

WHAT IS A LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK?

- A tool to understand opportunities and challenges faced by people living in poverty and how, in response to these realities, they make choices in their lives
- Illustrates the strategies people use to achieve their goals given what they perceive as their options

What are livelihoods?

The means by which people obtain the necessities of life



WHY USE A LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK?

- Understand how diverse people with disabilities not only survive, but thrive
- Highlights the diverse, everyday strategies and priorities of people, and the implications of their choices
- Provides a holistic approach to livelihoods that includes identities, cultures, policies, and economics

The full richness and diversity of livelihoods can only be discovered by listening to the stories of people.

STEP 1: WHAT ARE PEOPLE DOING TO MAKE A LIVING?

In Canada, people with disabilities are more likely to be living below the poverty line compared to people without disabilities. This is often due to barriers in obtaining employment.

People with disabilities are finding ways to make a living through artistry, caregiving, agricultural production, and panhandling.

Questions we want to ask:

- What strategies are you using to make a living?
- Why are you using those strategies?
- What strategies are you not using to make a living and why?

49% of men and women with disabilities aged 25 to 64 are employed compared to 79% of their non disabled counterparts

STEP 2: WHAT DIFFERENT OPTIONS DID THEY FEEL THEY HAD? WHY DID THEY CHOOSE THE PATH THEY DID?

People make choices based on the options they perceive are open to them. Perceptions are influenced by social identities, policies, values, opportunities, how people are treated, social barriers, and more.

Examples:

- Rose has a mental health disability and receives disability income support. She works part-time but she would like to do more, work more, and earn more. Earning more money means more deductions from her monthly cheque and higher rent. She fears being taken off social assistance and losing the medical and dental benefits. Rose chooses to stay working part-time.
- Kanaaq lives in a tiny Inuit town in Nunavut. He has become a skilled soap stone carver and regularly sells his work locally. His dream is to move to a big city to sell his art and help his family get off social assistance. His community does not support his plan. They are convinced if he leaves, he will lose the Inuit traditions and culture. Kanaaq decides to stay in his community.



STEP 3: WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME? HOW DOES IT RELATE TO WHAT THEY WANTED?

- Rose's choice means that she isn't able to earn as much as she would like. She isn't able to work to her full potential and has to turn down new opportunities and promotions at work for fear of earning a bit more, but she does keep her health benefits which covers her medications. To be financially independent, Rose would have to earn enough to cover not only her basic living expenses, but also her medical and dental bills that the disability benefits cover.
- Kannaq's decision to stay in his community limits his ability to achieve financial independence, but keeps him close to his community and traditions.



HOW DO WE USE A LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK?

We ask some key questions.

- How do other social locations (e.g. gender, race, language) interact with disability to shape experiences of livelihoods?
- To what extent does managing impairments affect experiences and livelihood choices?
- How do different forms of livelihood work together to enable getting the necessities of life?
- What are the relationships between income support and other forms of livelihoods?
- To what extent does managing impairments affect experiences and livelihood choices?



SO WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR DISABILITY AND LIVELIHOODS PARTNERSHIP?

Sources

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