, coupled with enhancing access to devices, while GBV awareness and support mechanisms need stronger integration.

Despite these gaps, participants report increased well-being and feel a greater sense of inclusion and respect within their communities, underscoring the project's positive impact on both livelihoods and social cohesion. The report concludes with practical recommendations to ensure sustainability and scale, emphasizing integrated support, enhanced financial services, and strengthened GBV prevention.

Project Background and Context

Persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) often face significant barriers to social and economic inclusion, compounded by limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and social support. Women with disabilities, in particular, experience intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization.

Recognizing these challenges, the UN Women-supported project through NHF executed by Debbie Kauna Foundation (DKF) aimed to enhance the livelihoods of PLWDs predominantly women, through mentorship programs combined with vocational training across carefully selected value chains suited to local economic contexts. The project sought not only to provide skills and resources but also to foster community acceptance and participation.

Target areas included Michika, Madagali, and adjacent communities, which are affected by displacement, returnee dynamics, and socio-economic challenges. Key value chains supported under the project encompassed agriculture (such as Small Ruminants, Poultry, Rice Processing) and artisanal crafts (Tailoring, Shoe Making, Tie & Dye). Furthermore, the project ensured provision of assistive devices to improve participant mobility and productivity.

The evaluation was designed to assess the effect of these multi-pronged interventions on the participants' capacities, income generation, social standing, awareness of rights and safety, and overall quality of life.

Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The evaluation was guided by the following specific objectives:

- To measure the effectiveness and quality of mentorship delivered, and its role in improving participant business knowledge and confidence.
- To assess the level and nature of participant engagement in the supported value chains and corresponding business growth strategies.
- To evaluate financial inclusion indicators, including access to formal banking, cooperative membership, and credit uptake.
- To examine digital literacy levels and device access among participants, and the impact on their business promotion and connectivity.
- To understand the extent of gender-based violence (GBV) awareness, availability of reporting mechanisms, and access to survivor support.
- To capture participant perceptions of changes in their social integration, security, comfort, and overall well-being.
- To identify challenges encountered during implementation and derive lessons for improved future programming.

The scope concentrated mainly on 256 sampled individuals drawn from the total project target in the geographic areas, ensuring diversity in age, education, disability type, and residency status to represent the broader project population.

Methodology

This evaluation combined quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group discussions (FGDs) to obtain a rich, multi-dimensional understanding of project outcomes.

Data Collection:

- **Quantitative:** A structured questionnaire administered to 256 participants collected data on demographics, business involvement, mentorship experience, financial and digital inclusion, GBV knowledge, and well-being. Data were disaggregated by gender, age category, type of disability, and location.
- **Qualitative:** FGDs involving groups of participants explored detailed experiences with mentors, business challenges, personal growth journeys, and community interactions.
- **Sampling:** Stratified sampling ensured representation of different clusters and community types (host, returnees, IDPs).

Data Analysis:

- Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies) and cross-tabulations for sub-group insights.
- Qualitative narratives were thematically coded to align with evaluation objectives and to deepen contextual understanding.

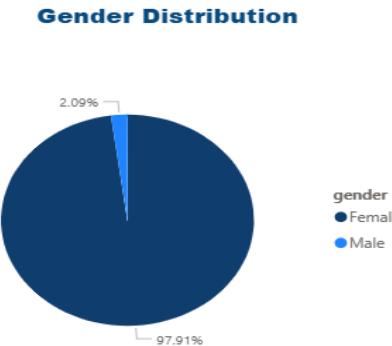
Ethical Considerations:

Participation was voluntary with informed consent. Data confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, especially considering the sensitive nature of disability and GBV topics.

