# The use of Diaconal Asset-Based Approach as a tool for the inclusion of persons with disabilities

## Case study of the work of the Association HANDICARE with hearing-impaired youth in Ngaoundéré – Cameroon

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## Abstract

The inclusion of groups in situation of marginalisation such as people with disabilities (PwD) is one of the great challenges that the 'Leave No behind' approach of the SDGs aims to solve. Very often, organisations and academic research address the issue of inclusion of PwD from the perspective of their vulnerability, overlooking their strength. The objective of this study is to look at the matter from the opposite side, meaning starting from the abilities, competences, and skills of PwD by assessing whether the approach used by HANDICARE (an association with a Christian background in Ngaoundere – Cameroon) in their work for the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth is diaconal asset-based and can be used for the inclusion of other similar groups. One member of the staff of HANDICARE, ten hearing-impaired youth and tree parents participated then in semi-structured interviewed.

The diaconal Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach '*Use Your Talents*' (UYT) (the main concept) enriched by three other concepts (*Seeking Conviviality* - another diaconal ABCD, *Empowerment* and *Social Innovation*) constituted the conceptual framework which led the analysis. The concept of *Disability-Inclusive Development* also helped to identify the features of the inclusion in the perspective of HANDICARE. This study revealed that the method used by that association work has a diaconal character since it is carried out with the motivation of showing the love of Christ and is asset-based focusing their method on the assets and competence of the hearing-impaired youth. The HANDICARE approach presents the characteristics of UYT with additionally a good application of the twin-track approach. The effectiveness of the inclusive process is shown in how the hearing-impaired youth are less discriminated and feel more emancipated when their competences are expressed and recognised. The expression of their talents and skills gives them confidence to consider themselves as fully members of the community. The study also reveals that diaconal asset-based methods like UYT in an integrated model with elements of *Seeking Conviviality* and *Empowerment*, especially the fight for the rights of groups in a situation of marginalisation, can effectively be used as a tool for the inclusion of PwD.

Key words: Diaconal Asset-Based method, UYT, Seeking Conviviality, Empowerment, Social Innovation, ABCD, Diakonia, Disability-Inclusive Development, Twin-Track approach, HANDICARE, hearing-impaired youth.

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**Dedication**

*To you my beloved Florence and our adorable children Ed Aser and Paguielle Syntyche. You have been my inspiration. I cannot help but admire your great sacrifice because you believe in me. What a love!*

*In memory of Palnang Yalla, my dearest brother!*
*You lived for others, and you served others till your last breath.*
*You were a true servant of God and humanity!*

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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviation

ABCD: Assets-Based Community Development

BUCREP: Bureau Centrale des Recensements et des Etudes de Population

CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CBCPS: Central Bureau of the Census and Population Studies (Bureau Central des Recensements et des Etudes de Population – BUCREP)

COLPROT: Collège Protestant de Ngaoundéré (Protestant Secondary School of Ngaoundéré)

DESA-UN: Department of Economic and Social Affairs - United Nations

DSPD: Division for Social Policy Development

ELCC: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon

ESDA: Ecole Spécialisée Pour Déficients Auditifs (Specialised School for Hearing-Impaired Pupils)

FH: Founder of HANDICARE

GPHC: General Population and Housing Census (Recensements Généraux de la Population et de l'Habitat – RGPH)

LWF: Lutheran World Federation

MLC: Malagasy Lutheran Church

NIS: National Institute of Statistics

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

P1, … P3: Parent1, …, Parent 3

PIAP: Programme Intégré pour l'Amélioration de la Qualité de vie des Personnes vivant avec un handicap dans les régions septentrionales du Cameroun (Integrated Programme for the improvement of live quality of PwD in the Northern Regions of Cameroon)

PwD: People with Disabilities / Persons with Disabilities

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

UN: United Nations

UYT: Use Your Talents

WCC: World Council of Churches

Y1, Y2, … Y10: Youth 1, Youth 2 … Youth10

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# Chapter 1- INTRODUCTION

## 1.0. Introduction

'Leave No One Behind!' This is the core of the approach carried by the SDGs. The process of implementing that approach should comprise "policies aimed at reducing inequalities and policies aimed at discriminatory barriers, including those arising from geography."[1] This is to show how the fight for the inclusion of all is the heart of the SDGs.

As people with disabilities (PwD) are one of the vulnerable groups, there is no need to re-emphasise the need for great interest in their inclusion to ensure that they will not be left behind.

The current research is aiming to study the approach used by an association working for the inclusion of PwD, especially hearing-impaired youth, to see whether their practice can be seen as a Diaconal Asset-Based approach to the inclusion of PwD. The focus will be on the methodology used by this association to reach the mentioned goal. At the end of the study, the discussion will evaluate whether this approach could be seen as a tool for inclusion.

## 1.1. Inspiration

Having been introduced in the world of hearing-impaired people in 2008, I have since worked as specialised teacher for the deaf and was Director of the Specialised School for the Deaf in Ngaoundéré for 8 years. That immersed me in inclusive education. This experience put me in the centre of the fight for the dignity of the PwD particularly in the town of Ngaoundéré (the capital of the Adamawa Region – Cameroon) through their empowerment and the fight for their rights.

During my service in all those structures, the observation I made, together with a good number of professionals, was that despite all the laws and governmental measures, PwD are suffering from a deep marginalisation that starts from the family and continues to the wider

[1] DESA-UN, *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: The 2019 Edition*, 2019 ed. (Department of Economic and Social Affairs - United Nations, 2018), 33.

society.[2] Among the major problems, the following have been identified: under-education and dropping out from school, underemployment, stigmatisation, deep poverty and marginalisation.[3]

These reasons are motivation enough to search for ways to clarify this issue and combatting it in the light of some theories, concepts, and practice of the inclusion of PwD, especially in my case, for the hearing-impaired, and to look for a way of understanding it.

In my reflections on the above concerns, I identified in Ngaoundéré an association called HANDICARE that is fighting for the inclusion of PwD, especially youth with hearing-impairment. That organisation will be the focal point of this research.

### 1.2. Research question

Since the research question should help circumscribe the area that is essential for the study[4] and must be focused and clear, specified and cut to size, built on sensitising concepts and include perspectives,[5] it was worded as follows:

***Does the Association HANDICARE use a Diaconal Assets-Based approach for the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth in the town of Ngaoundéré-Cameroon and can this approach be used for the inclusion of other similar groups?***

This main question could be broken into the two following sub questions:

i. *Can the approach and methods used by the association HANDICARE for the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth in the town of Ngaoundéré be considered to be a Diaconal Assets-Based approach?*
ii. *Can the Diaconal Assets-Based approach be considered as a tool for the inclusion of people living with disability?*

[2] Benedict Venance Mope, "Précarité de l'environnement familial et perturbation du parcours scolaire des élèves déficients auditifs nés de parents entendants. Cas des élèves de l'ESDA à Ngaoundéré" (Diplôme de Professeur Spécialisé pour Déficients Auditifs Monograph, FEPPDA, 2017).
[3] Mope, "Précarité de l'environnement familial et perturbation du parcours scolaire des élèves déficients auditifs nés de parents entendants. Cas des élèves de l'ESDA à Ngaoundéré."
[4] Uwe Flick, *An introduction to qualitative research* (Sage Publications Limited, 2018), 86.
[5] Flick, *An introduction to qualitative research*, 88.

### 1.3. Scope, Limitation of the research and methodology

In Cameroon, there are many groups that are considered as needing special attention and among others, PwD in general (hearing-impairment, physical disabilities, sight-impairment, mental disabilities, albino, dwarfism …), autochthone groups (Pygmies and Mbororos) and refugees can be named. All these groups call for inclusion. If included in this study, their number would then be too high, and their specificities would call for a very complex analysis.

Therefore, this research will focus only on PwD and especially the hearing-impaired youngsters withing the intervention zone of HANDICARE.

The study will investigate whether the values carried by HANDICARE give it a status of diaconal work, and whether the way they work to achieve their objective is an asset-based approach.

In the analysis, the study will explore the methodology used by HANDICARE to reach their goal of the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth, to see if it is a diaconal asset-based approach. Furthermore, it will discuss whether and how that approach could be considered as a tool for the inclusion of marginalised groups.

While many studies have been conducted in the domain of the inclusion of people with disability starting from their vulnerability, I am intending to look at the issue from the opposite side, meaning starting from the **abilities of those people living with disability**. This is because the society in which our sample is living looks at them with pity, and as people who just need help without been useful to the society in any way. Therefore, the assets-based approach is a crucial feature of this study.

### 1.4.Definition of Terms

Inclusion

In the context of this study, '*inclusion*' refers to considering all the members of the society in all spheres of social life in terms of rights and effective participation; it refers to a process encouraging interaction between people with different relevant attributes or an

impersonal institutional mechanism of opening up access to participation of all in all spheres of social life.[6]

Diakonia

Diakonia refers to the expression of the Christian faith by deed and words, manifesting the nature of the Church in the daily life through compassion, inclusive communities, responsible stewardship of creation and the struggle for justice.[7]

Asset-Based Community Development

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) refers to a process of acting collectively for the improvement of a community in any or all the spheres of their lives (physical, environmental, cultural, social, political, economic …) focusing on their strengths and already existing resources by building capacity withing that community.[8]

Use Your Talents

Use Your Talents (UYT) is a diaconal ABCD (also called congregational ABCD) based on the parable of the talents in the Bible which aims at making the congregation be the primary development agent by stressing on the use of each member's assets (called here '*talents*').

Empowerment

Empowerment refers to a multi-dimensional process by which people in a situation of marginalisation take on the role of actors in the process of changing their destiny. The goal of this process is empowerment.[9]

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[6] Hilary Silver, "The contexts of social inclusion," *Available at SSRN 2641272* (2015).

[7] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, ed. Kjell Nordstokke (The Lutheran World Federation, 2009), 28.; Norwegian Church Aid, Together for a Just World: Norwegian Church Aid's Statement of Principles, 7 (Oslo: Norwegian Church Aid, 2008).

[8] Rhonda Phillips and Robert Pittman, "A framework for community and economic development," in *An introduction to community development*, ed. Rhonda Phillips and Robert Pittman (Routledge, 2008), 8; Anna Haines, "Asset-based community development," in *An introduction to community development*, ed. Rhonda Phillips and Robert Pittman (Routledge, 2009), 39-40.

[9] Kjell Nordstokke, "Liberating diakonia," (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forl., cop. 2011, 2011), 60.

## 1.5.Thesis Structure

### Chapter two

This chapter will give the background of the context of the study. It will provide figures about PwD in Cameroon, a presentation of the studied organisation, and an idea about the inclusion of PwD in Cameroon.

### Chapter three

This part will present the concepts and theories that will be used later to analyse and discuss the field data concerning the sample. It will practically provide the theoretical framework related to the study features: Disability-Inclusive Development, Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Diakonia, Use Your Talents (UYT), Seeking Conviviality, Social Innovation, and empowerment.

### Chapter four

Chapter four will present the methodology. It will describe the research design, the methods used in the collection of data, the challenges related to the field research, the ethical issues, and the validation of the data.

### Chapter five

The data collected will be presented and analysed in this chapter. As the objective of the research is to assess whether the methodology used by HANDICARE is a diaconal asset-based one, the focus will be made on the analysis of the responses of the leader of that organisation, checked by the responses of the hearing-impaired youth and their parents.

### Chapter six

Once the analysis done, this chapter will discuss the findings in the light of the theories presented in the chapter three. It will help to answer the first part of the research question which is to determine if HANDICARE is using diaconal assets-based approach in their intervention. That chapter will also set a path to the next one which should answer the second part of the research question.

**Chapter seven**

Answering the second part of the research question, this chapter will determine and analyse perspectives that could foster the use of Diaconal Assets-Based Approach as a tool for inclusion more widely.

**Chapter eight**

This chapter will conclude the thesis by summarising the process of the study and underlining the findings. It will also present some possible recommendations and suggestions for further study.

# Chapter 2- Background and Context

## 2.0. Introduction

HANDICARE is an association located in the town of Ngaoundere, the capital of the Adamawa Region of Cameroon. Thus, this section is intended to present the context of the study regarding the situation of handicap in the Adamaoua Region going from the situation in Cameroon, and the environment in which HANDICARE is operating.

## 2.1. The statistics

This section aims at giving a broad picture of the situation of PwD, especially the hearing-impaired persons, compared to the larger population.

### 2.1.1. Reliability of statistics

There are many divergences in the figures presented by various studies consulted. As a choice, the statistics that will be used in the current study are those resulting from the 3rd General Population and Housing Census (GPHC)[10] conducted in 2005 and released in 2010. This presents the officially reliable data collected from the field, all the other figures are just projections. This fact might be explained by the socio-political situation of Cameroon and a very heavy bureaucracy which could be seen as a hindrance for the operational organisations which are the Central Bureau of the Census and Population Studies (CBCPS) and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS).[11]

However, the projections made by the CBCPS and NIS could be called upon when it is crucial to have very recent data to understand a feature.

[10] http://bucrep.cm/index.php/fr/recensements/3eme-rgph/resultats, assessed on 27-10-2020

[11] To take an illustration, a fourth census has been decreed by the President of the Republic on 15th September 2015, decree mentions nowhere any delay, and since, the operations are still awaited. This could be due to a very heavy bureaucracy put in place by the above decree for that census; it could be seen as a hindrance for the operational organisations which are the Central Bureau of the Census and Population Studies (CBCPS) and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS). https://www.prc.cm/fr/multimedia/documents/4006-decret-n-2015-397-du-15-09-2015-instituant-le-4eme-recensement-general-de-la-population-et-de-l-habitat, assessed on 28-04-2021

### 2.1.2. Figures about PwD in Cameroon

In 2005, the population of Cameroon was then 17 463 836 of whom 884 289 were from the Adamawa Region. The report of the GPHC was drawing a growth of that population to 21 917 602 in 2015 and 33 955 398 in 2035.

The Volume II – Tome 13 of the report of the GPHC[12] shows that in 2005, Cameroun had a total of 262 119 persons having at least a disability (127 381 females and 134 738 males), with a prevalence rate for disabilities of 1.5% for the entire country. PwD were representing then 1.3% of the urban population and 1.7% of the rural. With 0.9%, the Adamawa Region had the lowest prevalence.

Nationally, the school-attendance rate of children with disability is 69.9%. In the Adamawa Region, it is 45.5%, the lowest of the country. That contrasts very much with the fact that that Region has the lowest prevalence.

Regarding economic activities of PwD, 46.5% are involved in income generating activities disaggregated as follows: 53% for males and 39.3% for females, showing that women are less engaged in economic actions.

The unemployment rate is 16.4% (with almost a balance between males and females). The largest number of PwD are carrying out agricultural, forestry and hunting activities. Most of them are self-employed as the following figures show: 10.7% of them are long-term salaried workers, 8.3% of them are short-term salaried workers, 0.4% are employers, 70.4% are self-employed, 9.9% are house helps, 0.2% are paid apprentices and 0.1% are unpaid apprentices. There is no need to be more precise to conclude that they have very low salaries. Just 10.4% of them are in the formal or modern sector and 21.6% are in the non-agricultural informal sector compared with 68% in the agricultural informal sector.

More than the half of PwD have a family and 84 578 stated that they were chief of their families, representing 2.5% of the total number of household's heads. However, the living conditions of their households are less comfortable.

[12] BUCREP, *3e Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat: Situation Socio-économique des Personnes vivant avec un Handicap*, Ministère de l'Economie, du Plan et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (Yaoundé, Cameroon, 2010), http://bucrep.cm/index.php/fr/ressources-et-documentations/telechargement/category/42-analyses-thmatiques?download=83:tome-13-situation-socio-economique-des-personnes-vivant-avec-un-handicap.

### 2.1.3. About people with hearing-impairment

Nationwide, people with hearing-impairment represent the highest number among PwD with a portion of 38.8% of the total number, meaning they are about 102 000. The primary school enrolment rate is around 71% (girls and boys).

In the Adamawa Region, they constitute 35,4% of PwD. That means that they represent a huge number: 3045 of the 8602 PwD of the Region.

Compared to the other PwD, the hearing-impaired have the second highest rate of primary school enrolment with 57,2%,[13] whereas the rate of marginalisation for this obligatory schooling age (6-14) is 14,2%.[14] The general rate of PwD literacy in Adamaoua is 32.1%.[15]

**Table 1: Net Rate (%) primary schooling (6-11 years/6-12 years) by region of residence by gender and type of disability**

| Region of residence | deaf | mute | blind | leper | Upper limb cripple | Lower limb infirmed | Mentally ill | albino |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adamawa | 57,2 | 29,4 | 40,0 | 52,4 | 43,4 | 43,6 | 43,2 | 100,0 |
| Nation wide | 71,2 | 43,7 | 56,6 | 71,0 | 71,8 | 64,9 | 46,3 | 86,9 |

Source: 3rd GPHC, Vol II Tome 13[16]

**Some important figures:**

**Table 2: PwD per gender and per area**

| Area | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Urban | 1488 | 1223 | 2711 |
| Rural | 2477 | 3414 | 5891 |
| Total | 3965 | 4637 | 8602 |

Source: 3rd GPHC, Vol II Tome 13[17]

[13] BUCREP, *3e Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat: Situation Socio-économique des Personnes vivant avec un Handicap*, 45.
[14] BUCREP, *3e Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat: Situation socio-économique des enfants et des jeunes*, Ministère de l'Economie, du Plan et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (Yaoundé, Cameroon, 2010), xiii, bucrep.cm/index.php/fr/ressources-et-documentations/telechargement/category/42-analyses-thmatiques?download=85:tome-10-situation-sociale-et-economique-des-enfants-et-des-jeunes.
[15] BUCREP, *3e Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat: Situation Socio-économique des Personnes vivant avec un Handicap*, 29.
[16] BUCREP, *3e Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat: Situation Socio-économique des Personnes vivant avec un Handicap*, 45.
[17] BUCREP, *3e Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat: Situation Socio-économique des Personnes vivant avec un Handicap*, 82.

## 2.2. The context of inclusion of PwD in Cameroon

### 2.2.1. A nationwide reality

There is a lack of academic data concerning the inclusion of PwD in Cameroon.[18]. Therefore, mindful that the global situation is the same in the whole country, the context of the Adamawa Region will be presented through facts and articles produced as a background to other Regions of Cameroon. However, precision for the Adamawa context will be made when the presented reality is lightly different from the Adamawa context.

### 2.2.2. A brief overview of the inclusion of PwD in Cameroon

The need for the inclusion of People with Disability (PwD) in Cameroon is huge as it is shown by the UN-Department of Economics and Social Affairs in the report on disability and the Sustainable Development Goals[19]. This report points out the enormous lack in the responsibility of the State and the public sector in the care of this group of the population despite international conventions and many national laws.

- **Education**

Though there is an increasing attention to inclusive education, which slowly begins to take place, many children with disabilities are yet to benefit from their educational and social rights as many of them are not yet enrolled, and many adjustments are still to be done at the structural and pedagogical level.[20]

As shown by Ignace Edgar Mbom,[21] the expenditure related to the education of children are twice as high in non-poor families as in poor ones in the Adamawa Region; that explains why, with the extra cost due to their disabilities, children with disabilities coming from poor

[18] Maxwell Opoku et al., "Lives of persons with disabilities in Cameroon after CRPD: Voices of persons with disabilities in the Buea Municipality in Cameroon," *International Journal on Disability and Human Development* 16 (01/11 2016), https://doi.org/10.1515/ijdhd-2016-0009.
[19] Department of Economics and Social Affairs United Nation, *Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities, 2018* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2019), https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/07/disability-report-chapter2.pdf.
[20] Lynn Cockburn et al., "Realizing the Educational Rights of Children with Disabilities: An Overview of Inclusive Education in Cameroon," *Journal of Education and Practice* 8, no. 6 (2017).
[21] Ignace Edgar Mbom, "Déterminants familiaux de la non scolarisation des enfants vivant avec un handicap au Cameroun entre 2001 et 2007" (Master Thesis, University of Yaounde II, 2012), 50.

families[22] experience the lowest school attendance in Cameroon,[23] as confirmed by the statics presented earlier. In the case of hearing-impaired, the number of those who fulfilled their secondary school and university studies is very low (close to zero).

- **Employment**

Arlette Simo Fotso *et al.*[24] state that despite the laws and conventions, PwD are less employed in Cameroon compared to the valid. They point out discrimination as one of the major reasons and recommended that some additional coercive laws and rules must be taken in that regard, as well as information policies that would make employers correct their conception of disability. This analysis corroborates earlier study conducted by Zamo Akono who affirmed that "disability represents a barrier to employment in the Cameroon labour market"[25] because it reduces the chance to participate into the labour market. However, his assessment shows that features like education, professional training, and household-head status increase the possibility of being employed. As consequence, the PwD are meanly acting in the informal sector as shown by the above statistics.

