

Liliane Foundation and Intersectionality

a discussion paper

“There is no such thing as a single issue struggle, because we do not live single issue lives.”

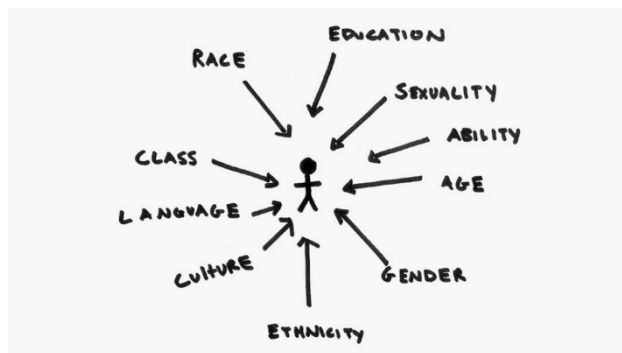
- Audre Lorde -

Introduction

This paper aims to introduce the concept of intersectionality based on literature review and it highlights the reasons why intersectionality can be beneficial for the Liliane Foundation (LF) and its partner organisations. The paper further gives an example of an intersectional framework used by other development organisations. This paper is considered as a living document, expected to be updated as new insights grow in discussions and mutual learning with partners.

What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is defined as the interaction between different factors such as gender, race, age, disability, ethnicity and other categories of social difference in individual lives and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.ⁱ The intersectional approach offers a way to understand how these different factors intersect to shape individual identities, thereby enhancing awareness of people’s needs, interests, capacities and experiences.



Social groups are neither homogenous nor static, and intersectional approaches recognize this complexity by taking historical, social, economic, cultural and political contexts into account. Intersectionality acknowledges that belonging to multiple disadvantaged groups or identities compounds and complicates experiences of oppression in different contexts, which can entail greater legal, social or cultural barriers.

The term ‘intersectionality’ comes from Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 as a way to help explain the oppression of African-American women. In her work, Crenshaw discusses Black feminism, arguing that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in independent terms of either being “black” or a “woman”. Rather, it must include interactions between the two identities, which, should frequently reinforce one another. In today’s perspective, intersectionality emphasizes the importance of context; intersections are experienced in different ways from one context to another.ⁱⁱ The triangle of gender, race and class are not taken universally, but rather the context itself should tell us what categories are important to individuals that live in that particular context.

Why LF uses an intersectional approach?

LF believes that using the intersectional approach is beneficial for at least few reasons:

Firstly, **it contributes towards more effective programmes and project results** because it offers a framework for understanding the various processes that marginalize certain groups. The root causes of exclusion can only be addressed if LF and its partners acknowledge that processes of exclusion occur at multiple levels tied to diverse intersectional categories/identities such as: age, gender, race, etc. Children with disabilities are a heterogeneous group. Based on their different intersecting identities, they have different experiences, strengths and agencies that need to be understood, utilized and built upon for effective and sustainable results in projects and programmes.

The LF and its partners also need to understand that treating identity as one-dimensional masks intra-group disparities and leads to ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches, which inevitably leave the most marginalized behind, as larger and more visible groups are easier to identify. The organisations do not need to become experts on wide range of identities, they can strengthen their existing disability work by further deepening their understanding about the intersecting forms of discrimination that children and youngsters with disabilities face on the grounds of gender, impairment type, age, race, ethnicity, religion or belief which all contribute to disability-related exclusion. ⁱⁱⁱ

Example: Adolescents with disabilities are not an uniform group and thus it is critical to understand how their experience of disability intersects with other dimensions of social exclusion. For example, by combining a gender lens with a disability lens, we can better understand the divergent opportunities and challenges that adolescent girls and boys with disabilities have in realizing their right to education and health. Girls with disabilities have far greater school dropout rates than their male peers with disabilities in some contexts. Furthermore, girls with disabilities also have lower access to health services and SRH care and higher risk of violence than boys with disabilities.