Participant Demographics and Profile

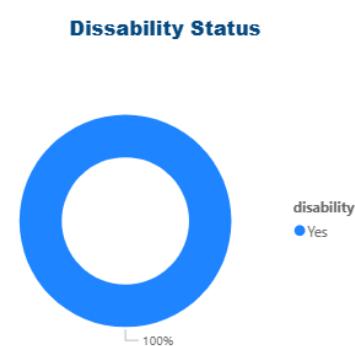
- **Gender Breakdown:** Women overwhelmingly represented the sample, accounting for 98%. This reflects the project's focus on empowering women with disabilities. Men constituted only 2%. This gender distribution highlights the project's contribution to addressing gender disparities in economic inclusion.

Figure 1: Gender Distribution Pie Chart



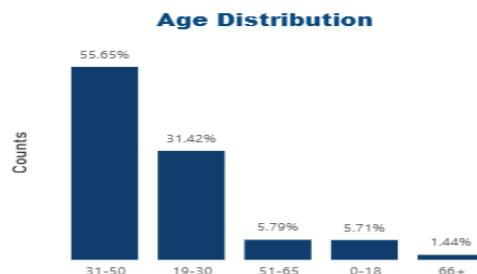
- **Disability Status:** All participants were persons living with disabilities (PLWDs), showcasing the project's specific targeting to this vulnerable group. Disabilities included physical, visual, and mobility impairments.

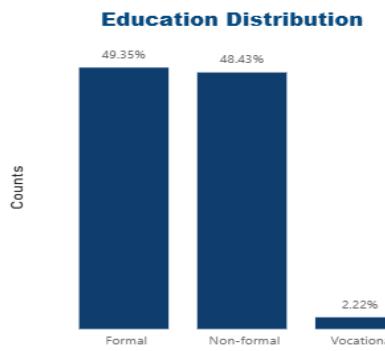
Figure 2: Disability Status Pie Chart



- **Age Distribution:** Participants' ages ranged from 17 up to 70 years old. Most participants clustered in the 25 to 50 age brackets, reflecting a working-age population actively engaged in livelihood activities.

Figure 3: Age Distribution



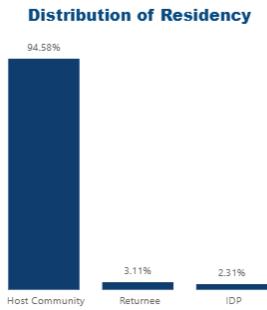


- **Education Levels:** Participant education varied widely, from non-formal education and primary schooling to secondary and tertiary levels. Approximately 40% had completed at least secondary education, facilitating business literacy, while others benefited from basic training and mentorship.

Figure 4: Education Levels Bar Chart

Residency and Community Type: Participants came from host communities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returnees, ensuring wide representation of vulnerable populations affected by displacement and returning to rebuild livelihoods.

Figure 5: Residency Type Distribution Chart

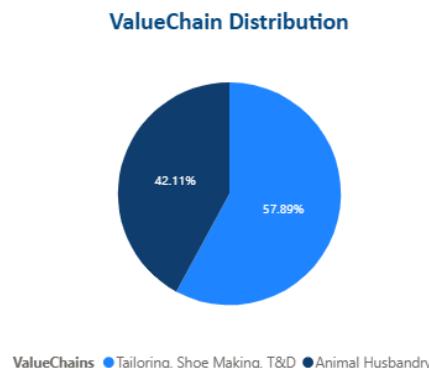


- **Value Chain Engagement:** The sample was involved in diverse value chains, including:

- Animal Husbandry (goats, sheep, poultry)
- Tailoring and Shoe Making
- Tie & Dye craftsmanship

Clustering allowed focused technical support and mentorship.

Figure 6: Value Chain Participation

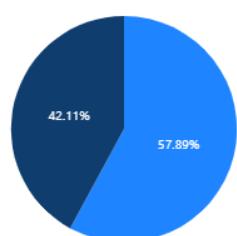


Key Findings

Impact of Mentorship

Mentorship was a cornerstone of success in this project. Participants highlighted mentors' approachability, patience, responsiveness, and delivery of practical knowledge. Mentors not only taught business management but also provided tailored advice on animal care, product quality, risk mitigation, and community relations.