In the Adamawa Region as in the other Regions, PwD are mostly dealing with agriculture and small-scale business with a negligible turnover, which does not allow them to earn enough money for their living. They are really among the poorest of the society.

- **Social inclusion**

Concerning marginalisation and exclusion, there is a huge gap between rhetoric and the reality in the field, which forces to acknowledge a clear alteration of the citizenship of PwD; this is an observation made by Fernande Abanda and Paul-Ivan Biligha in their study on citizenship and vulnerability.[26] Despite all the laws, conventions, and rules set by the State, the marginalisation and the exclusion of PwD start within the society and are rooted in their own

[22] They are the majority
[23] Mbom, "Déterminants familiaux de la non scolarisation des enfants vivant avec un handicap au Cameroun entre 2001 et 2007," 50.
[24] Arlette Simo Fotso, Christian Marie Zamo Akono, and Roger Tsafack Nanfosso, "2 Disability and Labour Force Participation in Cameroon," *Inclusive Growth in Africa: Policies, Practice, and Lessons Learnt* (2016).
[25] C. Zamo-Akono, "Disability and labour force participation in Cameroon," *International Journal of Human Resource Studies* 3 (2013).
[26] Abanda Fernande and Biligha Paul-Ivan, "CITOYENNETE ET VULNERABILITE: LE CAS DU CITOYEN HANDICAPE ET DES POLITIQUES D'AMENAGEMENT DE L'ESPACE PUBLIC IMMOBILIER AU CAMEROUN," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai, Europaea* 59, no. 1 (2014).

families.[27] As raised by the civil society organisations like ASSOCIATION VAINCRE LE HANDICAP[28], PwD are perceived as a 'social overload' and shame, leading to fears and rejection even from their own family; and the little consideration given to them often rather results in a dependence mentality and an auto-negation of their dignity, which is characterised by the refusal to believe in their own abilities.[29] This last point could explain why there are so many PwD beggars in the town of Ngaoundere.[30]

A study conducted in Buea municipality (South-West Region of Cameroon) in 2016 by Maxwell Opoku *et al.* shows that picture of PwD as worthless and without capacity is something that is seen by these latter as a mark of exclusion.[31] They reported the say of one of their hearing-impaired informants as follows:

> It is very sad that our own people don't believe in us. They see us as worthless persons who can't support the family in anyway. I have suffered this all my life and I'm now used to it. It hurts my soul to hear people say 'what can he do?'.[32]

That study also confirmed the fact that the discrimination begins within the family.

### 2.2.3. The laws and the action of the government

Even after signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) the 1st of October 2008, the Cameroonian Government took long time to start implementing it in the whole territory.[33] Up the now, the ratification of that convention is yet to be done. In addition to the CRPD, the Law N°2010/002 of 13 April 2010 and its Application Decree N°2018/6233 signed on 16 July 2018, the Law N°2011/018 of 15 July 2011 on the organisation and promotion of sport and physical activities, are some of the major legal instruments that frame the inclusion policy in Cameroon.[34]

Nevertheless, due to a limited budget, the role of the State and the public institutions is more often better to be seen at the official celebrations rather than in the local areas. This could

[27] Mope, "Précarité de l'environnement familial et perturbation du parcours scolaire des élèves déficients auditifs nés de parents entendants. Cas des élèves de l'ESDA à Ngaoundéré."
[28] 'OVERCOMING HANDICAP ASSOCIATION'
[29] http://vhandicap.net/La-situation-sociale-de-la.html, assessed on 04-05-2021
[30] This situation is worsened by the socio-economic situation of the Adamawa Region, which has a poverty rate of 55.1%, according to the last GPHC.
[31] Opoku et al., "Lives of persons with disabilities in Cameroon after CRPD: Voices of persons with disabilities in the Buea Municipality in Cameroon."
[32] Ibid
[33] Opoku et al., "Lives of persons with disabilities in Cameroon after CRPD: Voices of persons with disabilities in the Buea Municipality in Cameroon," 7.
[34] http://www.minas.gov.cm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=156&Itemid=182&lang=en, assessed on 05-05-2021 (this is the official website of the Ministry of Social Affairs)

be illustrated by the violation by the public sector itself of its own law regarding for example the accessibility of PwD.[35] This can be illustrated in the field of access to information by the fact that there is no public media that displays news in sign language.

### 2.2.4. The actions of the civil society

Civil society organisations are very active in promoting the inclusion of PwD. They are composed of local associations,[36] local NGOs, international NGOs, caritative organisations and faith-based organisations and Churches. Usually, the associations operate in specific zones and the NGOs in some Regions. One of the organisations that is well known for their high quality implementation in this matter is the CODAS CARITAS of the Catholic Church. They are operating in all the dioceses and archdioceses, covering the entire country. A good example of CODAS CARITAS' work toward the inclusion of PwD is the PIAP[37] programme conducted by the Archdiocese of Garoua.[38]

Initiated in 2012, PIAP is a programme that fights for the inclusion of PwD in the three northern Regions of Cameroon. That programme is organised in collaboration with two other Churches: the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon, covering the Adamawa Region and the Union Baptist Churches in Cameroon, covering the Far-North Region.

Basically, PIAP was working on accessibility of PwD in the field of education, health, socio-economic activities having as crosscutting features the promotion and the defence of the rights of PwD, as well as gender equality.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church as part of PIAP ensures the activities of the programme through two of their institutions: the Lutheran Ophthalmology Clinic of Ngaoundere and the Specialised School for Hearing-Impaired Pupils of Ngaoundere, ESDA. The latter is the single specialised institution for PwD in the whole Adamawa Region, and as is obvious, it is not a public school. The fact that it is the unique specialised school means that its intervention very often extends to other type of disabilities.

[35] e.g access to public buildings, information …
[36] Most of them are PwD associations
[37] PIAP stands for "Programme Intégré pour l'Amélioration de la Qualité de vie des Personnes vivant avec un handicap dans les régions septentrionales du Cameroun" (Integrated Programme for the improvement of live quality of PwD in the Northern Regions of Cameroon).
[38] http://codascaritasgaroua.org/contact/papen/genese/ , assessed on 05-05-2021

## 2.3.The Description of HANDICARE

### 2.3.1. HANDICARE in the context

Jeannette,[39] the founder of HANDICARE is an employee of ESDA. She is a specialised teacher for hearing-impaired student, trained by her employer and is working for that institution at COLPROT where she is ensuring the follow-up of the hearing-impaired students (interpretation, repetition, psychosocial follow-up …etc). HANDICARE is the outcome of the research she conducted while writing her thesis in partial fulfilment of her training. Though the context concerns all the PwD, HANDICARE had to start somewhere, and it happen to be obvious that the hearing-impaired category would be a good launching point. So, they know the field and they already have gate openers (the hearing-impaired students).

When HANDICARE started, ESDA was already operating for almost ten years. But that institution already had a focus on the education of hearing-impaired students. Meanwhile the psychosocial and socio-economic part of the intervention were missing and HANDICARE aims to fill this gap.

### 2.3.2. General information about HANDICARE

The presentation of HANDICARE in this section is based on their annual reports from 2017 to 2020[40] and additional data collected during the fieldwork.

HANDICARE is a Cameroonian Association which aims at promoting the well-being of people living with disabilities. The creation of that association is an outcome of the activities of ESDA[41], which is a diaconal school of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (ELCC).

The association was founded on July 2017 with the motto: '***Breaking Barriers***', and is apolitical, non-profit and without tribal, racial or religious discrimination. It is run by a board composed of 9 members.

[39] This is a pseudonym.
[40] The annual reports were collected during the field study.
[41] ESDA Report 2017

The headquarters of the association is located in the Burkina neighbourhood, about 5km from the centre of the town, in the compound of the founder. They occupy a $30m^2$ room which is equipped with a black board, a table, dozens of chairs, and some pedagogical tools. This space constitutes their meeting room.

### 2.3.3. The objectives of HANDICARE

The global objective of HANDICARE is stated as follows: "***To promote the well-being and socio-professional development of people with disabilities***".

The activities of the association are built around the following specific objectives:

- fighting against the marginalisation of PwD;
- contributing to the psychosocial and medical care of PwD;
- contributing to the emancipation, empowerment and inclusion of Pwd;
- promoting the protection of PwD's rights;
- contributing to literacy, training, and socio-professional integration of PwD.

Though the target of HANDICARE is all PwD in Cameroon, they focus for the moment on hearing-impaired youth in the town of Ngaoundere. That is due to the background of the founder, who is as mentioned, a specialised teacher for hearing-impaired students.

### 2.3.4. The geographic area covered by the intervention of HANDICARE

Though the registration document of HANDICARE gives them the right to cover all the country, they are working mainly in the town of Ngaoundéré. It is for the sake of realism and efficiency that they agree to focus on this town. Another reason is the fact that all the members are based in that area and have their assets there. This can also explain why association has its headquarters there.

### 2.3.5. HANDICARE Participants and Activities

Every Sunday afternoon, the association gathers between 20 and 25 young with hearing-impaired males and females. The participants are mostly aged between 17 and 35. They have reached a total of 30 youth registered as participants in the course of 4 years of functioning.

The activities conducted during their meetings are literacy, pedagogic support courses, learning of sign language, debates and educational talks, practical trainings, and sport and leisure.

A good number of the participants are current or former students of ESDA and 'Collège Protestant de Ngaoundéré' (COLPROT)[42] with the majority having dropped out. That could be explained by the fact that "those who have been to school started very late, almost when they were grown-up; this fact considerably limits the duration of their schooling time and has led many to give up"[43]. This is the reason why HANDICARE is actively involved in literacy training to help those youngsters who "cannot afford their socio-professional insertion without a basic education"[44]. They could then learn the French language (reading and writing), as well as French and American Sign Languages.

In addition to the literacy programme, those young people have educational talks and debates on specific themes, as well as movie sessions to help them have life education and overcome life challenges. This is to alleviate the lack of many aspects of parental education caused by the very limited communication they have with their parents due to the language barrier.

In the sport activities, HANDICARE formed a football team for the physical development of the hearing-impaired youth and their socialisation with other social groups through football matches and other leisure activities. Every month, they share a meal in order to create conviviality among them and strengthen their solidarity and their relationship with each other.[45]

To achieve its mission, HANDICARE is working closely with the parents, and is collaborating with medical doctors, decision-makers, social workers, and all those who are involved in the work with PwD.

HANDICARE is a result of a diaconal work of the Church and is expanding that work through personal engagements. In addition, it is embedded in Christian values.

[42] Protestant Secondary School of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon
[43] HANDICARE, *2017 Annual Report (Not Published report)*, HANDICARE (Ngaoundéré, Cameroun, 2018).
[44] Ibid
[45] Ibid

# Chapter 3 - Theoretical Framework

## 3.0. Introduction

Ronald J. Hustedde states that "Theories are explanations that can provide help in understanding people's behaviour and a framework from which community developers can explain and comprehend events."[46]

This chapter provides theorical elements that will be used to analyse the field data. As the main driver of this study is the analysis of the methods used by HANDICARE in their goal of fighting for the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth, features that might clarify or question the findings will be presented from the angles that would help respond to the research question.

Since the context is about the inclusion of PwD, the first section will look at that issue from the perspective of disability-inclusive development which gives room to see PwD from the perspective of their abilities. Since HANDICARE is an outcome of a diaconal work, the notion of Diakonia will be scrutinised in relation to Asset-Based Community Development. Two specifically diaconal approaches, '*Use Your Talents*' and '*Seeking Conviviality*' will then be studied with a focus on UYT which will form, together with ABCD, the main perspective in relation to the research question. Following the presentation of these two perspectives, the concept of *Empowerment* will be explored as an important feature that lies in the core of both ABCD and diakonia. Aspects of *Social Innovation,* which is another key concept identified as very useful in achieving social inclusion will also be presented, with the aim of contributing to the further development of diaconal asset-based approaches such as UYT.

## 3.1. Disability-Inclusive Development

### 3.1.1. Section introduction

The focus of the current study is not on *impairment* nor *disability* as concepts. I will rather lay stress on the ways of helping to realise the inclusion of PwD from the development perspective. Therefore, this section will present the concept of '*Disability-Inclusive*

[46] Ronald J. Hustedde, "Seven theories for seven community developers," in *An introduction to community development*, ed. Rhonda Phillips and Robert Pittman (Routledge, 2014), 20.

*Development*' which will help identify features of the development that will ensure the inclusion of the PwD.

### 3.1.2. Impairment, Disability, Persons with Disabilities and inclusion

For the sake of clarity, in this study, *impairment* is understood as abnormality or loss of physiological form or function and *disability* expresses the effects of the impairment, which may be the incapacity to fulfil some task or activity.[47]

Similarly, PwD is used in conformity with the definition in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) adopted by United Nations on 13 December 2006:

> Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.[48]

In this study, I will use the definition of social inclusion made by Hilary Silver specifying how it will be applied to PwD.[49] Thus, inclusion may refer to a process of encouraging interaction between people with different relevant attributes or an impersonal institutional mechanism of opening up access to participation of all in all spheres of social life.

### 3.1.3. Disability-Inclusive Development: Definition

The expression '*Disability-inclusive development*' implies that the development process through all its stages is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities; it demands equal access for all persons to all the development sectors.[50]

Inclusive development can be defined as development which boosts people's well-being through equality of opportunity for all with a special care for the poor, the vulnerable and the

[47] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian theology: Embodied limits and constructive possibilities* (OUP USA, 2009), 13-14.
[48] United Nations, CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND OPTIONAL PROTOCOL, (New York: United Nations, 2006). Article 1.
[49] Silver, "The contexts of social inclusion."
[50] DESA - United Nations Division for Social Policy Development, *Toolkit on disability for AFRICA: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT*, ed. DSPD-DESA (UN), Toolkit on disability for AFRICA, (DESA - UN, 2016), 3. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/disability/Toolkit/Disability-inclusive-development.pdf.

disadvantaged groups.[51] It also supports empowerment, which enables PwD to become resource groups and development actors in the society, rather than being categorised as 'vulnerable groups' that should be assisted.[52] Thus, PwD will not be a burden to the families and the society, rather, they will be contributors and actors.

Disability-inclusive development is intended to empower PwD to stand as self-advocates in order to ensure their full participation in all development processes and emergency responses and it works to tackle the barriers hindering their access and participation.[53] It appreciates disability in the sense of diversity and as an aspect of daily human experience.[54]

### 3.1.4. Elements of disability-inclusive development

The main elements (not exhaustive) to be considered from the perspective of disability-inclusive development are:[55]

- **Inclusive education**. The inclusion of PwD's in the general education and in early childhood quality learning of children with disabilities; the accessibility to infrastructures and the provision of reasonable accommodation.
- **Inclusive health services.** The access of PwD's to health buildings, equipment, information, and appropriate professionals; early assessments and identification, and adequate referral systems for children with disabilities.
- **Decent work and employment.** Access of PwD's to vocational training, skills development and other government-funded employment-support programmes; improvement of decent work opportunities in the rural and informal economies.
- **Social protection.** Equal availability of social protection to persons with disabilities as others; the specific needs of persons with disabilities taken into account in benefiting social protection floors and systems.

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[51] Eiji Kozuka, "Inclusive development: Definition and principles for the post-2015 development agenda," *Perspective on the post-2015 development agenda* (2014): 110.
[52] Division for Social Policy Development, *Toolkit on disability for AFRICA: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT*, 4.
[53] Kathy Al Ju'beh, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit: CRPD Influencing everything we do*, ed. Christian Blind Mission (January 2017, 2017), 48. https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/CBM-DID-TOOLKIT-accessible.pdf.
[54] Christian Blind Mission, "Inclusion made easy: A quick program guide to disability in development," *Melbourne: CBM Australia* (2012): 18, https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/cbm_inclusion_made_easy_a_quick_guide_to_disability_in_development.pdf.
[55] *Ibid*, 4.

Now, the question is: how does HANDICARE support these four elements in their work with hearing-impaired youth? This will be part of the discussion which will be presented in chapter 6.

### 3.1.5. Implementing disability-inclusive development: the twin-track approach

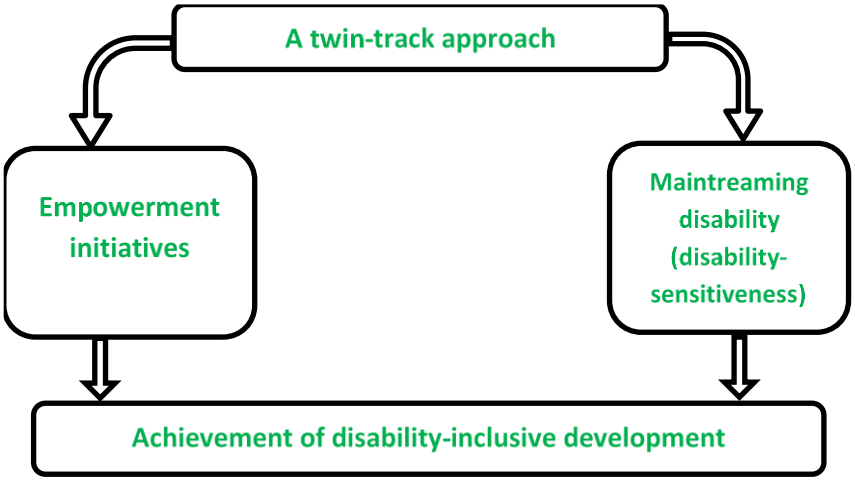
The most commonly used approach in the realisation of disability-inclusive development is the '*twin-track approach*'.[56] It consists of a double-wing (twin-track) intervention:

i- **Providing initiatives for the empowerment of PwD**. Initiatives that ensure the full participation of PwD.

**ii- Mainstreaming disability** (disability-sensitiveness) **in all the process** (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes).[57]

The two tracks of this approach to inclusion are intrinsically bound to each other; to ensure successful outcomes for people with disabilities, both tracks should be activated as complementary elements. One track cannot secure good results and the approach would not be any more a twin-track one.[58]

Figure 1: The twin-track approach

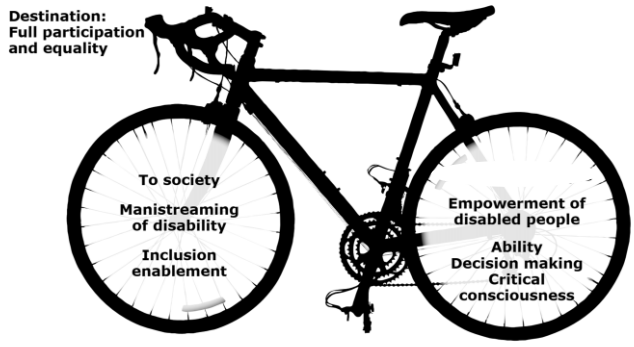



Source: DSPD, *Toolkit on disability for AFRICA: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT*, 9

[56] Al Ju'beh, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit: CRPD Influencing everything we do*, 55.
[57] Al Ju'beh, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit: CRPD Influencing everything we do*.; Division for Social Policy Development, *Toolkit on disability for AFRICA: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT*, 9-12.
[58] Al Ju'beh, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit: CRPD Influencing everything we do*, 55.

Another way of visualising the twin-track strategy is as a 'bicycle' model. It consists of visualising the twin-track as a bicycle which two wheels intimately related and inter-dependent to move toward the achievement of DID.[59]

Figure 2: Twin-track approach – bicycle model




Source: Al Ju'beh, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit: CRPD Influencing everything we do*, 56.

### 3.2. Diakonia and Asset-Based Community Development

This section aims to present the concepts of diakonia and ABCD, focusing on the link between those two items. This understanding of diakonia will be related to two specific models of what could be then called diaconal asset-based approach, UYT and 'seeking conviviality'.

#### 3.2.1. What is Diakonia

In this sub-section, I will limit my discussion about diakonia to the contemporary period, and mainly from the WCC and the LWF contexts.

The Norwegian Church Aid defines Diakonia as Christian faith into action, expressed through compassion, inclusive communities, responsible stewardship of creation and the struggle for justice.[60] It is both an expression of the very nature of the Church, and the manifestation of that nature in its daily life, plans and projects.[61] This is why it is described by

[59] Al Ju'beh, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit: CRPD Influencing everything we do*, 56.
[60] Norwegian Church Aid, Together for a Just World: Norwegian Church Aid's Statement of Principles.
[61] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 28.