An intersectional approach **is also beneficial for creating effective lobby and advocacy interventions aiming to affect systemic changes and breaking the barriers of exclusion**, because it helps to understand why certain people seem to have more power than others. Intersectional analysis emphasizes the fact that individuals and groups can experience both power and oppression simultaneously because of who they are and how they are positioned vis-à-vis intersecting inequalities.^{iv} It further helps LF and its partners understand how children with disabilities living in poverty who although seem relatively powerless still can effect change, because the power relations that determine access to resources, information and the availability of options and choices are shaped by their identities and positions in the context where they thrive.^v Having increased awareness and knowledge on the diverse intersections within the target group can motivate organisations to develop and adjust lobby and advocacy interventions that resonate better with these intersections. For example amongst children with disabilities, there might be a difference between boys and girls. Girls with a disability in some contexts might be more disadvantaged than boys. Therefore, they might need a different lobby and advocacy approach than the boys. Also children with some types of impairments might be less excluded than others (club feet vs. cerebral palsy). If LF and partners manage to use the intersectional approach in designing their L&A strategies they might be more effective in contributing towards more equitable and inclusive policies and practices.

Secondly, **an intersectional approach can enable LF and its partners to seek and engage in multi-stakeholder partnership** with other relevant stakeholders and collaborate to tackle diverse intersecting inequalities more effectively. As there is a general trend within the development sector to work on thematic areas, the intersectional approach can open the doors for the LF to work with new organisations and build new coalitions. The potential synergies that can be created might contribute towards children and youngsters with disabilities being more empowered and enjoying full implementation of their rights.

Example of an Intersectional Framework

The LF aims to use an intersectional lens to try to understand the root causes of marginalization. The LF consults the Accessibility, Attitude, Communication and Participation (ACAP) framework (van Ek and Schot, 2017) for this purpose. The main goal of the ACAP framework is to achieve “inclusion for all” within Community Based Disaster Risk Management programmes and projects. ACAP reflects on 6 domains of exclusion: ability, gender, ethnicity, economic development and geography. It is used as a framework and monitoring tool ensuring that nobody is left behind.

ACAP Framework

The ACAP framework breaks down the concept of inclusion into four elements: Accessibility, Attitude, Communication and Participation. These four elements are relevant for tackling the structural barriers that keep diverse people from gaining more opportunities in society and tracking progress across diverse population groups. It demonstrates how these four elements can be applied to projects and programmes by following these guiding questions:

<p>Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do project activities lead to removal of barriers?• Do practices address causes of exclusion?• Do they lead to relevant actions?• Are they supportive of an enabling environment?• Will they be sustained?	<p>Attitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the project recognize there are different people with different characteristics?• Does it recognize<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That people face different issues?• That they face different barriers?• And that people have different strengths?
<p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do all people understand the messages delivered through project activities?• Are messages accessible by all?• Are messages conveyed properly and in acceptable language?• Will they lead to desired actions?	<p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can (and do) all people participate in all stages of the project, including decision-making?• Do they have a voice?• Are they active?• Are their decisions accepted and incorporated?

A project or a programme that fulfils the above mentioned requirements is likely to be successful in recognizing diversity, removing barriers, ensuring participation and providing tailored approaches to development.

Conclusion

This paper gives a brief overview of what is intersectionality, it presents the reasons why it is beneficial approach to LF and its partners and it gives an example of an intersectional framework used by other organisations.

The discussion paper can serve the LF and the partners and consultants in the Voices for Inclusion project to have a common understanding on the concept of intersectionality and give them inspiration of creating an intersectional framework based on their joint efforts within the project.

i Davis, K. (2008). "Intersectionality as buzzword: a sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory useful".

Feminist Theory 9(1): 67-85

ii Chaplin, D. Twigg, J. and Lovell, E. (2019), "Intersectional approaches to vulnerability reduction and resilience-building".

RESILIENCE INTEL, Issue no.12.

iii DIFD (2018). Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development, 2018-2023. London DIFD.

iv Chaplin, D. Twigg, J. and Lovell, E. (2019).