ValueChain Distribution



ValueChains ● Tailoring, Shoe Making, T&D ● Animal Husbandry

Approximately 90% of participants confirmed mentorship helped them build confidence and improve business management skills. Many aspire to become mentors themselves, offering a sustainable, peer-led model for future development.

Participants expressed heartfelt appreciation for Debbie Kauna Foundation, NHF, and UN Women, underscoring the importance of projects that recognize and support persons with disabilities.

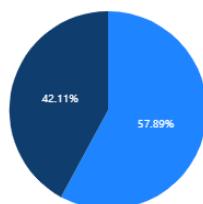
Figure 7: Mentorship Impact Bar Chart

Vocational Training and Value Chain Engagement

The project's focus on training aligned closely with participants' local realities.

- **Animal Husbandry:** Beneficiaries reported plans to increase female livestock for herd multiplication, with attention to feeding, hygiene, and veterinary services. Cooperative formation and digital marketing were also planned.
- **Tailoring, Shoe Making, Tie & Dye:** Participants showed enthusiasm for improving their craft, seeking advanced styles and better facilities like sewing machines and worktables.

ValueChain Distribution



ValueChains ● Tailoring, Shoe Making, T&D ● Animal Husbandry

• **Small Ruminants & Rice Processing:** Provided additional earnings but faced constraints due to limited capital and equipment.

Participants emphasized combining technical skills with sound business practices as key to sustained growth.

Figure 8: Value Chain-Specific Engagement and Expansion Plans

Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment

Financial access remains mixed:

- About 60% possess bank accounts, and roughly half are active in cooperatives.
- Loan uptake remains low, due to repayment fears and collateral barriers.
- Capital needs focus on bulk buying of feed, equipment procurement, and infrastructure.

Bridging these finance gaps is essential to unlock full business potential.



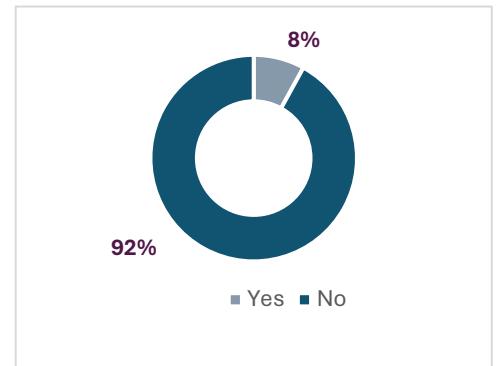
Figure 9: Financial Inclusion and Loan Uptake Chart

Digital Literacy and Access to Technology

Digital literacy efforts engaged about 65% of participants, but access to devices is uneven, limiting digital platform use for marketing or learning. Facebook and WhatsApp were the most popular platforms.

Improved technology access and skills could further enhance market engagement and peer networking.

Figure 10: Digital Literacy and Device Ownership Distribution

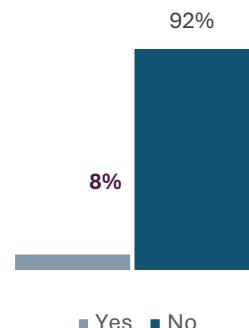


Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Awareness and Support

GBV awareness varied, with many lacking training or knowledge of laws and reporting tools. Some participants reported violence or discrimination, indicating vulnerabilities that livelihood support alone cannot address.

Increased GBV prevention training and survivor referral systems are needed for holistic protection.