Kjell Nordstokke as the "responsible service of the Gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people."[62]

From this definition, one can observe that diakonia stands for people in need and fights for justice for the helpless. Therefore, the World Council of Churches (WCC) expresses that "Diakonia is both *faith-based* and *rights-based*, and the connection between the two."[63] This means that not all social work can be called diaconal,[64] only those which are motivated by and stand as the outcome of the Christian faith. Diakonia is rights-based because in its essence, it supports the rights of people, especially those who are marginalised, such as PwDs. In fact, it is also understood, from a biblical and theological perspective, as the nature and the mission of the Church towards human beings who are created in the image of God.[65] In that sense, the theories of diakonia focus on bridging the faith and life of the Church with the reality of the society.[66] Therefore, the word *diakonia* is used in the ecumenical world as "the Church's social action and engagement **locally, in the society and globally**."[67]

### 3.2.2. Diakonia as struggle for social inclusion

In this sub-section, diakonia will be discussed as fight for social justice and inclusion of all people, focusing on those who are suffering or marginalised. Starting from the objectives of diakonia, elements that present it as carrying a special concern about groups in the situation of marginalisation will be analysed.

This is how the WCC expresses the purpose of diakonia:

> The immediate objective of diaconal action is to assist people in need, to defend their human dignity and the rights they hold as citizens, regardless of their formal citizenship or nationality, and to support processes that promote justice, peace and the integrity of creation.[68]

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[62] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 40.
[63] Executive Committee World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, World Council of Churches (Bossey, Switzerland, 7-12 June 2017), 3, https://kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/smm/dokumenter/2019/wcc-ecumenical-diakonia-study-document.pdf.
[64] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 40.
[65] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 8.
[66] Stephanie Dietrich, "Use Your Talents - Diakonia in Practice," in *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, ed. Sigurd Haus and Endre Hilleren (Oslo: Digni, 2017), 144.
[67] Stephanie Dietrich, "Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory," in *Diakonia as Christian social practice : an introduction*, ed. Stephanie Dietrich (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 13.
[68] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 69.

From that statement, WCC clearly demonstrates that the intention of diaconal work should be the fight for the restoration of all the humankind into the position of dignity and the full expression of their humanity. Therefore, diakonia is an expression of the Christian faith in the struggle for the inclusion of all the social groups, especially those who are in a situation of marginalisation such as PwD. In that sense, diakonia should address root causes of injustice and marginalisation all along the way it is carried out.[69] Therefore, for diaconal work to ensure significant change in individuals' life and the society, Nordstokke suggests that the following aspects should be included in its objectives:

- the affirmation and the defence of people's dignity;
- the promotion of people's rights;
- the empowerment of people;
- fostering people's access to rights and full participation in the society life
- laying elements of societal transformation.[70]

It is assumed that inclusion encompasses the affirmation of rights. From the above features, one can see the expression of diakonia as rights-based concept. Therefore, through the Church history, diakonia has been related to the situation of sick, poor and marginalised people and implemented to assist, support and defend people who are seen as vulnerable.[71] From this point, the inclusion of PwD is a struggle of diakonia as they are considered as vulnerable.

This view confers an understanding of diakonia as community development, a "ministry or development work carried out by Church members to improve the community as part of their service."[72] Therefore, Church members' actions or community work going toward affirming the dignity of and empowering others can be considered as diaconal work.

[69] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 42.
[70] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 42-43.
[71] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 41.
[72] Sigurd Haus and Endre Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent* (Oslo: Digni, 2017), 175.

### 3.2.3. Asset-Based Community Development related to diakonia

#### 3.2.3.1.Definition of Community Development

According to Phillips and Pittman, "Community development should be considered both as a process and an outcome."[73] In their process of defining that concept, they describe the word '*community*' in its various dimension as a place or a group of individuals who have a common interest or are linked to each other.[74] In that sense, they define '*community development*' as follows:

> A process: developing the ability to act collectively, and
>
> An outcome: (1) taking collective action and (2) the result of that action for improvement in a community in any or all realms: physical, environmental, cultural, social, political, economic, etc."[75]

So, for Phillips and Pittman, the concept of community development encompasses being a community whose members act together for their progress. That starts in their everyday reality by '*extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary*'.[76]

According to Margeret Ledwith, community development has as a vision of a just and sustainable world, married with social and environmental justice principles, embedded in values such as equality, dignity, trust, mutuality and reciprocity, processing through practical projects led by critical consciousness, going from local projects to movements for change.[77]

#### 3.2.3.2.Definition of Asset-Based Community Development

Very often, community development is carried out going from identifying the issues, the problems, and the needs of the community, thus concentrating, on what is missing.[78] This way of approaching community development is called '*need-based*' approach.

[73] Phillips and Pittman, "A framework for community and economic development," 7.
[74] Phillips and Pittman, "A framework for community and economic development," 5.
[75] Phillips and Pittman, "A framework for community and economic development," 8.
[76] Ira Shor in Margaret Ledwith, *Community development: A critical approach* (Policy Press, 2011), 9.
[77] Margaret Ledwith, *Community development in action : putting Freire into practice* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), 5.
[78] Haines, "Asset-based community development," 39.

In the contrary, the ABCD focuses on a community strength and already existing resources by building capacity withing that community.[79] Here, assets can be defined as valuable qualities, persons and things as well as advantages and resources, all these referring to gifts, skills and capacities of individuals, associations, institutions and organisations.[80]

Though ABCD does not ignores the problems within the community, it chooses to concentrate on what the community already has and does instead focusing on the lack. Seen from this angle, the community will value their positive aspects and will work on developing further the identified assets, with a chance of creating a snowball effect that will affect other needs and problems.

### 3.2.4. Diaconal Asset-Based Community Development

Zo Rakotoarison *et al.* assert that "faith-based communities have the potential to be important stakeholders in civil societies and local communities through the participation and involvement of their members and thereby contribute to community development."[81] Following that direction, Kjell Nordstokke affirms that "social assets are intimately connected with people's worldview, value systems, and also their spirituality (…) [thus] social, cultural and also religious assets are understood to belong to the [category] of resources."[82]

As member of the community who are organised within a second community (congregation as community-interest), the congregation members constitute a huge potential of community development. If this community aligns with the conception of ABCD going from their faith perspective, this diaconal work is then qualified as '*diaconal ABCD*'. In the remainder of this thesis, the term '***diaconal asset-based approach***' will be used as referring to diaconal ABCD and a specific approach called '*Use Your Talents*' will be the main approach that will be studied in the aim of responding to the research question.

[79] Haines, "Asset-based community development," 39-40.
[80] Haines, "Asset-based community development," 40-41.
[81] Zo Ramiandra Rakotoarison, Stephanie Dietrich, and Heikki Hiilamo, "Tackling Poverty with Local Assets: A Case Study on Congregational Asset-Based Community Development in a Lutheran Church in Madagascar," *Diaconia* 10, no. 2 (2019): 119, https://doi.org/10.13109/diac.2019.10.2.119.
[82] Kjell Nordstokke, "Mapping Out and Mobilising Diaconal Assets," in *Diakonia as Christian social practice: an introduction*, ed. Stephanie Dietrich et al. (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 215.

## 3.3. Perspectives on diakonia as method for the inclusion of persons with disabilities

### 3.3.1. Use Your Talents

#### 3.3.1.1. What is Use Your Talents

Use Your Talents (UYT) is a **diaconal assets-based approach** which started within the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC) in the year 2000 as a response to their desire to set a new development policy grounded in congregations' and local people's experiences. It is referred to as a **congregational asset-based community development**.[83] Here, the congregational character comprises the actions and initiatives made by congregation members and all the Christians on their own.

UYT is an outcome of an empirical process where it was observed that in a spirit of resilience, people were realising local community work without any external funding.[84] The '*Parable of the Talents*' presented in the Bible in the book of Matthew chapter 25 verses 14 to 30 sounded as a very suitable explanation of what was observed on the field. That parable narrated by Jesus presents three servants who were entrusted talents. Two of them made a good use of theirs and made a 100% profit, whereas the third buried his and did not multiply it. Therefore, in the course of the process this approach was called '***Use Your Talents***'.[85]

UYT aims at ***making the congregation be the primary development agent putting a high emphasis on the use of each member's resources***.[86] Thus, the diaconal work of the Church highlights the full implication of each Christian member of a congregation in community development, expressing hence that it is not just an exclusive task of a ministry or a programme. This way of thinking assumes that every Christian should take an active part in the development of the community in which he lives.

[83] Sigurd HAUS, *Use Your Talents – the Congregation as Primary Development Agent*, ed. Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) (Stavanger: Sik - VID, November 2016, 2016), Report, 65. https://www.vid.no/site/assets/files/20219/evaluation_report_use_your_talents_1_june_to_nms.pdf.
[84] Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 17.
[85] Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 18.
[86] Galunde Waketa Warotte, "'Use Your Talents' concept: an evolving complementary or alternative approach to development work," in *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, ed. Sigurd Haus and Endre Hilleren (Oslo: Digni, 2017), 156.

### 3.3.1.2.The understanding of '*talent*' in UYT

In the original (Biblical) meaning, the word '*talent*' represents a big amount of money, while in a modern sense it is seen as human abilities or special gifts; This dual view leads to the assimilation of the '*talent*' as a synonym of the word '***asset***'.[87]

Thus, in UYT, '*talents'* represent in a broader way people's skills and knowledge, their relationships to others, and their belongings, like land, houses and money… etc. It is assumed that all people are entrusted with talents which are expected to be used (both individually and in a corporate way) without any fear, because "when we put our talents together, when we work together, we can accomplish great results." [88]

In that sense, Stephanie Dietrich explains that " 'Use Your Talents' is built on the same understanding and belief that all humans have inherent resources and the ability to take part in developing their own life and that of their community."[89]

Taken in that perspective, talents could be represented as follows:

**Table 3: Summary of UYT understanding of the word '*talent*'**

| | **Individual** | **Collective** |
|---|---|---|
| **Physical talents** | House, land, belongings, farm, money … | Natural resources, common space, schools, marketplaces, leisure places, … |
| **Economic talents** | Money, business … | Banks, microfinance, saving groups … |
| **Human capital** | Skills, capacities, competences, abilities … | Engineers, nurses, farmers, businessmen … |
| **Natural gifts** (related to personal particularities) | Kindness, serving, liveness, goodness, catalyst (motivation giver), leadership skills …<br>Here, *time* can also be considered as asset thus talent.[90] | |
| **Spiritual gifts** | Prayer, preaching, prophecy, singing … | Prayer cells, congregation groups (youth groups, women groups …), Sunday school … |
| **Social capital** | Relationship, social position … | Organisations, trust in each other, administrations, local opportunities, solidarity mindset, socio-cultural assets, families … |
| **Environmental talents** | | Forests, rivers, mountains, seas … |

[87] HAUS, *Use Your Talents – the Congregation as Primary Development Agent*, 62.
[88] Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 18.
[89] Dietrich, "Use Your Talents - Diakonia in Practice," 145.
[90] Rakoto Endor Modeste in Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 9.

### 3.3.1.3.The core aspects of the UYT approach

The key principles of UYT are the following:

- **The two main questions**

All the UYT thinking is driven by the following central questions: (i) ***What can we do with what we have here and now?*** And (ii) ***How can the congregation be a primary actor in developing the local community?***[91]

The first question could be broken into the two following: '*What do we have here?*' and '*What can we do with it now?*' These questions draw the attention of the actors to the available assets and the way they could make good use of them in order to contribute to the development of their community.

The second question puts an emphasis on the diaconal aspect of the UYT approach. It is important that the Church through its ministry and **through its members** be the driving force of the development of the community.

- **From the congregation and into the community**

The international coordinator of UYT, Sigurd Haus explains that:

> The essence of 'Use Your Talents' is to start at the congregation and go into the community – using what we have here and now. The goal is, first and foremost, to fulfil God's commandment to "Love your neighbour" (…) It is about how congregations can fulfil their holistic ministries, how they can work to make living conditions better for their own members, for the congregation and for the rest of the community.[92]

So, for the members, development starts in the "holy community of the church and goes on to the community at large."[93]

- **Each individual and every community have respectively personal and local assets**

[91] Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 17.
[92] Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 18.
[93] Rakoto Endor Modeste in Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 9.

It is assumed that not only each person, but also every church and community can rely on their proper assets to enable development to happen.[94] UYT is based on the much stronger idea that "people are not starting with empty hands and (..) they are not only participants, but they own their development."[95]

Some general factors in UYT identified during the various conducted projects are the following:[96]

- **Start with the resources**. This is what gives it the nature of an asset-based approach.
- **Actors**. In the projects, the local stakeholders are not 'beneficiaries' nor 'participants', they are actors. They can take initiatives and organise the work in cooperation with others.
- **Integrated in the life of the congregation**. This is what gives UYT the characteristic of **congregational asset-based community development**.
- **Networking/cooperation**. Learning from each other and connecting each other's assets is key in the practice of UYT.
- **Voluntary work**. UYT is based on voluntary engagement of people. This is also a feature of ownership.
- **Sustainability**. UYT makes it possible to avoid the dependency-syndrome as projects are not relaying on external funding.[97]
- **Ownership**. People are acting from their own perspective, and they are involved in projects as actors. They fully take responsibility in their development.

In addition to the learning drawn from various projects conducted within the frame of UYT, the report of the evaluation initiated by the UYT Innovation Project and released in June 2020[98] revealed among other findings that:

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[94] Beatrice Nekesa Johanson, "USE OF TALENTS: A WAY TO TRANSFORM AND DEVELOP COMMUNITIES IN KENYA THROUGH CONGREGATIONS." (Master VID Specialiazed University, 2017), iii.
[95] Rakoto Endor Modeste in Haus and Hilleren, *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, 9.
[96] HAUS, *Use Your Talents – the Congregation as Primary Development Agent*, 66-67.
[97] Galunde Waketa Warotte, "USE YOUR TALENTS: A driving force in overcoming dependency syndrome through congregational development approach - Experiences from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus" (UYT Introduction Workshop, Garoua - Cameroon, Unpublished, 2017).
[98] Lena Boberg, Beatrice Juma-Johansson, and Maël Andriamisarisoa, *Use Your Talents Evaluation Report* (Stavanger: Norwegion Mission Society (NMS), June 2020, 2020), v-vi. https://www.norad.no/en/toolspublications/publications/ngo-evaluations/2020/use-your-talents-evaluation-report/.

- **Resource mapping is key**; it gives people a mindset which leads to a change process and as result, they develop interest in recognising, appreciating, and validating their individual's and locally available assets which could be engaged for development.
- **Grassroots are also key**: it has been observed that the approach is easily adopted and demonstrated in a practical engagement of the grassroot level.
- **UYT can influence gender equality**: as UYT provides a platform for all members to get involved through their assets, it fosters the change of mindset towards gender equality.

#### 3.3.1.4.Use Your Talents in relation to persons with disabilities

This sub-section aims at analysing UYT as an approach that includes PwD. it will be about stressing on UYT characteristics that portray it as an inclusive community development concept.

Inclusiveness appears to be in the heart of the core aspects of UYT. Regarding inclusion, Stephanie Dietrich states that:

> 'Use Your Talents' is built on the same understanding and belief that all humans have inherent resources and the ability to take part in developing their own life and that of their community (…) In the Christian worldview, the emphasis in 'Use Your Talents' is that all people are created in God's image and have diverse gifts and talents which can and should be utilised in their unique setting. Instead of focusing on everything one cannot do or accomplish, we are encouraged to reflect on what we can do with the possibilities and resources available to us.[99]

In this assertion, two things could be identified as elements of caring about marginalised groups and their inclusion in the development matters: firstly, they are seen as fully part of the community and secondly, they are considered as talents holders. From the Christian anthropology angle, Stephanie Dietrich demonstrates here that all humans, including PwD, have resources and abilities, thus something to contribute with in their own and their community's development. That means that from the UYT perspectives, PwD are not seen from their disability or vulnerability side; it is rather assumed that they are actors in their own and others development. So, to foster this participation, Dietrich draw the attention on the real shift

[99] Dietrich, "Use Your Talents - Diakonia in Practice," 145.

of mindset to looking at people (including PwD) from the talents they possess and have at their disposal, and from the perspective of what they are able to do.

In that sense, after studying the impact of the UYT approach on women within the frame of a women empowerment project in the MLC, Zo Rakotoarison affirms that UYT "**lifts up people's dignity [and] is an instrument of inclusion and participation**."[100] In fact, looking at PwD as resource persons, beyond showing them respect, is restoring their dignity as human created in God's image just as others. Here, Rakotoarison is presenting UYT ***as a tool for the inclusion and participation of groups like PwD***.

In another study, Rakotoarison, Dietrich and Hiilamo concluded that:

> the UYT approach has the potential to improve precarious living conditions (…) On a personal level, it contributes to strengthening the self-perception of individuals related to abilities and assets, so-called "talents," and it supports people's ownership in the development of life conditions. The approach supports people's self-esteem and thus encourages them to mobilise personal efforts for the sake of their personal and the common good (…).[101]

In this understanding of UYT as an instrument for inclusion, participation, and self-esteem, Dietrich and Rakotoarison *et al.*'s statements are corroborated by the 2020 UYT Evaluation Report which shows that by addressing the 'dependency syndrome', UYT led to the change of mindset, restoring thus people's dignity and self-esteem.[102]

This demonstrates that ***inclusion is in the heart of UYT***, presenting it as an inclusive development approach relevant for PwD.

### 3.3.2. Seeking Conviviality as a perspective of Diakonia with PwD

#### 3.3.2.1. What is Seeking Conviviality

While UYT has been developed within an African context, '*Seeking Conviviality*', another diaconal asset-based development approach, developed in a European context, within countries from Eastern and Central Europe. According to Tony Addy, '*conviviality*' "refers to the art and practice of living together, (…) the idea of creative relationships between people,

[100] Zo Ramiandra Rakotoarison, "Women, Use Your Talents," in *Use your talents : the congregation as primary development agent*, ed. Sigurd Haus and Endre Hilleren (Oslo: Digni, 2017), 65, 67.
[101] Rakotoarison, Dietrich, and Hiilamo, "Tackling Poverty with Local Assets: A Case Study on Congregational Asset-Based Community Development in a Lutheran Church in Madagascar," 137.
[102] Boberg, Juma-Johansson, and Andriamisarisoa, *Use Your Talents Evaluation Report*, 28.

and between people and their environment, (…) a free give and take between people as they create their own reality."[103]

The reflection issuing to that concept went from the critical question '*How can we live together in local communities?*'.[104] That question led to two practical ones: '*How can diakonia contribute to people living a good life together?*' and '*What kind of economic and social policies support living together?*'. Those latter imply that the actions should focus first on the togetherness and then on services.[105] Therefore, this approach is grounded in daily life in Church and society,[106] where the creativity of people in addressing their situation is actively encouraged.[107]

In '*Seeking* Conviviality', the meaning of '*conviviality*' engages living peacefully together in a context of religious, ethnic and cultural difference, coming together and enjoying conversation in a relaxed way, and realising freedom through interdependency based on ethical values.[108] In other words, it is about "living together in solidarity, in sharing resources and in the joint struggle for human dignity and sustainable community life."[109]

In that sense, Musa Filibus, the Director of the Department for Mission and Development withing the Lutheran World Federation commented that

> [Seeking conviviality] implies the foundation of communities based on reciprocal relationships, mutual respect for their differences, and strength among people and communities that enriches living together (…) [envisioning] European community diakonia as space for building trust and living together in inclusive neighbourhoods; striving for solidarity and justice.[110]

In that perspective, diakonia is understood as "'Gospel in action' and as a mark of and task for the whole church, it is ***not simply for specialists or a specific group of volunteers***."[111] Thus, it could be understood by this conception of diakonia that diaconal work should be carried

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[103] Tony Addy, "New approaches to community-based work, social service, and Diaconia Challenges from the CABLE approach," *Diaconia* 4, no. 2 (2013): 2.
[104] Tony Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe* (Lutheran World Federation, 2017), 4.
[105] Tony Addy, "Seeking Conviviality: A New Core Concept for Diaconal Church," in *The Diaconal Church*, ed. Stephanie Dietrich et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2019), 160-61.
[106] Ibid
[107] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 3-4.
[108] Addy, "Seeking Conviviality: A New Core Concept for Diaconal Church," 161-62.
[109] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 3-4.
[110] Musa Filibus in Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 2.
[111] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 4.

in the everyday life by the entire Church, highlighting the great importance of voluntary work. Then, diakonia could be seeing as a physical expression of being Christian as it would give a physical demonstration of the Christian faith. Therefore, the '*seeking conviviality*' emphasises on "local diakonia, diakonia of the local church, diaconal congregations and organisations at the local level."[112]

#### 3.3.2.2.The practice of Seeking Conviviality

The practice of '*Seeking Conviviality*' lies on three keys which are also expressions of diakonia:[113]

- **Motivation**. It refers to experience and relationships. As people are the main resource in diakonia, creating relationships will enable people to find their own motivation and resources in their life experience where Christian faith and values foster compassion and solidarity which lead to changes in the society.[114]
- **Presence with people**. It refers to a commitment to be continually 'present' with people in the process of changing their life. This contrasts with traditional projects and promotes long-term diaconal work which gives room for people contribution.[115]
- **Participation**. It is about finding ways to build relationships and participation of people into all steps of the process, from planification to implementation.[116]

In carrying out Seeking Conviviality, the following faces of diakonia should be considered:[117]

- Diakonia as a vocation. It should be the response to God's call through serving the '*other*' just as Jesus did.
- Diakonia as conviviality. The life together as presented above should be an expression of diakonia.
- Diakonia as struggle for justice. The promotion of equality and justice by standing by the side of those who suffer from injustice and marginalisation.

[112] Addy, "Seeking Conviviality: A New Core Concept for Diaconal Church," 163.
[113] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 13.
[114] Ibid
[115] Ibid
[116] Ibid
[117] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 15-25.

- Diakonia as ensuring people's dignity. Diaconal action should issue in a human-driven economy in the contrast with consumer society and market driven economy carry by the neo-liberalism paradigm.[118]

#### 3.3.2.3. Seeking Conviviality in the perspective of inclusion of persons with disabilities

From the two above sub-section, it can be assumed that the concept of conviviality leads to a concern for justice and dignity[119] which are aspects linked to the inclusion of people in a situation of marginalisation such as PwD. Moreover, the process of seeking conviviality is carried out with the paradigm that people, in a convivial way, constitute the driver of the social change, and they can act from their own experience leading the society to a giving-receiving arena. This is how Musa Filibus expresses it:

> "Seeking Conviviality calls for the radical reorientation of diakonia. It gives voice to people forced to live in the margins of society. They become leading stakeholders and actors in the process of analysing their situations and identifying viable solutions (…) The vision for diakonia is developed in context and aims to empower people to take ownership of their own community's transformation and to live and write new life stories as active members of community.[120]

This statement draws us back to the twin-track approach as a method for ensuring disability-inclusive development. The remark that should be done here is that Seeking Conviviality strongly affirms the fight again injustice and the inclusion of all. That is also what including PwD means.

## 3.4. Social Innovation and Empowerment as concepts that foster the inclusion of persons with disabilities

### 3.4.1. Social Innovation

#### 3.4.1.1.Social Innovation: a definition

William Voorberg, Victor Bekkers, and Lars Tummers define social innovation as

[118] Addy, "Seeking Conviviality: A New Core Concept for Diaconal Church," 166.
[119] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 3-4.
[120] Musa Filibus in Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 2.

> the creation of long-lasting outcomes that aim to address societal needs by fundamentally changing the relationships, positions and rules between the involved stakeholders, through an open process of participation, exchange and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including end-users.[121]

In the same sense, the European Union uses the term 'social innovation' for appreciating the social dimensions of innovation and tackling serious social challenges among which are lacking equity and social justice.[122]

For Jürgen Howaldt, Ralf Kopp, and Michael Schwarz, social innovation is

> a new combination or configuration of practices in areas of social action, prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors with the ultimate goal of coping better with needs and problems than is possible by using existing practices.[123]

They further explain that it is because it "varies social action and is socially accepted and diffused in society" that the innovation could be qualified as 'social'.

#### 3.4.1.2.Social Innovation as a method for inclusion

Social innovations are very often called upon in face of complex social problems.[124] The emphasis is put on effective solutions for the benefit of the society regardless the quality of the initiator and the design of those solutions; that enlarges the possibilities.[125]

Quoting Crozier and Friedberg and other scholars, Howard *et al.* explain the dynamics of social practice by interpreting social innovation as a process of collective creation in which the members learn, invent and lay out new rules for the social collaboration (a new social practice); and this process leads to the acquisition of necessary cognitive, rational and organisational skills.[126] Furthermore, social ideas and successfully implemented social

[121] William Voorberg, Victor Bekkers, and Lars Tummers, "A systematic review of co-creation and co-production: Embarking on the social innovation journey," *Public management review* (2014).
[122] J. M. Wittmayer et al., "Narratives of change: How social innovation initiatives construct societal transformation," *Futures : the journal of policy, planning and futures studies* 112 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2019.06.005.
[123] Jürgen Howaldt, Ralf Kopp, and Michael Schwarz, "Social Innovations as Drivers of Social Change – Exploring Tarde's Contribution to Social Innovation Theory Building," in *New frontiers in social innovation research*, ed. Alex Nicholls, Julie Simon, and Madeleine Gabriel (Springer Nature, 2015), 30.
[124] Jakomijn van Wijk et al., "Social innovation: Integrating micro, meso, and macro level insights from institutional theory," *Business & Society* 58, no. 5 (2019): 888.
[125] Peter Russo and Susan Mueller, "Social Innovation Education," in *Social innovation. Solutions for a sustainable future*, ed. Osburg Thomas and Schmidpeter Rene (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 172.
[126] Howaldt, Kopp, and Schwarz, "Social Innovations as Drivers of Social Change – Exploring Tarde's Contribution to Social Innovation Theory Building," 30-31.

innovations may be transformed and institutionalised as regular social practice and then diffused out through the society as result of imitation.[127] That means that the dynamics could take place at all the levels with the interaction, the co-learning and the co-invention of the stakeholders. Later, they become part of the social change process and it gives them chance to take a step further, up to the next level as the waves move on. In the case of inclusion of PwD, they would actively take action as a member of the community in the change of collective mindset needed for their inclusion.

Hence, social innovation provides methods that could be very useful in the inclusion of groups through dynamics going from the bottom of the ladder to the social transformation at a higher level. Co-learning, co-invention, cross-sector partnership and an opportunity-oriented mindset are keys that may be more than helpful in this matter. In this sense, through UYT and aspects of empowerment, PwD could be co-inventors in the process of social change that will issue to a stage where they will feel included.

### 3.4.2. Empowerment

#### 3.4.2.1.Empowerment: A Definition

While presenting the concepts of *disability-inclusive development*, *diakonia*, *UYT*, *Seeking Conviviality* and *Social Innovation*, it was remarked that empowerment was lying in the core of all these notions. This section aims at highlighting the importance of empowerment in carrying out community development in a large sense with the purpose of ensuring the inclusion of groups in a situation of marginalisation such as PwD.

To understand the concept of '*empowerment*', John Lord and Peggy Hutchison suggest that it is important to examine the notions of power and powerlessness,[128] the first being the capacity to produce consciously or unconsciously effects on others.[129] The latter could then be seen as the fact of losing power upon one's life. Nadine Bowers Du Toit explains that "power

[127] Howaldt, Kopp, and Schwarz, "Social Innovations as Drivers of Social Change – Exploring Tarde's Contribution to Social Innovation Theory Building," 30.
[128] John Lord and Peggy Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice," *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health* 12 (1993): 2.
[129] A paraphrase of the definition giving by Cornell Empowerment Group in Lord and Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice," 2.

is intrinsically linked to participation, and development practice, centres on the participation of the poorest of the poor in their own development."[130]

As Lord and Hutchison found in their research, powerlessness can result from the combination of people's social isolation and low self-esteem which limit their capacity to dream and affect their ability to believe in themselves and to take control of their lives.[131] It could also be a consequence of social and economic structure.

In this sense, Stephanie Dietrich defines empowerment as

> a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control of various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important."[132]

This definition presents empowerment as a process of enabling people to take back the power to act for what they see as important in their lives. Charles Elliot corroborates this by arguing that to empower the poor and marginalised, beyond simply equipping them with skills, "is to give them decision-making power."[133] In that sense, empowerment can lead to raised awareness.[134] It is a process of change,[135] as Whitmore explains it in his definition of empowerment as "an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live."[136] Wallerstein enlarges that perspective to organised groups and entities by describing empowerment as

> a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice.[137]

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[130] Nadine Bowers Du Toit, "The elephant in the room: The need to re-discover the intersection between poverty, powerlessness and power in 'Theology and Development' praxis," *Herv. teol. stud* 72, no. 4 (2016), https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3459.
[131] Lord and Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice," 10.
[132] Dietrich, "Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory."
[133] Charles Elliot in Bowers Du Toit, "The elephant in the room: The need to re-discover the intersection between poverty, powerlessness and power in 'Theology and Development' praxis."
[134] Lord and Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice."
[135] Cornell Empowerment Group in Lord and Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice," 3.
[136] Whitemore in Lord and Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice," 3.
[137] Wallerstein in Lord and Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice," 4.

The term "**social justice**" is a keyword to understanding empowerment.

To summarise, empowerment can be presented as a social process which enable people or entities at various level of the society to take back the power to get dignity and act deliberately towards their wellbeing through social change. Thus, they can decide what is meant to be their wellbeing and take initiatives to make it happen.

### 3.4.2.2.Empowerment in the diaconal perspective

In a diaconal perspective, Kjell Nordstokke explains that nowadays, empowerment is mainstream diaconal theory and praxis both at the Churches level and internationally with a focus on rights-based approaches which requires methods that put a great emphasis on people participation in projects related to their lives.[138] Moreover, Carlos E. Ham affirms that empowerment and Diakonia are fundamental components of '*being Church'*, for empowerment refers to Biblical concept of the '*imago Dei*' (image of God).[139]

Empowerment is referred to as a method that fights the fundamental causes of problems. It goes beyond a mere participation of vulnerable. Therefore, Tony Addy states that addressing those causes "is one of the reasons for stressing empowerment and the need for the church and diakonia to work with and not only for marginalised people."[140] As the World Council of Churches (WCC) says: "Liberating with stress on empowerment and promoting participation of the people".[141]

WCC, in their document *Ecumenical Diakonia*,[142] gives an understanding of empowerment as the '***diakonia from the margins***' which "represents a unique opportunity for diakonia at all levels (…) for affirming its empowering and transformative potential". They introduced the concept of diakonia as **prophetic**, **transformative** and **justice-seeking**, being

[138] Kjell Nordstokke, "Empowerment in the perspective of ecumenical diakonia," *Diaconia* 3, no. 2 (2012).
[139] Carlos Emilio Ham, "Empowering Diakonia: A perspective from the World Council of Churches," in *Diakonia as Christian social practice: an introduction*, ed. Stephanie Dietrich et al. (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 110.
[140] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 21.
[141] World Council of Churches, *From Inter-Church aid to jubilee : a brief history of ecumenical diakonia in the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2002), 13.
[142] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 36.

elements of what they call "***cycle of empowerment***",[143] hence presenting empowerment as an element of transformation.

Therefore, as presented in *Ecumenical* Diakonia, empowerment is at the heart of Diakonia which "is committed to affirm the dignity and power of those involved in its work, and especially of those judged as poor and helpless", because "**empowering diakonia means opting for practices that allow people to be subjects in the process of working for a better future**".[144] Here, empowerment is put at the heart of diaconal action, because it allows the active participation of the vulnerable groups and, as comments Carlos E. Ham, "affirms the power-service in Christ's way, towards transformative justice, as part of God's mission".[145] This makes the result more accurate.

#### 3.4.2.3.Empowerment in the perspective of Community Development

To the question 'why empower?' Margaret Ledwith responds "empowerment is a key concept at the heart of radical community development. It is the process whereby we develop the theory and the practice of equality."[146] In that way, she associates community development practice with democracy and social justice. For her, the initial context for change is the fact that "community development begins in the everyday lives of local people" and this principle is created by a process of empowerment and participation, "empowerment involves a form of critical education that encourages people to question their reality: this is the basis of collective action and is built on principles of participatory democracy."[147]

Thus, Ledwith agrees that as empowerment is at the heart of good community development practice, power dynamics are at the core of empowerment.[148]

[143] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 28-29.
[144] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 45.
[145] Ham, "Empowering Diakonia: A perspective from the World Council of Churches," 107.
[146] Margaret Ledwith, *Community development : a critical approach* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2011), 32.
[147] Ledwith, *Community development : a critical approach*, 2-3.
[148] Ledwith, *Community development : a critical approach*, 13.

Taylor *et al.* affirm that "Empowerment is human energy".[149] Even if this assertion sounds very loud as a motto, they joined Ledwith warning that the deeper implications of empowerment are rooted in the dynamics of power and control, which are often ignored.[150]

In the book *Community development in action: putting Freire into practice*, Margaret Ledwith explains that empowerment in community development is a commitment to social justice which leads to "believing in people to such an extent that they believe in themselves!", this is also the beginning of social change.[151] She argues that this belief is essential in the concept of empowerment which cannot be achieved without it; it is the first step in the process of change.

So, empowerment is vital to community development as it leads to an engagement in movement that challenges disadvantage, exclusion and oppression the specific community is facing.[152] That comprises a strong belief in people's capacity that they will feel confident enough to gain self-confidence and self-esteem which turn them to rather become actors of their social change.

### 3.5. A (new) integrated model of Use Your Talents to work for the inclusion of persons with disabilities (chapter conclusion)

This section is intended to provide a summary of the chapter by analysing how UYT as diaconal asset-based approach could be used as a method for the inclusion of PwD. It will be enlightened by relevant aspects of the other concepts studied in this chapter. Towards the end of the section, aspects that could be qualified as limits in the conception of UYT as a diaconal approach will be discussed.

According to Kjell Nordstokke, the local congregation is a place for innovative diaconal practice where ordinary people could take creative initiatives manifesting thus a sort of

[149] Daniel C. Taylor, Carl E. Taylor, and Jesse O. Taylor, *Empowerment on an Unstable Planet: From Seeds of Human Energy to a Scale of Global Change* (New York: New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 65.
[150] Taylor, Taylor, and Taylor, *Empowerment on an Unstable Planet: From Seeds of Human Energy to a Scale of Global Change*, 3.
[151] Ledwith, *Community development in action : putting Freire into practice*, 23.
[152] Ledwith, *Community development : a critical approach*, 13.

'*diakonia from below*' and '*self-empowerment*' as an energy from within, grounded in their daily experiences and the vision of their faith.[153]

This description of '*diakonia from below'* made by Nordstokke encompasses aspects of UYT, Seeking Conviviality and Social Innovation studied so far, in this chapter. It links the characteristics of UYT with those of Seeking Conviviality and Social Innovation in a sense that would help this approach gain elements that might be lacking in order to improve its effectiveness in realising the inclusion of PwD.

All the process of UYT is grounded in empowerment. As studied earlier, empowerment is seen as the '*diakonia from the margins*' which is prophetic, transformative and justice-seeking.[154] From its principles UYT is seeing PwD as fully part of the community and holding talents with which they can contribute to the development of that community. Furthermore, as UYT is described by Zo Rakotoarison as an instrument of inclusion and participation,[155] it gives an arena for the expression of the PwD's talents in the sense that it allows them to be stakeholders in the process of their development, giving thus a reality to their inclusion.

If the questions '*how can diakonia contribute to people living together?*' from Seeking Conviviality and '*what can we do with what we have here and now?*' from UYT were merged, it could issue to obviously thinking about all the groups in carrying out the development in the community. With this in mind, the community would become sensitive about the existence in their midst of groups of people like PwD who are different from others considering the challenges they are facing. That would be a good step to the implementation of the twin-track method in ensuring the disability-inclusive development.

Additionally, asking the question '*What kind of economic and social policies support living together?*' expressed in the Seeking Conviviality approach will strengthen mainstreaming the disability aspect in everything done towards the common action as it will require policies that would integrate the specificities of all. Thus, the inclusion of PwD would be something integrated in the daily life of the community as all the social groups will be taken into account.

[153] Nordstokke, "Empowerment in the perspective of ecumenical diakonia," 186.
[154] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 28-29.
[155] Rakotoarison, "Women, Use Your Talents," 65, 67.

Putting all this together, working jointly with PwD for their inclusion starting from their talents will reveal all its relevance. To me, this would be a good alternative to the traditional way of conducting inclusive activities emphasizing on needs (which are not always easy to meet). Here, it may be no need to conceive official projects which should be time-bound and could be expensive, to reach the goal of the inclusion of PwD. In Seeking Conviviality perspective, the transformation of the society should be a long-term action and grounded in people's daily life. Going in the same direction, UYT suggests that the process of social change should focus on already existing assets as both UYT and Seeking Conviviality stress on starting by strengths.

However, putting together UYT and Seeking Conviviality exposes what I identify as a limit of the UYT approach: the absence of clear and strong perspective on addressing root causes of injustice. That could be interpreted as working on just one wheel of the 'bicycle twin-track' (the empowerment 'wheel'). But for a bicycle to move well, it needs both wheels, the second being here the sensitiveness to all kind of injustice. Though the gender sensitiveness is quite developed in the UYT approach,[156] there is a need to widen and scale up this sensitiveness to all kind of marginalisation. In addition, since diakonia is also rights-based,[157] Rakotoarison *et al.* estate that UYT should combine asset-based approach with rights-based approaches in order to lead to better expected results.[158]

Johannes Nissen demonstrates the importance of dealing with the notion of power when carrying out empowerment activities.[159] However, UYT as empowering approach does not yet openly address power dynamics in its implementation. Therefore, elements from Seeking Conviviality such as the struggle for justice could highly contribute to scaling up the rights-based perspective of UYT as a diaconal approach since diakonia should link faith to rights.[160] This would comply with the Voorberg's definition of Social Innovation which implies setting rules that enable at all levels the accessibility of all (namely PwD).[161] That would definitely action the two wheels of the 'bicycle twin-track approach' to ensure the inclusive of PwD.

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[156] Currently, there is gender guideline in the process of being edited. This guideline is made with the intension of mainstreaming all the activities within the frame of UYT projects.
[157] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 3.
[158] Rakotoarison, Dietrich, and Hiilamo, "Tackling Poverty with Local Assets: A Case Study on Congregational Asset-Based Community Development in a Lutheran Church in Madagascar," 136-37.
[159] Johannes Nissen in Nordstokke, "Empowerment in the perspective of ecumenical diakonia," 185.
[160] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 3.
[161] Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers, "A systematic review of co-creation and co-production: Embarking on the social innovation journey."

To conclude, diaconal community development could be presented as an effective method for the inclusion of PwD. UYT being the perspective chosen for this study encompasses the characteristics of ABCD essential for empowering the PwD but needs to scale up its rights-based elements to fully be a method for the inclusion of PwD.

# Chapter 4. Methodology

## 4.0.Introduction

This chapter presents the methods adopted in this research project and provides justification about their use. It encompasses the research design, the sampling, the recruitment of participants, the methods used for data collection, the validity and the reliability, the data analysis, the ethical considerations, and the challenges encountered during the data collection.

## 4.1.Research Design

According to Julianne Cheek, a "research design refers to the way in which a research idea is transformed into a research project or plan that can then be carried out in practice by a researcher or research team".[162] It is the conceptual frame within which a research is conducted, a plan for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data.[163]

The research question presented at section 1.2. has many parameters that could be overly complex to study by a mere use of numbers or statistics. According to Jennifer Mason, the qualitative methodologies highlight the richness, the depth, the nuance, the context, the multi-dimensionality, and complexity of a phenomenon, because qualitative methods have "the capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts".[164] This is why the qualitative methodology has been adopted for this study which aims at seeing this inclusion from the perspective of strengths, therefore, assesses whether the method used for that purpose by HANDICARE is asset-based and can be characterised as diaconal. Since it is about social change, open-ended interviews were conducted in order to grasp information in the actor's own words in a way to let them express how they perceive the experience they are having on their struggle to feel included.

[162] Julianne Cheek, "Research Design," in *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (Sage publications, 2008), 761.
[163] Chakravanti Rajagopalachari Kothari, *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (New Age International, 2004), 31.
[164] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching Second Edition*, SAGE ed. (London, California, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2002), 1.

### 4.1. Sampling

The study is concerned with the inclusion of PwD, having a focus on hearing-impaired youth in the frame of an association. According to David Morgan, "sampling is the process of choosing actual data sources from a larger set of possibilities."[165] In the reflection on how to get data that would direct to an answer to the research, it was found relevant to interview three categories of individuals, the HANDICARE staff, the youth and their parents, in order to have a larger view of the case. Using a purposive sampling, the participants were selected in a way they are relevant in releasing data that would be critical to the research question.[166] As Alan Bryman states, "purposive sampling is the fundamental principle for selecting cases and individuals in qualitative research."[167]

The interview with the member of the staff is meant to provide critical information about the functioning and the methods used by HANDICARE in their objective of working for the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth. The second group composed of hearing-impaired youth was selected with the purpose to get a description of how they perceive their ex/inclusion and the methods used by HANDICARE in achieving their goal. The third category composed of parents was chosen with the aim to get information about how the ex/inclusion of those youth is experienced by their surrounding and how this latter perceives the methods and the result of HANDICARE's intervention.