Figure 11: GBV Awareness and Response Indicators

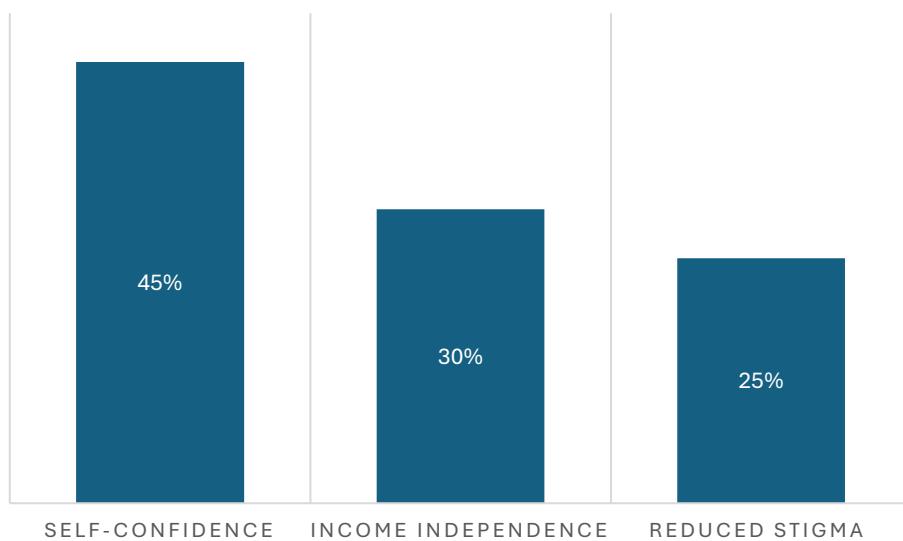


Participant Well-Being and Social Integration

Most participants report improved well-being, finding greater security and acceptance in their communities thanks to economic empowerment and social inclusion efforts.

Self-confidence, income independence, and reduced stigma are significant impact results.

Figure 12: Well-Being and Community Support Chart



Challenges and Lessons Learned from Implementation

While the project achieved many positive outcomes, the evaluation revealed a range of persistent challenges that impact the scalability, sustainability, and overall effectiveness of the interventions. Reflecting on these challenges alongside lessons learned is crucial to inform future program design and implementation.

Key points include:

Limited Access to Capital and Financial Resources

A recurring theme among participants was inadequate access to affordable capital, which restricted their ability to expand businesses, purchase inputs in bulk, and invest in necessary tools & infrastructure. Many beneficiaries highlighted the difficulty in obtaining loans due to the lack of collateral, fear of repayment, and limited availability of microfinance options tailored for persons with disabilities. This financial gap posed a significant barrier to growth despite the participants' motivation and skills.

Lesson learned:

Sustainable economic empowerment requires not only skills development but also facilitated access to flexible, accessible financial services, such as microcredit, grants, or revolving funds, designed with the unique needs of PLWDs in mind. Additionally, cooperative formations showed promise as a pathway for collective financial strength and risk-sharing.

Inadequate Access to Tools, Equipment, and Assistive Technology

Many vocations, especially Tailoring and Shoe Making, demand quality equipment to improve efficiency and product quality. Participants frequently expressed frustration over the lack of reliable sewing machines, shoe polishing devices, and workspace enhancements such as large cutting tables and power sources (e.g., generators). Assistive devices, while provided to some extent, were not always sufficient or promptly distributed to fully enable participant mobility and productivity.

Lesson learned:

Provision of adequate tools and assistive products must be timely, tailored, and scaled according to participant cluster needs. Follow-up maintenance and technical support for equipment is equally critical to sustain benefits.

Gaps in Access to Veterinary and Animal Health Services

Livestock-related value chains were dominant among participants, and good animal health is fundamental for productivity. However, participants highlighted limited veterinary facilities, inadequate access to vaccines and medicines, and poor availability of quality feed. This constrained livestock health and growth, increasing vulnerability to animal diseases and losses.

Lesson learned:

Building stronger linkages with local veterinary services, establishing mobile health clinics, and improving supply chains for feed and medicines are crucial steps to reinforce this value chain's viability.

Digital Divide and Limited Technology Access

Although a sizeable portion of participants attended digital literacy classes, digital inclusion was hampered by uneven access to devices, limited comfort navigating digital platforms, and intermittent power or connectivity issues. This divide curtailed participants' ability to leverage social media for marketing, explore e-commerce opportunities, or engage in peer learning remotely.