### 4.2. Recruitment of participants

A total of 14 persons were interviewed, one from the staff (the founder), 10 hearing-impaired youth and 3 parents. Each category was interviewed based on separate questionnaire. For the 3 groups, the questions were around the experience they had about the exclusion/marginalisation of the youth with hearing-impairment, approaches used by HANDICARE for the inclusion of the youth with hearing-impairment and the outcomes of the HANDICARE's intervention. To ensure an effective and comprehensive use of the data, the interviews were recorded by appropriate devices (audio-recording for the parents, and videorecording for the hearing-impaired youth).

[165] David L. Morgan, "Sampling," in *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (Sage publications, 2008), 799.
[166] Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*, 4th ed. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 418.
[167] Bryman, *Social research methods*, 428.

The member of the staff selected for the interview was the founder and president of HANDICARE. I chose to interview her because she is not only the founder, but she is working practically with the hearing-impaired youth. All those involved in HANDICARE are volunteers including the president who rather invest her time and resources for the sake the association.

The 10 hearing-impaired youth (6 males and 4 females) were selected based on their ability to communicate in sign language, their knowledge of the association and their availability. To comply with the need to obtain direct consent from the interviewees, they were chosen from among those who were over 18 years old.

Initially, the research group for the parents was designed to be a group interview and this was intended to be for parents whose children were minor (below 18). But due to the challenges of getting in touch with them all at the same time and the fact that they were not many youths below 18 among the HANDICARE participants, the plan has been shifted to also include parents whose children were 18 and above and the group interview was also changed into individual interviews. As consequence, an additional consent form for those young adults to consent to their parents giving information concerning them (third person).

### 4.3. Data Collection methods

In the process of collecting data, the conducting of interviews provided the primary data source. In addition to that, documents from HANDICARE such as annual reports, as well as the 2018 ESDA's annual report were used mainly for the description of HANDICARE in context. Notes taken from observations have also been precious in gathering data.

#### Interviewing

The interviews were meant to enable to answer the research question which is about assessing whether the methods used by HANDICARE for the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth were diaconal asset-based ones.[168] The process of interviewing was based on semi-structured questionnaires (see Annex 1) composed of 'open-ended' questions.[169] Those latter, which are also described as nondirective questions, allow the participants to make their

[168] Svend Brinkmann, "Interviewing," in *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (Sage publications, 2008), 470.
[169] David Silverman, *Interpreting qualitative data*, 6E. ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2019), 46-48; 177-80.

descriptions in their own words and highlight the aspect of inclusion that appears to be meaningful to them.[170]

All the interviews were carried out face-to-face. The information letter for the consent to participate and the interview guide were shared in advance of the interview being carried out. The information letter provided information related to the project and explained what was expected from them as participants, while the semi-structured interview guide gave them an idea of which kind of information was needed from them.

The interviews were conducted in sign language for the hearing-impaired youth, English for the founder of HANDICARE and French and Fulfulde[171] for the parents (in total 4 languages used during the interviews). The information letter for the consent, and the interview guide were also translated into those languages as part of the recordings. The interviews were conducted at home (6) at the school (3), at the office (the founder) and at HANDICARE's headquarters (4). The length of those interviews varied from 14 to 119 minutes.

### 4.4. Validity, reliability and reflexivity

A pre-discussion with the founder of HANDICARE helped to identify and get in touch with the other participants. Sometimes, she had to play the role of guide and contact person in reaching the homes and setting up the appointments. However, she did not interfere in the interviews of other participants.

Validity is described as being dependent on the extent to which a research accurately measures what it purports to measure.[172] In that purpose, some questions were very often split into sub-questions in order to make the nuances perceived by the interviewees, especially the hearing-impaired and the parents.

As reliability calls for the consistency and/or repeatability of data collection, interpretation, and/or analysis,[173] some questions addressed to the youth with hearing-

[170] Kathryn J. Roulston, "Open-Ended Question," in *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (Sage publications, 2008), 582.
[171] Also called Fulani, Fulfulde is the main spoken language (beside the official languages French and English) in the three Northern Regions of Cameroon. It is an international language use in almost all the countries of West Africa and some of the Central Africa countries.
[172] Peter Miller, "Validity," in *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (Sage publications, 2008), 909.
[173] Miller, "Reliability," 753.

impairment were repeated in order to ensure the dependability of the responses. It happened in some cases that the responses by a single interviewee were divergent and even contradictory. These contradictory data were ignored in the analysis to avoid any bias.

Regarding reflexivity, as former Director of ESDA, I was already known and highly respected by almost all the youth and their parents, which could in some ways have influenced the interviews and the whole process.[174] However, focusing on the question guides and keeping in mind the purpose of the study helped me be as neutral as possible. Sometimes, the answers were quite surprising to me, and it rather triggered my curiosity and helped me to accentuate the importance of learning and getting the participants' view. Likewise, the low educational level of the youth with hearing-impairment was a challenge to be overcome. That was done by rephrasing the questions according to the understanding of an interviewee, leading at times to giving examples to help him/her grasp what the meaning of the question was. I must assume that this occasionally caused bias in some responses, since the intention at the beginning was to get everything from the participant's perspective. Hence, this situation has been considered in the analysis of data; all responses which I suspected were triggered or oriented by the rephrasing of the questions were not ignored.

### 4.5. Data analysis

Data analysis represents an indispensable step in the process of gathering data and linking the findings with concepts.[175] The technique that was used to analyse the data was to identify main themes by studying the interviews and notes taken during the data collection.[176]

While a transcription of the interview of the founder of HANDICARE has been made and constituted a primary data source, the information from the notes and recordings of the interviews with the youth and the parents were directly integrated into a structured framework, as described in the next paragraph.[177] Therefore, the recordings were safely kept till the end of

[174] Maura Dowling, "Reflexivity," in *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (Sage publications, 2008), 747.
[175] Deborah K. Van Den Hoonaard and Will C. Van Den Hoonaard, "Data Analysis," in *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, ed. Lisa M Given (Sage publications, 2008), 186.
[176] Ranjit Kumar, *RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: a step-by-step guide for beginners*, ed. SAGE, SAGE ed., ed. Ranjit Kumar (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: SAGE Publications Ltd, SAGE Publications Inc., SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd, 2011, 2011), 210. http://www.sociology.kpi.ua/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ranjit_Kumar-Research_Methodology_A_Step-by-Step_G.pdf.
[177] Kumar, *RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY: a step-by-step guide for beginners*, 210.

the research project and then destroyed afterward. This approach is also supported by Svend Brinkmann who states that both the direct recordings and the transcripts can serve as primary data source to be interpreted and analysed.[178]

The reason behind the direct interpretation and analysis of the interviews of the participants that were not transcribed was motivated by the fact that they were conducted in sign language (the case of the hearing-impaired youth) and needed a visual interpretation. The parents were interviewed with the aim of obtaining information that would help confirm or provide more details about the data collected from the two other categories. Having conducted those interviews in French and Fulfulde motivated the choice of making a direct interpretation and analysis.

### 4.6. Ethical considerations

For the three categories of interviewees, the recruitment was done in compliance with the VID guidelines. An NSD application was made in advance and their approval was received. Information letters with a consent form to be signed (see Annex 2) were given to the participants for their endorsement. Since some parents should give information about their children who are above 18, those latter gave their consent too.

Mindful of the context of working with PwD, the interviews were conducted in a very sensitive way so as to ensure the protection of the privacy of the participants.

The recordings of the interviews were safely stored in separate devices from the computer used for the write-up of the thesis. All the recordings were anonymised, except the interview with the founder who gave her express permission to be identified in this thesis.

### 4.7. Challenges

The challenges faced during the collection of data were mainly at three levels: being at the same time an insider and an outsider in conducting this research, some practical challenges in the interviews with the youth with hearing-impairment and practical challenges in securing interviews with the parents.

[178] Brinkmann, "Interviewing," 470.

Being in a familiar setting and working as a researcher was often a challenge for me. I have previously always had convivial contact with the hearing-impaired youth and their parents. But that conviviality was also fostered by my position of contact person with charity organisations. During my first years as Director of ESDA, the context in which I worked was such that we should help the pupils with practical items. This meant that many interviewees were expecting to receive some gifts from a certain organisation through the study I was conducting. It was sometimes very challenging to explain that the purpose of the study was not to make any donation to anyone.

With the hearing-impaired youth, the first challenge was their low educational level.[179] That brought a major difficulty for them in understanding the questions they were asked. Therefore, I often had to break down the questions into many sub-questions, or rephrase them, or even to give some concrete examples to illustrate the meaning of the questions. That resulted to some biased answers. These biased responses were not taken into account in the analysis. Another consequence of the low educational level was divergent answers to repeated questions during the interviews. When questions were repeated in the course of the interview, an ambiguity occurs in some answers. In some cases, there was inconstancy in the answers the interviewee was able to explain any nuance that might have led to doubt or to divergent understanding.

Another challenge was to translate the questions of the interview guides from English to French and from French to Sign Language while ensuring the good comprehension of those questions by splitting or illustrating them. That was a tedious work, especially since I had to use in total four languages.

The challenges with the parents were at the level of methods and cultural apprehension. Originally, the interview with this category was planned to be a group interview. However, the parents were not all available at the same time and it was more difficult to call them together for a meeting than to go and meet them at home. Hence, the individual interviews were finally adopted as a more suitable method. That implied reporting the change to NSD which took note of the shift and gave its approbation.

[179] Information from notes during the field research. The majority ended their schooling at the level of the primary school it was only a minority who were still attending classes and who were yet to fulfil the fourth class of the secondary school.

# Chapter 5: Presentation field result and analysis

## 5. Introduction

This chapter provides the information presented by the participants during the interviews, as well as notes taken during those interviews to enlighten some points that may need further explanation. In the presentation the collected data will be sorted according to the following items: the experience of exclusion or margination, the understanding of inclusion, HANDICARE as diaconal work, HANDICARE's strategies, HANDICARE's activities and outcomes of their intervention, and other significant findings. Since the research is focused on assessing how HANDICARE is working for inclusion of hearing-impaired youth, the data are collected from three categories: a member of the HANDICARE's staff (the founder, who is working practically with the youth), the hearing-impaired youth, and their parents. Those groups represent the sphere of intervention of HANDICARE.

The three categories of participants are coded as follows: the founder of HANDICARE: FH; the hearing-impaired youth: Y1-10; and the parents: P1-3. Direct quotes from the participants have been included to illustrate and give a better understanding of the findings. For the sake of language comprehension, I have added some precisions in some quotes: words in parenthesis (…) are explanation I added and those in brackets […] are words from previous sentences which are missing in the quote. It should be noted that the founder of HANDICARE gave her expressed authorisation to be identified in this thesis.

## 5.1. Exclusion or marginalisation as experienced by HANDICARE's stakeholders

All the 14 participants mentioned exclusion or marginalisation in the interviews. The experiences were narrated from the perspective of each group. Despite some nuances, they can be classified into two major causes with various effects: the language barrier (communication) and cultural perceptions.

### 5.1.1. Communication as cause of exclusion and marginalisation of hearing-impaired youth

- **Experiences of hearing-impaired youth**

8 of the 10 hearing-impaired youth interviewed explicitly named communication/language as their major experience of exclusion and marginalisation. 5 of them experienced it right from home. The fact that the families do not know sign language is a great limitation in the communication issuing to isolation of the hearing-impaired youth. Here are some excerpts:

> I am always alone. The hearings (those from the household who are not hearing-impaired) are always talking among themselves. as I am the only hearing-impaired one at home, they ignore me. (Y1)
>
> I am isolated! (Y4)
>
> The communication with my siblings is limited. As they cannot sign, it is difficult to stay with them. (Y6)

The effects of this communication problem touch their education, their social life, and their relationship with the larger community.

Concerning education, all the three participants who are students at COLPROT raised the concern about some teachers who do not take them into account while explaining the lessons. Based on my observation, I think this may be because they have not been trained to handle hearing-impaired students during their lectures.

> The teachers just talk and do not help us understand. They just write things on the board after explaining it orally. (Y2)

However, all the three interviewed participants mentioned a very good relationship with their hearing mates. Those latter are their tutors during the lectures. They explained that many of them know some sign language. In my observation during a class session at COLPROT, I realised that there was even a class where some hearing students were interpreters and were very skilled in sign language.

> Our hearing mates help us to write and read the lessons. (Y1)

Concerning social life, marriage is a serious issue for those youths. They expressed the desire to get married to hearing people but due to communication barriers, they end up looking for hearing-impaired partners.

> Most of the time, they wish to get married to ordinary people (meaning hearing people), but those latter are afraid of the communication challenges and so forth. As consequent, those hearing-impaired youth get married among themselves. This year (2021) we have (have had) tree marriages and one last year. (FH)

The consequence of marginalisation due to communication is seen both on the hearing-impaired youth side and the community side. The frustration is perceptible in the expressions:

> Most of the time, they retract and would not like to deal with others. They would not accept the others to get involved in their business. Sometimes they would look like they were aggressive, but that is just an expression of the frustration they are feeling. (FH)

> I do not like the way HANDICARE is mixing the hearing-impaired with the hearing youth. The hearings just talk talk among themselves, and we do not understand. I prefer that the association be only for hearing-impaired youth. (Y6)

> For them (the community), it is normal that PwD should live apart. (FH)

> Most of the time, the problem of exclusion comes from the facts that the hearing-impaired cannot be understood by others. (FH)

- **Experience of the parents**

The parents experienced the communication problem mostly from the perspective of not knowing how to deal with their children. Thus, they needed to be told very often by the HANDICARE staff what were the opportunities offered to their children and how they could help those latter with a particular issue. Most of the time, when they do not know how to do something, they leave the child in the care of FH (case of P1), or they just prevent them accessing some opportunities (case of P2). Actually, those parents consider themselves as victims of the situation, so they just have to handle it in resignation.

> If God gives you something, you cannot refuse, you have to endure it. I am enduring my burden of my life. That burden is very heavy, because I think since they are 'deaf', they have no future … (P2)

Most of the time, this language barrier leads them to a kind of abdication at a good extent of their parental responsibility. This is openly expressed by P3:

> There are things I could not explain to her as her mother (talking about her daughter's love life), but she learnt at HANDICARE and knows many things due to what she learnt there. I am even surprised. (P3)

### 5.1.2. Cultural perceptions as causes of the exclusion

The identified cultural causes of exclusion or marginalisation are very often rooted in the understanding of disability. Many people think that it is a curse to have a child with

disability, hence it is a shame for the family. This results in hiding the hearing-impaired children or enduring disregards from the community. This fact has been expressed by the founder of HANDICARE, P1, and P2. For the founder, people look at PwD with pity because in most of the local cultures, they think it is witchcraft or the consequence of sin.

> Most of the people do not understand what a hearing-impaired person is; some may think they are witches, some other may think they are crazy and mad, and they run away from them, they would not like to join them. We want to break this barrier. (FH)
>
> The parents do not allow them to go out, because they feel it is a shame to have such child and they want to protect their image. **The marginalisation starts from home**. (FH)
>
> It was rather us the parents who endured the mockeries. At the Church, people said that it was because we, the parents, sinned that our child became hearing-impaired. (P1)

Those cultural or common beliefs impact the consideration giving to the education and the future of the hearing-impaired youth. The families think that their hearing-impaired child/youth could not afford education and could not get a proper job. This view was alarmingly expressed by P2:

> If God gives you something you cannot refuse, you have to endure it. I am enduring my burden of my life. That burden is very heavy, because I think since they are 'deaf', they have no future; who will employ them? what will they do in life? I really wonder … since they are 'deaf', what will they do tomorrow (meaning 'what will they become in the future')? If I die today, how will they live? I am a poor woman, I don't have means to feed them, and they are deaf … Instead of getting hearing children, so that they would get job tomorrow or do long studies so that they would get money … Now they are deaf … what will I do? … This is my concern … this is why I am always ill. (P2)

This statement of P2 gives also an explanation of why the hearing-impaired youth are many times denied access either to school or to a minimum of consideration.

> I wanted to continue with my studies, but since my mother died, my adoptive parents refused to let me continue my studies. They said the secondary school was too expensive. So, I dropped out. (Y10)
>
> Unless the family could see what their child can do, they would never accept that [their] child (talking about the youth) can do something good. All what they think they have to do towards him is [just] to give him food, and hide [him] from people's sight, because for them it a shame. (FH)

From this last statement and the above P1 declaration, one can say that the stigmatisation is not suffered only by the children, the parents also experience it. This may explain why the parents prefer to hide their impaired children instead of looking for ways to help them cope with their disability. This corroborate what was presented in the context chapter (sub-section 2.2.2.).

### 5.2. HANDICARE's understanding of inclusion

From the interview with the founder of HANDICARE, their understanding of inclusion of hearing-impaired youth encompasses:

- Having access to education and vocational training centres together with the hearing youth.

> Our aim is that those youth who did not have the chance to go to school may be able to read and write so they could get a training and then be socially included… (FH)

- Being part of the community at all levels and working together with the larger community.

> I would like to see them in the society mixed with others, doing things together with others, not doing things apart … they have to share the same school, the same world. They have to be mixed up with others. That is what we call inclusion. (FH)

- Affirming their social life.

> Our wish is to see them getting job, being self-reliant, getting married and founding families. (FH)

### 5.3.HANDICARE as diaconal work

This section is crucial in the process of getting an answer to the research question. It will help analyse whether the HANDICARE's intervention is a diaconal work. In that sense, it presents the motivations and the values that trigger the work of this association.

The founder expressed that the motivation to create HANDICARE comes both from the need to implement the findings of her research during her training as specialised teacher for

hearing-impaired students and moreover from her understanding of Christian faith and values. For her, as "the Bible says that Christ is LOVE" (FH), faith should be expressed through "transmitting to others the love [she] received from Christ… It is not a pity" (FH). She indicated that the social work she does could not be dissociated from the expression of her spiritually, because "social and faith work together, [and] a real Christian should express his faith through social work" (FH).

> My motivation of doing social work does not depend on bringing people to Christianity or not, every person deserves love, even when they do not become Christian. (FH)

**Service model**

Another aspect to mention as important in this regard is the service model. All the members of HANDICARE, beginning with the founder have a strong personal engagement as one of their greatest assets (they see it that way). From the interviews, it appears that they make the sacrifice of everything they have: their property, their belongings, their money, their time and even their intimacy. They do everything they can and use everything they have "**to see [the hearing-impaired youth] emancipate**" (FH).

This view of the founder of HANDICARE is corroborated by the says of the parents. This is how they expressed it:

> I see the link between what HANDICARE is doing and their Christian background. They show love in what they are doing… If they were not Christian, I am sure they would have given up. … I was worrying about how she is engaged in this work, but she answered me that it is a commitment she took before God. That means that she is not expecting any salary from anywhere. I will never forget that lady. (P1)

> The founder of HANDICARE is not doing anything to earn any benefit of it, she is 'following God' (meaning 'she is serving God'). It is for God that she is doing this. It is not everybody who has that kind of heart. … There is a huge difference between the way HANDICARE is working and how the other [secular] organisations are conducting their activities. (P3)

### 5.4.HANDICARE's strategies for the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth

As with the previous section, this section is also essential for answering the formulated research question. The strategies used by HANDICARE to achieve their objectives will provide information as to whether their methods can be presented as asset based.

From the interviews (especially with the founder) I identified the following strategies:

i- The overall strategy is to make people see the competences of the hearing-impaired youth to break the hostile mindset of the community. This approach is mainstream in all what they are doing. They implement this strategy mainly through empowerment, through all kind of training sessions at all their ordinary meetings.

> **Everything we are doing is based on what those youth can do**. (FH)
>
> we are going from the point that those children can do something, then we let people see what the youth are able to do, so that they could change their mind. (FH)
>
> For me, **the best way to empower them is to give them various training in various sectors of life**. (FH)

ii- Putting the hearing-impaired youth in contact with the hearing people. This strategy has a double effect: firstly, it breaks the presumptions people have toward the hearing-impaired people and it creates a contact between the hearing-impaired youth and the larger community to enable those youth to express their identity without any fear. This is done either by inviting hearing persons to their meetings or attending common activities.

> In our activities, we invite "normal" people (meaning people without disability) to see what our youth are capable to do. So, when they come and see, they understand that what they were thinking was wrong. (FH)
>
> During sport activities, we do not allow our youth to just play among them (PwD), we mix up with other youth. And for those going to high school, they do not have a special class for them, they are mixed up in the same class with their ordinary mates… ***we groom them in order for them to not feel any complex in face of ordinary people***. For me, it is another way to fight against marginalisation. (FH)

iii- Looking at disability as '*dis-ability*'. Hence, enabling the expression of '*abilities*' by reducing as much as possible the hindrances that foster the disability aspects.

> we just need to put them in a condition where the disability is not a barrier for what they have to do [to see what the youth are able to do]. (FH)

iv- **"Learning by doing"**. It is the strategy used to teach and train the hearing-impaired youth during their training sessions.

> When we conduct activity, I show them, then I let them try. They fail at the first time, but at the end, they make it. And then when they succeed to do something, it boosts them, and they realise that they could do everything like the other. So, the first thing is to make them see that they can do something, at least at very small level. (FH)

v- **The use of motivational discourse as catalyst**.

> I keep on telling them that they are as skilled as the others. When they succeed to do something, I used to ask them "is it not the same thing the other people use do and you said you could not do it? Are you not doing it now?" They answer, yes, we are doing it now. Then sometimes I show them that they are doing it better that the others (…) They understand that discourse. (FH)

vi- Empowering the environment to foster inclusion. "For those attending inclusive school, we encourage their mate to learn the sign language in order to be able to communicate with them" (FH).

vii- Using the snowball effect. The outcomes of the learning sessions and the performance of the youth are used as means to motivate the youth to do more and reach new parents through those who are already convinced by the skills and performance of their children.

> The result of the [youth] is a major factor… after they (the parents) have seen how their child (son/daughter) is working well and having good result, they become strong advocates for those children to other parents and their testimony is a powerful motivation for their peers. So, the snowball effect is also one of the strategies. (FH)

viii- Propagating through peers. This is close to the previous strategy. It consists of focusing on a certain target group (parents, classmates …) to use them as door openers. The aim is to reach those persons that HANDICARE cannot directly contact (parents, leaders, and other hearing-impaired youth …) through those who are already in the HANDICARE circle.

ix- Using offered opportunities to promote inclusion.

> We also attend ceremonies organised by authorities or other groups. It gives us an opportunity to get our youth mixed up with others. By

translating into sign language, we draw the attention of the audience on the imperativeness of inclusion. (FH)

x- Using partnership to further the hearing-impaired youth learning.

> There are some trainings we cannot provide, for instance, those whose skills need to be sharpened in a specific place out of the association, we send them to some training workshops… (FH)

xi- Building new skills and competences from already existing ones.

> They are some who just know a few things. From that basis, we empower them by adding new more things. We always try to bring them at the next level. And we can see that they are happy and motivated. (FH)

xii- Fighting for the rights of the hearing-impaired youth and teaching those latter how they could defend them (but I observe that the youth were not much involved in this matter).

> what we are doing is not just to advocate for these rights, but we also defend and stand for these latter. (FH)

> Yes, we [empower them to defend their rights by themselves]. But what we noticed is that most of them do not even know their rights. (FH)

xiii- **Using available assets for functioning**. With no external funding, HANDICARE is using already available assets: the homeplace of the founder, the members money, the hearing-impaired youth talents, the connections HANDICARE has (psychologist, teachers, the school for hearing-impaired pupils, the high school…)

> They can be trained at the association level using what we have at our disposal… (FH)

### 5.5. HANDICARE's activities and Outcomes

This section will focus on the activities carried out by HANDICARE in regard to the expected results to later assess whether the objective of inclusion is perceptible in the outcomes. I will present how those activities and outcomes are perceived by the HANDICARE's staff, the hearing-impaired youth, and the parents.

### 5.5.1. As seen by HANDICARE's founder

For the founder of HANDICARE, the intention behind all activities is the restoration of the dignity of the hearing-impaired youth.

> Through our activities, by the time, they understand that they are not patients [to be assisted], they normal human beings. (FH)

She expresses that the overall goal is the emancipation of those youth; this is what she calls '*being normal human beings*', meaning 'having an ordinary life as anybody'. Therefore, the HANDICARE's activities are around **skills training and competence building**, **activities for integration**, **the expression and the defence of the hearing-impaired youth's rights**. For them, this should be reflected in all the spheres of their lives. This is how the founder states it in this excerpt:

> In short, just the fact to see them emancipate is a huge achievement. For instance, most of them did not know that they could get married one day; now they are getting married and having children… Now in front of "normal" people, they are able to defend themselves … [and] correct them in some skills. They can go to sport without being ashamed of using their own language, they even feel proud of using a different language than other's. At home, many have changed positively, because parent understood that if they handle those youth very well without marginalising them, they will do everything like the ordinary youth/children. We got many testimonies from parents. (FH)
>
> [Though] for now self-employment is difficult, because they do not have means to buy equipment… they could get involved in some small jobs like bakery, they can make "pofpof"[180] and sell for their income; one of them is doing that. For those who sew… they do it to let people purchase dresses and clothes and they deliver the products. (FH)

### 5.5.2. As seen by the hearing-impaired youth

About their involvement in HANDICARE's activities, the interviewed youth expressed their interest in the following fields:

- **Socialisation and fellowship**. 8 of the interviewees expressed it explicitly. Actually, 6 pointed it as their favourite activities, and 7 acknowledged that it has an impact in their lives.[181] However, one of the youths said he preferred it should be exclusively among the hearing-impaired youth, because of the language

[180] Kind of local donut in Cameroon

[181] They see HANDICARE as their second home where they can be understood by others and get in touch with hearing youth.

challenge, whereas 3 of them rather enjoy the presence of the hearing youths. That draws the attention to the need to address the communication problem.

Still in this category, there are certain youths who find in HANDICARE a refuge and a substitute to the family. They said that HANDICARE is helping them to address life's practical issues and challenges with their family, in their studies and in the society in general.

- **The trainings and workshops**. 7 of the interviewees mentioned it as very relevant in their daily lives. There are some of them who are earning money from those activities and others who increased their school performance. However, 2 of them stated that they like literacy more than practical trainings.

> Jeannette is teaching well, we like the ways she shows us things. She writes on the bord and we see, we copy … that increases our skills… being in the association helped me in my studies. I can read and write my lessons. (Y2)

> The most important things I learnt at HANDICARE are cooking and baking. Now I am making cake and frying fish to sell. I earn some money, but not much. (Y9)

- All the interviewees stated that they are very happy to be part of HANDICARE, they see it as given them value and making them 'be like all the others'. A good number of the association members[182] are very concerned about their social lives. They are married or want to get married; they want to have "normal life" as anybody: having a job and providing to the needs of their families. Especially marriage and work are very important issues. At HANDICARE, they can freely talk about those matters and get answers to their life questions. This is how one of them expressed it with a great joy:

> **HANDICARE teaches us that we are not less than the hearing people, we are equal. Everything the hearing people can do, we too can do it. We can work equally like hearing people.** (Y5)

This statement seems to summarise all what the hearing-impaired youth expressed during the interviews I conducted with them.

### 5.5.3. As seen by the parents

Two out of the three interviewed parents (Y1 and Y3) stated that they are very satisfied about what HANDICARE is doing, and the third one, though acknowledging the huge work

[182] Those aged between 20 and 30

HANDICARE is doing, is yet to be satisfied; She said she is not seeing concretely how her children benefited from the HANDICARE's intervention as she is not seeing yet all her children making income. In fact, that latter comment shows that she measures the outcome of HANDICARE's work with making incomes or having job.

However, none of all the parents knows in detail what HANDICARE is doing practically. The two that appreciated the work of HANDICARE just see how their son/daughter have changed, they can say in which area they have changed, but cannot clearly explain what was done. They simply named the activities from where the youth returned with the product of their learning[183] and those from which they saw their son or daughter practicing the learnings at home (first aid).

P3 expressed a profound happiness about what HANDICARE is doing and is wishing that other parents would send their children to HANDICARE too. This shows that the snowball effect is very possible. If HANDICARE succeed in its objective, there is a great chance that it makes parents be less reluctant to believe in their children's abilities, just as the founder of HANDICARE expressed as a working hypothesis.

To the question of identifying and comparing skills in their children before they became members of HANDICARE and after they have been involved in the association's life, P1 and P3 answered with great satisfaction that their children possessed skills before being in touch with HANDICARE and that they increased those skills and acquired new ones through the work of HANDICARE.

Contrary to P2 who felt very pessimistic about her two children, the two other parents expressed hope for the future of their children. For P1, her wishes include seeing her son hearing again. "But my son will speak one day, he should speak. As he will become a medical doctor, he should speak; else, how could he communicate with his patients?" (P1).

The parents also showed a high trust in the founder of HANDICARE. Each time they did not know how to deal with their progenitures in a specific case, they called on HANDICARE and their intervention had always borne fruit.

[183] like making face masks, making hygienic pads …

To conclude this section, both the hearing-impaired youth and the majority of parents expressed their satisfaction about the activities carried out by HANDICARE. They said how those activities are helping them in their daily lives. This corroborated the statement of the founder of HANDICARE. However, a few numbers of the interviewees wished that some adjustments would be done in some of the activities.

### 5.6. Other findings

In addition to the findings presented in the five previous sections, there are others which were not expected in the planned interview guide but resulted from the semi-structured character of the interviews. This section presents those I consider worthy of attention.

**1- Less discrimination in competences?**

After the interviews, I perceived from those holding a job (Y4, Y5 and Y6) that generally, their competences were paid similarly to the hearing persons. None of them mentioned any marginalisation or exclusion in their payment. All the three participants gave the same answer: “we are paid same same to our co-workers” (P4). However, Y6 added “There is no suitable job for us.” But the context was not about payment, it was about the kind of job he had (carpentry). This is how FH commented it:

> It is a matter of [how] good is the quality [of the service], that will create trust with the customers. Everything we do, we let people see, we let people test, and then (from that) they can talk (advertise) to others. (FH)

**2- Responsibility?**

All the 10 hearing-impaired youth participants were above 18, yet they were all under the responsibility of their parents at a various level. Even those who were married continued to be under the leadership of their parents. Very often, those latter can take decision on their behalf.

> After the death of my mother, people decided about my future without consulting me because I was hearing-impaired. (Y10)

By empowering the youth, HANDICARE is raising the level of responsibility of the youth.

### 3- How to valorise the skills?

All the participants showed that they possess many skills. If some of them managed to get a job, the majority still struggle very much about how to valorise those talents and skills. The parents also recognise the talents of their children but unfortunately do not know how to help them valorise them.

## 5.7. Chapter conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from the field interviews. Those findings informed the reader about the experience of exclusion or marginalisation the members of HANDICARE members have. These stem essentially from two causes: language barrier (communication) and cultural beliefs. Still from those findings, the understanding HANDICARE has of inclusion refers to *having access to education*, *taking part in the community life as members* and *affirming their social life*. The diaconal characteristics of HANDICARE, were seeing from their faith and Christian value expression both in their motivation and the ways they carry out their work. Additionally, the identified HANDICARE's strategies were mainly driven by the assumption of ensuring the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth through the demonstration of their competences and skills; those competences and skills are built on those the hearing-impaired youth already had. The findings also showed that the HANDICARE's activities were appreciated by the stakeholders.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

## 6.0. Introduction

In this chapter, the results presented in chapter five will be discussed in relation to the theories presented in chapter three in order to provide an answer to the research question. It will especially be about assessing the methods used by HANDICARE for the integration of the hearing-impaired youth, which is the first part of our research question (the other part – about broadening the case to other similar groups – will be answered in a separate chapter).

Firstly, I will discuss the intervention of HANDICARE for the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth, building on how they understand and work for their inclusion. Hence, the activities will be analysed in regards of the twin-track approach. Secondly, an analysis of the work of HANDICARE as a diaconal asset-based approach will be made by assessing the field research in the light of the presented theories and concepts; UYT will then be the main concept, but this will be enriched by the other concepts studied, namely *Empowerment*, *Seeking Conviviality* and elements of *Social Innovation*. The third section of this chapter will discuss the effectiveness of the method used by HANDICARE for the integration of the hearing-impaired youth while the fourth one will present the limits identified in their intervention.

### 6.1.1. The experience and understanding of ex/inclusion in HANDICARE

According to the field research, the expression of exclusion as experienced by the hearing-impaired youth is presented as being based on a **language barrier** and **cultural perceptions**. This can explain the formulation of the HANDICARE motto: "***breaking barriers***!" It aligns with this assertion of the Founder:

> We want to break the barrier of language, because most of the time the problem of exclusion comes from the facts that the hearing-impaired cannot be understood by others (…) and (as cultural barrier,) people do not understand what a hearing-impaired person is…" (FH)

This statement of FH presents the exclusion experienced by the hearing-impaired youth as a barrier to break and implies that they should work on both sides of the barrier. This calls on the use of the twin-track approach.

The HANDICARE understanding of inclusion also comprises the **restoration of the dignity of the hearing-impaired youth** through their '***emancipation***' which they describe as "***being normal human being***". They expressed that it should be done through three approaches: **empowerment**, **integration**, and the **defence of the rights**.

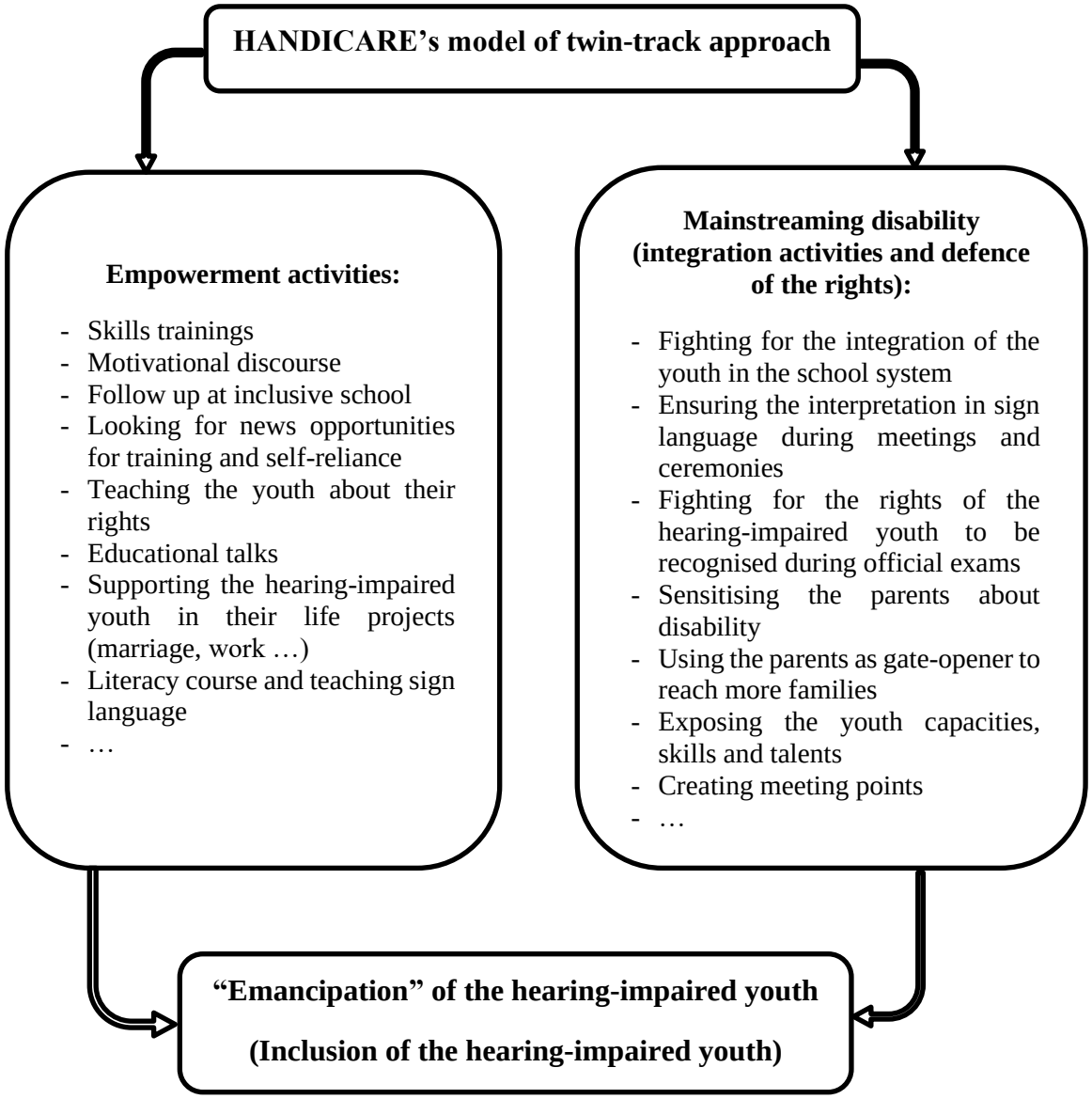
This view of the HANDICARE volunteers aligns with the twin-track approach. Empowerment constitutes the first track and the integration activities and the defence of the rights of the hearing-impaired youth constitutes the second track, which mainstreams the disability sensitiveness.

If the empowerment is carried out through training at various levels which they are organising during their meetings, they realise the integration component through enabling the youth's talents and skills to be seen and perceived by the community and through common activities, such as sports and official ceremonies. This new way of using existing practices such as training youth and showing the outcomes of their training to their parents and others is what Howaldt *et al.* describe as *Social Innovation*.[184] Furthermore, this way of using 'new idea' (using the skills of the youth for their integration) that work'[185] creates a sustainable solution for the youth which gives them a new position and participation in the society; it is also defined by Wooberg *et al.* as *Social Innovation*.[186]

From the above analysis, a HANDICARE's model of twin-track can be presented as follows:

[184] Howaldt, Kopp, and Schwarz, "Social Innovations as Drivers of Social Change – Exploring Tarde's Contribution to Social Innovation Theory Building," 30.
[185] Geoff Mulgan et al., "Social Innovation: What It Is, Why It Matters and How It Can Be Accelerated," Working paper, (01/01 2007): 8.
[186] Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers, "A systematic review of co-creation and co-production: Embarking on the social innovation journey."

**Figure 3: The twin-track approach – the HANDICARE's model**




Adapted from Twin-track presented in DSPD, *Toolkit on disability for AFRICA: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT*, 9

### 6.1.2. HANDICARE and disability-inclusive development work

The HANDICARE understanding of inclusion as presented at point 5.2. involves three elements which align with some of the features of the disability-inclusive development presented at point 3.1.4.:

- **Access to education and vocational training centres in an inclusive way**. This refers to the feature '*inclusive education*'. From the interviews, it becomes obvious that up to now, HANDICARE is still fighting for the hearing-impaired youth to get access to education. That means that the challenge is first to get

those youth to school or vocational education, the quality learning is yet to be addressed.

- **Being fully actors in the community work together with the others**. This could be linked to the feature '*Decent work and employment*'. HANDICARE is very active in skills development and providing some opportunities for the hearing-impaired youth. However, their actions are limited to empowering the youth without enabling them to access decent jobs though some of the participants started to make some income from what they learnt.
- **Affirming their social life**. This is done through various educational activities and the will and struggle of the hearing-impaired youth to have the same family life as everybody. They expressed their will to get married, provide for the needs of their families and get involved in the community life as others do. But they are lacking access to social protection. None of the interviewees mentioned anything related to social protection, they were rather complaining about the fact they are not considered, as far as social protection is concerned. However, it is seen that HANDICARE is working hard in fighting for the PwD's rights; they are even able to confront the authorities with their responsibilities towards PwD.

Those three elements are mostly linked to the features '*inclusive education*' and '*Decent work and employment*' of the disability-inclusive development. Fighting for '*Inclusive health services*' is a lacking element in the intervention of HANDICARE, while '*social protection*' seems to be taken up in their fight for the rights of the PwD, but not directly. However, despite those limitations which can be understood when considering the context in which HANDICARE is working, I would still qualify their actions as inclusive development activities.

### 6.2. HANDICARE's method as diaconal asset-based

Though they are not using the expression '*Use Your Talents*', the UYT methodology is present at the heart of the strategies used by HANDICARE to reach their goal. I will go from the diaconal and asset-based aspect of the HANDICARE's work to discuss how the concept of UYT is embedded in their strategies. That will help demonstrate the method they use is diaconal asset-based and lead to discussion as to how this method could be used as a tool for the inclusion of PwD more widely.

### 6.2.1. HANDICARE as diaconal work

The motivation and the service model of HANDICARE is mainly based on their will to **demonstrate their faith through "transmitting to others the love [they] received from Christ**" (FH) since their understanding of social work does not dissociate it from their spiritual life but rather constitutes the expression of their faith. This perspective aligns with the definition of diakonia as 'faith into action' as stated by the Norwegian Church Aid, including compassion, inclusive communities, and fight for justice.[187] It could also be seen as "Gospel by deeds (…) performed by Christians in response to the needs of people" which Nordstokke also described as 'diakonia'.[188]

Furthermore, the service model of HANDICARE is built on sacrifice and self-abnegation, love, voluntarism and giving. As P1 asserted, the founder is doing everything according to "the commitment she took before God" (meaning: 'motivated by her faith'). This shows that HANDICARE is the result of action based on Christian devotion.