Lesson learned:

Bridging the digital divide necessitates greater investment in device provision tailored for PLWDs, accessible training methods (considering literacy levels and disabilities), and exploring low-tech or offline solutions coupled with community digital hubs.

Insufficient Integration of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response

The evaluation uncovered gaps in GBV awareness, particularly around legal knowledge, reporting mechanisms, and survivor support options. Some participants disclosed experiences of discrimination and violence, but training and referral mechanisms were not consistently available or known.

Lesson learned:

Mainstreaming GBV prevention across all project components is imperative to safeguard participants. Livelihood programs must incorporate comprehensive sensitization, survivor support, and linkages with community and health services.

Sustainability and Dependency Concerns

While mentorship fostered enthusiasm and capacity building, many participants expressed dependency on the project's direct support for tools, inputs, and capital. Without sustainable mechanisms for continued training, financial access, and mentorship, gains risk erosion after project closeout.

Lesson learned:

Cultivating local ownership through peer-led mentorship networks, embedding vocational support within local institutions or cooperatives, and identifying longer-term funding pathways increase the likelihood of sustained impact.

Strategic Recommendations for Future Programming

Building on the challenges and lessons, the following strategic recommendations provide a roadmap for enhancing the effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusivity of future initiatives:

Establish and Expand Accessible Financial Services for PLWD Entrepreneurs

- Develop flexible, low-interest micro-loan products and micro-grant schemes adapted to the income cycles and repayment capacities of PLWD women entrepreneurs.
- Support and scale cooperative savings groups as trusted financial intermediaries providing peer support and collective bargaining power.
- Partner with microfinance institutions to design inclusive credit products, prioritize simplified application processes, and provide financial literacy training.

Ensure Timely and Contextual Provision of Tools, Equipment, and Assistive Devices

- Conduct needs-based assessments at cluster levels to customize the provision of equipment and assistive devices that directly enhance participant productivity.
- Allocate resources for regular maintenance and technical support services to prolong equipment lifespan and functionality.
- Facilitate community workshops to train participants on effective utilization and upkeep of their tools.

Strengthen Veterinary Health Services and Livestock Support

- Build partnerships with local veterinary clinics, NGOs, and government agricultural departments to improve livestock health service coverage, including mobile veterinary units and vaccination campaigns.
- Promote the establishment of feed cooperatives or bulk purchasing schemes to improve access and affordability.
- Integrate animal health modules into vocational curricula to empower participants with basic knowledge in disease prevention and care.

Enhance Digital Inclusion with Tailored Training and Device Access

- Expand digital literacy programs to include accessible content tailored to disability types and literacy levels.
- Explore subsidies or device lending libraries enabling greater device access.
- Develop/Equip community digital hubs where participants can access devices, internet, and peer support.
- Advocate for improved rural connectivity and power infrastructure that supports digital work.

Fully Integrate GBV Awareness, Prevention, and Referral Mechanisms Across Livelihood Programs

- Incorporate mandatory GBV sensitization sessions in all vocational and mentorship trainings.
- Disseminate information about existing legal frameworks, reporting tools like SMARTRR, and survivor support services.
- Establish firm links with local health and protection actors to facilitate survivor referrals and support networks.
- Train mentors and community leaders as GBV focal points to widen reach.

Promote Sustainability through Peer Mentorship and Institutional Links

- Formalize mentorship programs by training successful graduates as peer mentors, building capacity for knowledge transfer and psychosocial support within communities.
- Collaborate with local government and community-based organizations to embed vocational training, financial education, and support services into regular programming.
- Identify pathways for continuous funding such as through government programs, corporate social responsibility (CSR) partnerships, or social enterprises.

Document and Share Success Stories and Best Practices

- Collect and widely disseminate participant success stories demonstrating empowerment, business growth, and community impact to inspire others and attract funders.

- Develop case studies illustrating how inclusive livelihood programming benefits marginalized groups and contributes to broader social goals.

Annexes

- Data collection tools and surveys
- FGD Data and Feedbacks
- Participant list (anonymized)