By bridging faith and the hearing-impaired youth's reality and needs, HANDICARE is demonstrating a social engagement which, as Stephanie Dietrich explains, gives to their work a diaconal character.[189] Thus, HANDICARE can be considered as a diaconal work.

### 6.2.2. HANDICARE as Asset-Based Community Development

ABCD seeks to develop a community from its strength and already existing resources, through building capacity within that community.[190] HANDICARE is working "***to promote the well-being and the socio-professional development of people with disabilities***",[191] especially hearing-impaired youth. Therefore, in all their activities, their understanding of inclusion makes them envision a society where the hearing-impaired youth are fully part of the community at all levels, affirming their social lives and dignity in a just and equal way with all the other

[187] Norwegian Church Aid, Together for a Just World: Norwegian Church Aid's Statement of Principles.
[188] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 40.
[189] Dietrich, "Use Your Talents - Diakonia in Practice," 144.; Dietrich, "Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory," 13.
[190] Haines, "Asset-based community development," 39-40.
[191] The global objective of HANDICARE.

stakeholders of that community; this is how Margaret Ledwith defines community development.[192]

> I would like to see them in the society mixed with others, doing things together with others, not doing things apart (…) they have to share the same school, the same world. They have to be mixed up with others. That is what we call inclusion. (FH)

Analysing the strategies used by HANDICARE to reach their goal, all their actions towards the hearing-impaired youth are competence-driven or asset based.

> **Everything we are doing is based on what those youth can do**. (FH)

In addition, in their intervention the expression '*dis-ability*' is refocussed towards '*ability*'. Everything is done to foster the ability of the hearing-impaired youth by alleviating as much as possible the hindrances that cause the '*dis-ability*'.

> We are going from the point that those children can do something (…) we just need to put them in a condition where the disability is not a barrier for what they have to do. (FH)

Therefore, HANDICARE concentrates on the assets/resources of the hearing-impaired youth, to work on their inclusion, and that leads us to consider their work as ABCD. The following sub-section will highlight the 'UYT character' of the methods used by HANDICARE.

### 6.2.3. HANDICARE and the UYT approach

The aim of this sub-section is to discuss in which ways HANDICARE's work presents the characteristics of the UYT approach.

In UYT, ***a high emphasis is put on the use of each member's resources in order to make the congregation be the primary development agent***.[193] Hence, each Christian is expected to be fully engaged in diaconal work through community development.

HANDICARE's motivation is embedded in this way of thinking where, as FH expressed it, they seek to show love to their neighbours which is first and foremost the goal of UYT.

[192] Ledwith, *Community development in action : putting Freire into practice*, 5.
[193] Warotte, "'Use Your Talents' concept: an evolving complementary or alternative approach to development work," 156.

The 13 strategies used by HANDICARE (presented at 5.4.) to work toward the purpose of the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth will be analysed to highlight the characteristics of the UYT approach in HANDICARE's methods. While doing it, aspects of *Seeking Conviviality* and *Social Innovation* will be called upon at some of the points for more precision. As *Empowerment* is lying at the heart of all the concepts studied so far, it will be apparent through all the analysis.

1- The overall (mainstreaming) strategy (a kind of "philosophy" of the association): ***USING THE HEARING-IMPAIRED YOUTH'S TALENTS AS A TOOL TO BREAK THE BARRIER OF EXCLUSION***.

This philosophy clearly appears in strategies i-, ii-, iv-, v-, vi-, vii-, x-, xi- (8 over 13). It is carried out through empowerment (iv-, v-, x-, xi-), aspects of *Seeking Conviviality* (ii-, vi-, vii-, viii-) and *Social Innovation* (vi-, vii-, viii-). It gives a comprehension of **HANDICARE's work as based on the hearing-impaired youth's talents**; and it is done through empowerment as defined by Stephanie Dietrich: a process that helps people gain control of aspects of their lives and be actors in their community with dignity.[194]

> Everything we are doing is based on what those youth can do (…) We are going from the point that those children (youth) can do something, then we let people see what the youth are able to do… (FH)

Those assertions of FH express the core aspects of UYT, especially the following:

- **the question "*what can we do with what we have here and now?*"**: everything goes from what the hearing-impaired youth are able to do, and they are empowered to up skill their talents,
- **each individual possesses talents**,
- **starting with resources/talents and strengths**: that makes the hearing-impaired youth see themselves as valuable and focus less on their disability,
- **the hearing-impaired youth are actors, not 'recipients'**: They are at the centre of their inclusion process.

**2- The concept of 'talent'/asset**

The fact that all the HANDICARE's actions are driven by the strategy of relying on the youth's skills gives them an important understanding of the essence of UYT

[194] Dietrich, "Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory."

(everything centred on the use of the talents). Though they did not call this method 'Use Your Talents', their practice reveals the character of this ABCD approach.

In addition, without complaining much about what they are lacking, they use the available resources for their functioning (xiii-), take advantage of presented opportunities (ii-, vi-, ix-), use results obtained by the youth as snowball effect (vii), use the youth and their parents as gate openers (vii-, viii-) … All these strategies give and illustration of the definition of '*talents*' in the UYT perspective.

> They can be trained at the association level using what we have at our disposal… (FH)

Furthermore, all the functioning of HANDICARE is based on what they have as talents (assets). Without external funding, they use what they have at their disposal: the homeplace of the founder, the members money, the hearing-impaired youth talents, the connections they have. In addition to that, the use of opportunities as talent/asset, like taking advantage of all kinds of ceremonies to promote the rights of PwD and their inclusion and to expose to the public the potential and talents of the hearing-impaired youth, is also the essence of UYT.

**3- Empowerment as one of the main characteristics of UYT in HANDICARE**

Empowerment is the essential method used by HANDICARE for the inclusion of the youth. It is at the heart of the 'philosophy' presented above (1-). Their driver here is that "*when people will see what they (the hearing-impaired youth) are capable to do, they will change their mind"* (FH). So, **empowerment is key for the use of UYT as a tool for the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth**. Moreover, looking at it carefully, in addition to the characteristics of UYT, the HANDICARE method includes an aspect of *Seeking Conviviality* such as **creating 'meeting points'** with other groups of the community and a special concern for justice and dignity of the hearing-impaired youth[195] which, in the sense of the fight for the rights of groups in situation of marginalisation like PwD, are aspects linked to the inclusion of PwD. Additionally, the process of *Seeking Conviviality* is carried out with the paradigm that people, in a convivial way, constitute the drivers of social change, and they can act from their own experience leading the society to a giving-receiving arena.[196]

[195] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 3-4.
[196] Addy, *Seeking conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe*, 13.

- **Empowerment through discourse**

> I keep on telling them that they are as skilled as the others (…) Then sometimes I show them that they are doing it better that the others (…) They understand that discourse. (FH)

Here, the discourse is based on the skills and talents of the hearing-impaired youth. The discourse appears to be a way of promoting their talents at their own level. Using discourse as a method for empowerment and promotion of talents makes the youth be aware of how they are progressing in the inclusion process.

To conclude this section, it has been discussed that the method used by HANDICARE in their work for the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth can be understood as diaconal asset-based. It presents the characteristics of the UYT approach which is embedded in empowerment with the additional aspect of fight for the rights of those youth which is more seen in the *Seeking Conviviality* concept than in UYT. The next step is to assess if the inclusion process aimed by HANDICARE is effective.

### 6.3. The effectiveness of the inclusion process

In this section, I will discuss the effectiveness of the method used by HANDICARE in reaching their aim by analysing whether it is effectively carrying the achievement of the objective of inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth. I will rely on the appreciation of the activities and outcomes expressed by the participants to assess whether the method is relevant for the inclusion of PwD.

#### 6.3.1. "Everything the hearing people can do, we too can do it!"

> **HANDICARE teaches us that we are not less than the hearing people, we are equal. Everything the hearing people can do, we too can do it. We can work equally like hearing people.** (Y5)

This assertion of Y5 could be seeing as the summary of how the hearing-impaired youth experience their progress in taking their place in the society. Proudly making that statement, it shows how meaningful the work of HANDICARE has being in this respondent's life. This is the general feeling of all the 10 youth who were interviewed. It can be seen as the result of the 'empowering discourse'.

From their expression, it can be noticed that this feeling of 'being like all the others' created an emulation in the youth and helped them in developing their social lives through finding a family, seeking job or making use of the skills acquired in HANDICARE (e.g., starting small business).

In fact, 'being like all the others' is the expression of the inclusion of those youth though it is still a process and a long-term objective; at least, they can visualise it and make steps towards it. Even the parents have a similar perception (mostly P1 and P3). P1 is already dreaming of seeing her son becoming a medical doctor. This is the consequence of the first aid training her son got in HANDICARE, which revealed his passion and his ability to take care of people's health.

### 6.3.2. Less discrimination in competences

A further observation is that in the case of this study, there was less discrimination regarding the performance of competences and talents. The 3 youths (P4, P5 and P6) who are in employment declared all that they were not discriminated when they were paid. If at this stage, it is not yet possible to make an absolute affirmation about this matter as general, it supports the assumption made by HANDICARE about their approach of using the talents of the hearing-impaired youth as a mean for their inclusion.

This fact can also be noticed in another way at the parents' level. After seeing the good results their children are getting at school, they become less pessimistic about their competences and skill and become strong advocates and propagators of the inclusion of those youth (FH). Even the parent who was not showing complete satisfaction was measuring the success with the outcomes of her children's competences; so, her non-satisfaction was an affirmation that when the youth will earn their lives from their competences, people would look at them as 'ordinary persons'. This could also be considered as a factor of inclusion.

This result from the case study corroborates Rakotoarison's affirmation that UYT "**lifts up people's dignity [and] is an instrument of inclusion and participation**."[197] And in this regard, the HANDICARE method (which I have demonstrated to be a diaconal asset-based) incorporates intangible assets which promote the practice of justice, fairness, and inclusiveness,[198] and effectively gives the image of empowerment as element of transformation

[197] Rakotoarison, "Women, Use Your Talents," 65, 67.
[198] Nordstokke, "Mapping Out and Mobilising Diaconal Assets," 219.

### 6.3.3. The emancipation of the hearing-impaired youth

As presented at the HANDICARE twin-track model, what they call '*emancipation*' represents a step in the process towards inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth where they express their satisfaction of being part of the community and living as all the members of that community. The following statement of FH shows that she already sees some encouraging achievements:

> … The fact to **see them emancipate is a huge achievement** (…) now they are getting married and having children (…) In front of "normal" people, they are able to defend themselves (…) [and] correct them in some skills. They can go to sport without being ashamed of using their own language, they even feel proud of using a different language than other's. (FH)

This view of emancipation is aligning with the view the hearing-impaired youth have about themselves from the perspective of inclusion. It can also explain why, in their objectives, HANDICARE linked emancipation, empowerment, and inclusion.

## 6.4. Limits and challenges in the HANDICARE's approach to inclusion

The present section presents some observations I made about the intervention of HANDICARE. Some of the comments concern their method while some others are about the functioning and general aspects of the organisation.

- **About the method**

- **Much training, less use of skills**. In the HANDICARE empowerment approach, they work more on training and much less on helping the youth transform their skills and talents into opportunities (job, business, entrepreneurship …). This deficit is manifested by the fact that just few of the youth manage to benefit from their talents and skills while the majority still struggle very much about how to valorise them. The same remark can be addressed to the parents who easily see how their children increase their talents and skills, but they do not know how to help them valorise those assets. This shows that there are some dimensions of the HANDICARE intervention that are not yet effective. It could mean that simply

training the hearing-impaired youth is not sufficient, but they should continue the process till a stage where the hearing-impaired youth are self-reliant.

- **Too little involvement and empowerment of parents and families**. This could constitute a serious hindrance in the asset-based inclusion process. Though exclusion/discrimination begins within the families[199] as stated by FH, parents and families are also therefore key elements in the process of asset-based inclusion. During the interviews, all the parents expressed the fact that they do not know anything about the HANDICARE approach and are even ignorant of how HANDICARE is carrying out their activities. My assumption is if the parents are more involved in the process, they will be themselves empowered and would play key role in the process of inclusion of their youngsters. The example of P1 who is now envisioning her son being a medical doctor is an illustration of how parents and families could be catalyst in the asset-based inclusion. Empowering the families or at least the closely surrounding of the youth would also help to address this barrier. A strategy to achieve this could be to empower the youth to empower those in their surroundings.
- **Too little empowerment of partners**. This observation builds on precedent. HANDICARE already has a success story about that strategy with the classmates of the youth who are students at COLPROT. They should be inspired by that experience to broaden this approach to other sectors.
- **The hearing-impaired youth are not sufficiently challenged to share their skills/talents and knowledge with their fellows**. Among the hearing-impaired youth, many are professional in certain domains. The empowerment in the asset-based inclusion process implies the full participation of PwD in all the steps.[200] Here, it is a matter of coaching and facilitation. Encouraging young PwD to take the responsibility for sharing skills and training their fellows could ensure the effectiveness of empowerment which really leads to a shift of power.[201]
- **The hearing-impaired youth are "passive actors"**. They initiate nothing but just follow the instructions of the HANDICARE volunteers. A good practice of an asset-based approach, especially UYT is to stress the role of all the stakeholders as

[199] Opoku et al., "Lives of persons with disabilities in Cameroon after CRPD: Voices of persons with disabilities in the Buea Municipality in Cameroon."
[200] Al Ju'beh, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit: CRPD Influencing everything we do*.; Division for Social Policy Development, *Toolkit on disability for AFRICA: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT*, 9-12.
[201] Lord and Hutchison, "The process of empowerment: Implications for theory and practice," 10.

actors.[202] In addition, empowerment, which is the main method used by HANDICARE in their activities requires, as Stephanie Dietrich defines it, that the power the hearing-impaired youth need for gaining control of aspects of their lives and participating in the community life with dignity should be fostered so that they could act on issues they define themselves as important,[203] and defend their rights by themselves. Our interviews and observations show that till now, the initiatives are taken by HANDICARE.

- **A lack of a systematic asset mapping**. To embed their method in existing assets and talents, there is a need for HANDICARE to conduct an asset mapping to systematically identify which talents the youth already possess and what the opportunities for development are. At the moment, HANDICARE is discovering the talents only through the feedback or responses of the youth during their workshops.
- **No action for inclusive health services**. Though this issue is an essential element of the disability-inclusive development, HANDICARE activities are yet to be oriented toward ensuring it.

➢ **About the functioning**

- **The leader/founder is working alone.** That is a serious threat to the sustainability of the association. An asset-based approach should help the founder to overcome this deficit and give more and more responsibility to her collaborators and the youth, even if she feels they are not yet able to handle things or are not as motivated as she is.
- **No infrastructure**. The fact of using the founder's compound presents a risk of conflict with her family.

[202] HAUS, *Use Your Talents – the Congregation as Primary Development Agent*, 66-67.
[203] Dietrich, "Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory."

# Chapter 7: Diaconal Assets-Based Approach as tool for the inclusion of Persons with Disability

## 7.0. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a discussion about how diaconal asset-based approach could be a mean for the inclusion of PwD. Going from the case study to the wider context, the discussion will be about how the findings could be broadened to other groups like the hearing-impaired youth (the second part of the research question). It will propose the integrated model of the twin-track approach for an asset-based method. The chapter will also specifically discuss on the UYT approach as an asset-based method for the inclusion of PwD and groups in a situation of marginalisation.

## 7.1. Diaconal Asset-Based Approach as tool for inclusion of PwD

The inclusion of PwD requires two complementary approaches: **empowerment** of PwD and **mainstreaming of disability sensitiveness** in all the processes. These elements should be carried out in the diaconal asset-based approach which aims to work for the inclusion of PwD.

Since inclusion requires a significant change in individuals' life and in the society, the objectives of a diaconal asset-based work, as suggested by Kjell Nordstokke, should encompass the following aspects:

i. the affirmation and the defence of people's dignity;
ii. the promotion of people's rights;
iii. the empowerment of people;
iv. fostering people's access to rights and full participation in the society life
v. laying elements of societal transformation.[204]

In the case of the inclusion of PwD, the two first aspects (i, ii) represent the mainstreaming function of the approach, which aligns with the definition of diakonia as rights-based, and the last three (iii, iv, v) represent empowerment which is also an important element of diakonia. All this should consider the surrounding assets (including opportunities).

[204] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 42-43.

### 7.1.1. Empowerment in Diaconal Asset-Based Approach for inclusion

Since empowerment is meant to help PwD gain control of various aspects of their lives and fully participate in the community life with dignity,[205] and includes transformation of both PwD and the community,[206] it should be carried out both toward PwD and the community. In the diaconal perspective, it would be the expression of the '***diakonia from the margins***.'[207]

- **Empowerment of PwD**

From the HANDICARE case, it was shown that empowerment led to emancipation of the hearing-impaired youth. This strong statement of one of the youths "we are equal (…) Everything the hearing people can do, we too can do it" draws attention to two things: **valorisation of their competences** and **the power to fully participate in the community life**. Those two aspects constitute the axes of empowerment.

Valorising the competences of PwD could mean:

- Assessing their talents and skills, as well as local assets (asset mapping),
- Enabling (even ensuring) competence building (education, vocational training, all kind of skill and competence acquisition …),
- Enabling empowerment by peers,
- Providing or connecting PwD to opportunities to make a good use of their competences and talents (this means that empowerment should issue in concrete outcomes).

Giving power to fully participate in the community life could mean putting PwD at the centre of everything concerning their lives in a manner to make them build up their self-esteem which would release their ability to believe in themselves and contribute to community life as any other member of the society. Here, empowerment is also meant to enable PwD to defend their rights. Thus, the diaconal work should be, as Margaret Ledwith says, a commitment to social justice which leads to "believing in [PwD] to such an extent that they believe in themselves!". This should issue in a state where PwD are also part of the decision-making process within the society.

[205] Dietrich, "Reflections on Core Aspects of Diaconal Theory."
[206] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 28-29.
[207] World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Diakonia*, 36.

As it is demonstrated in the case of HANDICARE, there is less discrimination in competences. This suggests that the diaconal asset-based approach should highly work on building up competences of PwD at all levels, because "Empowerment is human energy".[208]

### 7.1.2. Mainstreaming disability sensitiveness

Empowering PwD is not sufficient to ensure their inclusion. The twin-track approach suggest that actions should be taken at the community side to make sure that PwD are considered in all the life of the society. In a diaconal work, this aspect reflects the rights-based perspective of diakonia. Concretely, the actions to be taken could include:

- Promoting and defending PwD's rights in all the spheres of the disability-inclusive development (education, health, employment, social protection …),
- Enabling the accessibility of PwD to all the aspects of the life of the community (infrastructure and buildings, debates and decision-making, sport and leisure …) – this is a consequence of the previous point,
- Empowering the community to consider PwD in all the aspects of social life,
- Promoting the skills and competences of the PwD within the community (for example giving them space or opportunities for expression),
- Creating space for co-working and co-creating.

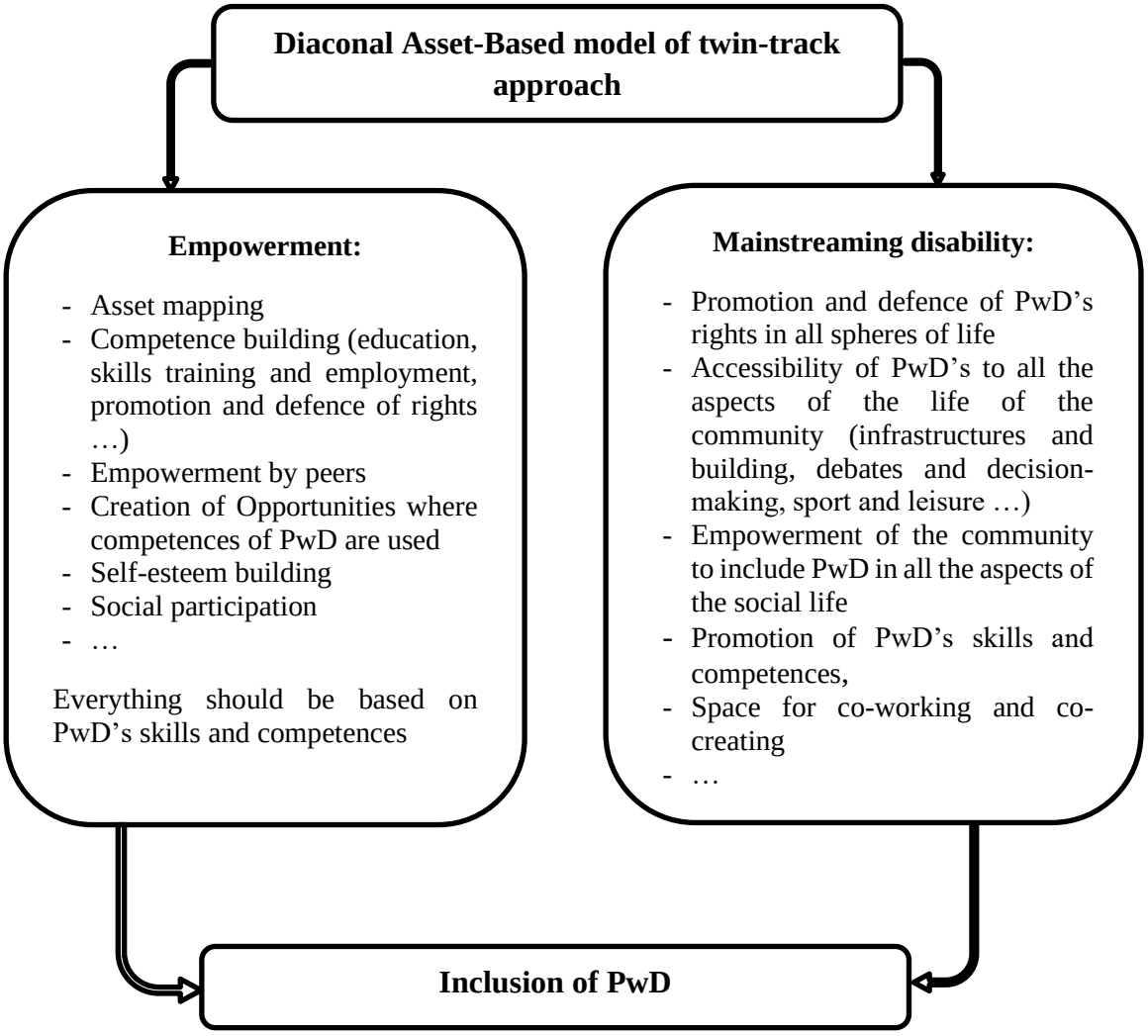
In brief, diaconal work should lead the community to consider the PwD at all levels as ordinary members of the society and also enable the accessibility of those latter to all the social and health services and the community life.

## 7.2. An integrated model of twin-track approach based

This section will constitute a summary of the suggested model of diaconal asset-based approach for the inclusion of PwD. The twin-track would be an easy visualisation of the model:

[208] Taylor, Taylor, and Taylor, *Empowerment on an Unstable Planet: From Seeds of Human Energy to a Scale of Global Change*, 65.

**Figure 4: The twin-track approach – Diaconal Asset-based model**




Adapted from Twin-track presented in DSPD, *Toolkit on disability for AFRICA: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT*, 9

### 7.3. UYT as a tool for the inclusion of PwD

UYT has been the main approach used in the analysis of the case study. This section will discuss some limits of UYT in been effective diaconal asset-based for the inclusion of PwD.

As it has been discussed in chapter 3, diakonia should address root causes of injustice and marginalisation all along the way it is carried out.[209] UYT as diaconal asset-based approach is yet to demonstrate a particular concern about the root causes of poverty, marginalisation of

[209] Lutheran World Federation, *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia*, 42.

groups and injustice. It stresses on the empowerment part of the community development work. However, the concept of empowerment challenges power dynamics since it aims at giving power to the powerless to gain control over aspects of their lives.[210] But even though UYT is presented as an empowering diaconal approach, it does not openly address power dynamic in its implementation. This could be seen as a limit of the concept and could be a serious hindrance to its use as a tool for the inclusion of groups in situation of marginalisation like PwD. As presented by the twin-track approach, inclusion is better ensured through the activation of both tracks, empowerment and mainstreaming of inclusion aspects in all the intervention. The 'bicycle' representation of the twin-track approach gives a good illustration of how UYT should add mainstreaming aspects to really become an approach that could ensure social change through a visible societal transformation.

There is a need for the UYT approach to completely align with the five objectives of diaconal work as suggested by Nordstokke, mainly the defence (not just the promotion) of people's dignity and the promotion of people's rights, in order to be effective as a tool for inclusion. That will give to UYT more components in its aim of making the congregation be the principal development agent of the community.

[210] Johannes Nissen in Nordstokke, "Empowerment in the perspective of ecumenical diakonia," 185.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

## 8.0. Introduction

The aim of this study was to assess whether the method used by HANDICARE for the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth was diaconal asset-based and if that latter could be used for the inclusion of similar groups. The purpose of this concluding chapter is to make a summary of what the research revealed and to offer recommendations and perspectives for further research.

## 8.1. The key findings

While many studies of the inclusion of PwD are conducted from the perspective of their vulnerability or from needs-based approaches, this study looked at the issue from the perspective of the abilities and strengths of PwD.

The research revealed that HANDICARE uses diaconal asset-based methods. The interviews conducted made it clear that focusing on the skills and talents of the hearing-impaired youth in the process of the inclusion has had a double effect. In the one hand, it boosted the youth's self-esteem and feeling of being part of the community (what HANDICARE called '*emancipation*'), and in the other hand, it to conferred to the youth more consideration from their families and the community who became less reluctant to believe in their children's abilities. This corroborates HANDICARE's hypothesis: when people see the competences of the hearing-impaired youth, it will break the hostile mindset of the community.

In this regard, the study showed that:

- Exclusion is mainly manifested through language barrier and hostile cultural perceptions of disability. While the language barrier results from the fact that families do not know sign language, the hostile perception is due to a lack of understanding of what disability is.
- There is less discrimination when it comes to the expression of competence. The hearing-impaired youth who hold an employment all asserted that they were paid equally to their hearing colleague.

- The more the hearing-impaired youth discover or acquire, and make good use of their talents, the more they gain self-esteem and are eager to stand in the society as actors. They could then meet the others in the society with less of an inferiority complex.
- Parents and families contribute less to exclusion and discrimination when they see that hearing-impaired youth are as skilled and competent as anybody else, and they can even be door-openers for reaching more parents and families.
- HANDICARE's method in fighting for the inclusion of hearing-impaired youth present the characteristics of UYT in the empowerment and functioning aspects. But they also use elements of Seeking Conviviality as consciously building the youth's self-esteem and defending their rights. This means that the UYT approach should integrate the rights-based aspects in order to be an effective method for the inclusion of PwD.

Additionally, the research found that using the twin-track approach, diaconal asset-based methods can be effective in the inclusion of PwD. Empowerment should then effectively work on building skills of PwD being centred on their assets, leading thus to making them the drivers of the change. But this empowerment should be sustained by rights-based activities which guarantee that PwD are given the chance to fully take part in the community without hindrances. To ensure it, the community should then be empowered to be supportive.

### 8.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, I would like to make some recommendations to HANDICARE and to development practitioners (especially UYT).

**To HANDICARE:**

- Training the hearing-impaired youth is not enough, there is a need to accompany them in the process of their socio-economic inclusion. That could also be a solution to the over-responsibility of the parents.
- HANDICARE should increase the work with the parents. It would empower them to be good helper to their children, especially in sign language and in accompanying the youth in best use of their talents.

- HANDICARE should think of ways to offer higher competence training to the hearing-impaired youth that would provide them jobs or help them create viable businesses.
- HANDICARE should integrate aspects of entrepreneurship in their activities to better help the youth create their own company.
- A systematic asset-mapping process is required to assess the skills of the participants and the opportunities offered to them.
- HANDICARE should seriously consider how to foster peer-based training. Many youths are very skilled and can share their knowledge with their mates.
- HANDICARE should revise their functioning to foster the participation of more of the volunteers.
- HANDICARE should include in their interventions action toward ensuring the inclusive health services are provided and accessible to the hearing-impaired youth. This issue is essential to ensure disability-inclusive development.
- HANDICARE should consider how to empower the youth to defend their rights and become self-advocators of their rights.

**To diaconal asset-based practitioners**: a use of the diaconal asset-based twin-track model is recommended to ensure an effective inclusion process of PwD.

**To the promoters of UYT**: The rights-based perspective of diakonia should be integrated in the UYT approach to effectively address root-causes of issues like marginalisation and poverty.

### 8.3.Suggestions for further research

This study is also giving an opportunity conduct an action research project which would implement the twin-track approach for the inclusion of PwD or other groups in a situation of marginalisation, widening the analysis on how the rights-based work and advocacy/self-advocacy by PwD would be best carried out. Another perspective would be to make a deeper theological and methodological examination of how UYT could integrate diaconal concepts as *Seeking Conviviality* to develop a new approach to asset-based diaconal practice. Finally, it is also suggested to make a comparative exploration of the methods used in UYT in different contexts, taking seriously the questions of participation and power dynamics, and a wider conceptualising of UYT as asset-based and rights-based approach.

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## Annex 1: Interview guides

### A. Questionnaire for the young with hearing-impairment

1- Can you give us your background? (age, neighbourhood, work/School …)

2- How could describe an ordinary life of a young with a hearing impairment? Have you ever experienced any situation of exclusion or marginalisation …

   a. At the family level?
   b. At the neighbourhood or in the society in general?
   c. If yes, share how it was and how you felt it?

3- Before coming to HANDICARE, are there competences or skills you already had: things you learnt at school or a training centre, things you learnt through a peer or you got naturally?

4- Can you tell us how you came in touch with HANDICARE? (When, through which channel …) And why did you joined HANDICARE, what were your motivations (to learn, to socialise with others, to escape from the family environment …)?

5- What did you learn in HANDICARE?

   a. Did you learn something new? How did you learn it?
   b. Are there things you knew before and developed further?

6- In case you have learnt something new or have developed further what you already knew, how did you learn it? Was it anything (way of doing, tools and material used…) that helped you acquire easily and/or with special motivation your new knowledge?

7- Since you are in touch with HANDICARE what change have you observed in your life?

   a. About your social life?
   b. In the economic (income, work or job opportunities…)?
   c. Other changes?

8- Is it anything else you what to share?

### B. Questionnaire for the founder of HANDICARE

1- Can you tell us a bit about your background?

2- How did you get the idea of creating an association like HANDICARE? What was your motivation? Has it anything to do with your faith and/or the values you believe in?

3- How did you start HANDICARE?

4- What are the objectives of HANDICARE?

5- How is the structure of HANDICARE? (organigramme, employee/volunteers …)
6- Have you notice any problem of exclusion or marginalisation of the youth with hearing-impairment? If yes how does manifest?
7- Can you explain the structure of HANDICARE and the role of each stakeholder?
8- Why do you have a special focus on youth with hearing-impairment?
9- How do you do to recruit those youth in the association?
10- Can you describe which kind of activity you have at HANDICARE?
    a. Are there activities in the social area? If Yes, how do you conduct them?
    b. Are there activities in the educational area? If yes, how do you conduct them?
    c. Are there activities in the socio-economic area (in the sense of creating job opportunities or employment)? If yes, how do you conduct them?
    d. Other area of intervention?
11- What are the strategies you use to reach your goals? **Please, explain thoroughly**.
12- What are the results you have gotten so far in the various domains of your intervention?
13- Can you share with us some success stories as well as some challenges you encountered in reaching your objectives and/or using your methods?
14- How do you finance your activities? Where do the funding come from?
15- What are some of the challenges you encountered so far in your organisation and how did you cope with them?
16- Does your involvement in HANDICARE impact somehow your personal life or your family? In which way?
17- Some final reflection?

C. **Questionnaire for the parents**

1- How is it to be a parent of a hearing-impaired child?
2- Have you notice any exclusion/rejection or marginalisation of your child? If yes, can you share a bit how it was manifested?
3- How did you come to know HANDICARE?
4- Can you share a bit the life of your children regarding his/her skills and abilities:
    a. before getting in touch with HANDICARE
    b. and after he/she have been part of the HANDICARE fellowship?

5- Can you clearly identify any change due to his/her involvement in HANDICARE? Please give as much detail as possible.
6- In case your children learnt new things, how did you see the process of learning?
7- According to you what are the main activities of HANDICARE that you find fruitful for your children?
8- According to you, is it anything in the intervention of HANDICARE you find related to the faith or the value of the founder? If yes, how do you appreciate it and how you experience it compared to secular organisation's work?[211]
9- As parents, what are your contributions in the HANDICARE activities?
10- Are there anything you would like HANDICARE to add to what they are already doing? Or are there anything you think HANDICARE should focus on?
11- Some final reflection?

[211] This question may seem too private or a little bit subjective, but in the context in Cameroon is very okay and open to ask such question. That would help us assess if the work of HANDICARE is seen as diaconal by the parents.

**Annex 2: Information letter - Participant Consent**

**Information Letter for Consent to Participate in a Research Interview** (Founder and youth)

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

*"The use of Diaconal Asset-Based Approach as a tool for the inclusion of people with disability: case of the Association HANDICARE's work with the hearing-impaired youth in Ngaoundéré - Cameroon"*?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to analyse if a diaconal asset-based approach could be used as a tool for the inclusion of marginalised groups such as people with disability. The current document will give information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

The purpose of this study is the see if the approach used by HANDICARE in the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth could be identified as a diaconal asset-based one and discuss if it could be implemented in other context in order to assess if a diaconal asset-based approach could be considered as a tool for inclusion.
The research project is meant for a Master Thesis in Community Development and Social Innovation at VID Specialised University, Norway. That latter is the institution responsible for the project (the handling of the data) and only my academic supervisors and I will have access to the data.

You are asked to participate in this research because of your implication in the HANDICARE activities. The identity of the participants will be anonymised, but it will be known that the data was produced within the HANDICARE association. Sound and video recordings of the interviews will be stored for the purpose of the research and deleted when the research ends latest 15.06.2021.

The interview is voluntary. The questions in the interview will be related to your life and experiences with HANDICARE. If an interpreter is needed, he/she will be of your choice and will be bound with the obligation of discretion. You may refuse to answer any question. You may request access to the data and can ask for correction or deletion of the interview data at any time. You have the right to withdraw your data from the study without further explanation by contacting the data protection officer at VID on e-mail: personvernombud@vid.no or myself, Amos OUNSOUBO, E-mail: ounsouboamos@yahoo.fr.

Yours sincerely,

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## Consent

I have received information about the above-mentioned project and the handling of the data from the interview. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
I hereby agree to participate in an interview as part of the study, and I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 15.06.2021.

Place: Date: Signature:

**Information Letter for Consent to Participate in a Research Interview** (Parents)

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

*"The use of Diaconal Asset-Based Approach as a tool for the inclusion of people with disability: case of the Association HANDICARE's work with the hearing-impaired youth in Ngaoundéré - Cameroon"*?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to analyse if a diaconal asset-based approach could be used as a tool for the inclusion of marginalised groups such as people with disability. In the current document will give information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

The purpose of this study is the see if the approach used by HANDICARE in the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth could be identified as a diaconal asset-based one and discuss if it could be implemented in other context in order to assess if a diaconal asset-based approach could be considered as a tool for inclusion.
The research project is meant for a Master Thesis in Community Development and Social Innovation at VID Specialised University, Norway. That latter is the institution responsible for the project (the handling of the data) and only my academic supervisors and I will have access to the data.

You are asked to participate in this research because of your implication in the HANDICARE activities. The identity of the participants will be anonymised, but it will be known that the data was produced within the HANDICARE association.

Personal data will be anonymised as soon as no longer needed, sent/transferred or stored in encrypted form. Sound and video recordings of the interviews be stored separately on an external device which is kept out of hands of people and then destroyed as soon as they are anonymised and not needed anymore. The recording device which will be used is borrowed from the VID's Library and will be returned as soon as the field research is done (estimated date for returning the device: 31 March 2021). The project will end latest 15.06.2021.

The interview is voluntary. The questions in the interview will be related to your child's life and experiences with HANDICARE. If an interpreter is needed, he/she will be of your choice and will be bound with the obligation of discretion. You may refuse to answer any question. You may request access to the data and can ask for correction or deletion of the interview data at any time. You have the right to withdraw your data from the study without further explanation by contacting the data protection officer at VID on e-mail: personvernombud@vid.no or myself, Amos OUNSOUBO, E-mail: ounsouboamos@yahoo.fr.

Yours sincerely,

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# Consent

I have received information about the above-mentioned project and the handling of the data from the interview. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
I hereby agree to participate in an interview as part of the study, and I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 15.06.2021.

Place: Date: Signature:

**Information Letter for Consent to Participate in a Research Interview** (Peer)

Are you interested in taking part in the research project

*"The use of Diaconal Asset-Based Approach as a tool for the inclusion of people with disability: case of the Association HANDICARE's work with the hearing-impaired youth in Ngaoundéré - Cameroon"*?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to analyse if a diaconal asset-based approach could be used as a tool for the inclusion of marginalised groups such as people with disability. The current document will give information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

The purpose of this study is the see if the approach used by HANDICARE in the inclusion of the hearing-impaired youth could be identified as a diaconal asset-based one and discuss if it could be implemented in other context in order to assess if a diaconal asset-based approach could be considered as a tool for inclusion.
The research project is meant for a Master Thesis in Community Development and Social Innovation at VID Specialised University, Norway. That latter is the institution responsible for the project (the handling of the data) and only my academic supervisors and I will have access to the data.

You are asked to participate in this research by giving your consent to allow a third person (your parent) to provide information concerning you and your implication in the HANDICARE activities. Your identity and the informant one will be anonymised, but it will be known that the data was produced within the HANDICARE association.

Personal data will be anonymised as soon as no longer needed, sent/transferred or stored in encrypted form. Sound and video recordings of the interviews be stored separately on an external device which is kept out of hands of people and then destroyed as soon as they are anonymised and not needed anymore. The recording device which will be used is borrowed from the VID's Library and will be returned as soon as the field research is done (estimated date for returning the device: 31 March 2021). The project will end latest 15.06.2021.

The interview is voluntary. The questions in the interview will be related to your life and experiences with HANDICARE. If an interpreter is needed, he/she will be of your choice and will be bound with the obligation of discretion. You may refuse to answer any question. You may request access to the data and can ask for correction or deletion of the interview data at any time. You have the right to withdraw your data from the study without further explanation by contacting the data protection officer at VID on e-mail: personvernombud@vid.no or myself, Amos OUNSOUBO, E-mail: ounsouboamos@yahoo.fr.

Yours sincerely,

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# Consent

I have received information about the above-mentioned project and the handling of the data from the interview. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions.
I hereby agree to participate in an interview as part of the study, and I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 15.06.2021.

Place: Date: Signature:

## Annex 3: List of Informants

| N° | Type of informant | Sexe | Age | Marital status | Place | Date | Length (min:sec) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Founder of HANDICARE | F | 45-50 | | Ngaoundéré | 05-03-2021 | 55:33 |
| | | | | | | 30-03-2021 | 64:05 |
| 2 | Youth 01 | M | 25 | Single | Ngaoundéré | 10-03-2021 | 35:12 |
| 3 | Youth 02 | M | 19 | Single | Ngaoundéré | 10-03-2021 | 26:05 |
| 4 | Youth 03 | M | 18 | Single | Ngaoundéré | 10-03-2021 | 17:05 |
| 5 | Youth 04 | M | 28 | Single | Ngaoundéré | 21-03-2021 | 24:17 |
| 6 | Youth 05 | M | 28 | Married | Ngaoundéré | 21-03-2021 | 25:16 |
| 7 | Youth 06 | M | 28 | Single | Ngaoundéré | 21-03-2021 | 18:11 |
| 8 | Youth 07 | F | 23 | Married (3 children) | Ngaoundéré | 21-03-2021 | 28:56 |
| 9 | Youth 08 | F | 22 | Married | Ngaoundéré | 25-03-2021 | 22:31 |
| 10 | Youth 09 | F | 20 | Single | Ngaoundéré | 25-03-2021 | 14:20 |
| 11 | Youth 10 | F | 20 | Single | Ngaoundéré | 31-03-2021 | 27:35 |
| 12 | Parent 01 | F | 35-45 | | Ngaoundéré | 22-03-2021 | 38:06 |
| 13 | Parent 02 | F | 55-65 | | Ngaoundéré | 25-03-2021 | 27:36 |
| 14 | Parent 03 | F | 35-45 | | Ngaoundéré | 31-03-2021 | 30:03 |
| | Total of interview time (h:m:s): **7:34:51** | | | | | | **454:51** |

## Annex 4: NSD Recommendations and Guidelines

NSD Reference Number: 439830

Date of Approval: 01.03.2021