

A photograph of a woman with a warm smile, wearing a red and black patterned headscarf and a brown sari with a black floral pattern. She is standing in what appears to be a vegetable market. In the background, there are posters on a wall, a large bag of purple onions, and a green plastic basket. The bottom half of the image is overlaid with a large orange triangle containing white text.

# THE VALUE OF MAINSTREAMING

Why disability-inclusive  
programming is good for  
development





**This brochure is written by Lorraine Wapling.**

Lorraine is a freelance consultant with experience in countries across Africa, Asia, South East Asia and Oceania. A trained teacher by profession, Lorraine has been working in the development sector for the past 19 years focusing in particular on the promotion of disability-inclusive development. Currently Lorraine is researching the models that influence educational outcomes for D/deaf children in low-middle-income countries for her PhD with a view to highlighting where the international development sector could better support quality education for D/deaf children.

Lorraine has produced a number of resources including co-authorship of a training manual on disability-inclusive development, a donors' guide to inclusive grant making, a youth-focused 'technical paper' for UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, and a 'Research Toolkit for DPOs' in collaboration with Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre at University College London. Lorraine was recently called as an expert witness to provide evidence to the UK's International Development Select Committee enquiry into disability in UK aid and has made several presentations at the UN in support of disability-inclusive development.



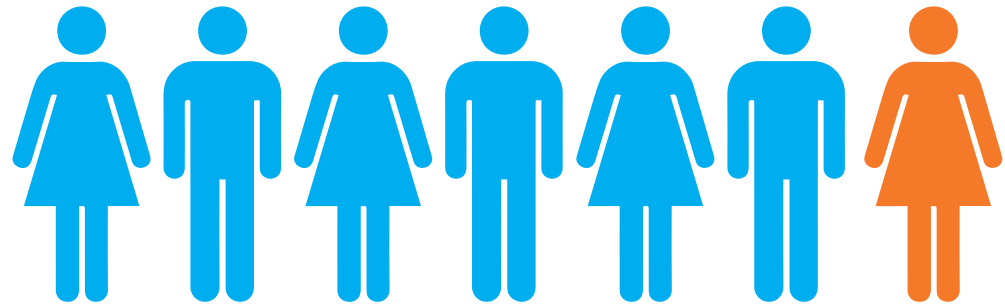
WaterAid transforms lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities. We work with partners and influence decision makers to maximise our impact.



ADD International works for the independence, equality and opportunity of disabled people living in extreme poverty in Africa and Asia.



# DISABILITY AS AN ISSUE IN DEVELOPMENT



**1 in 7 people around the world is disabled** – that’s over 1 billion people<sup>1</sup> and while they have the potential to make important contributions towards their countries’ economic and social development, the Australian government estimated that currently **only 3-4% of them directly benefit from international development programmes.**<sup>2</sup>

The slogan **“Disability not inability”** is becoming increasingly visible as disabled people raise awareness of their rights and potential. They are calling for their skills, ambitions and talents to be recognised and for their views and needs to be properly represented. What’s more, if all disabled people had access to development it would mean that eliminating extreme poverty could become a far more realistic aim, as could true universal primary education. Instead, the absence of disabled people from most mainstream development programmes has increased inequality, led to missed international targets, and is slowing economic and social progress in communities across the world.<sup>3</sup>

Why are disabled people so poorly represented in development programmes? There are always multiple issues involved

but **one of the most powerful factors is attitude.** The image of disability is typically one of dependency and inability – a misperception that is exaggerated by the acute shortage of data on disabled people, their priorities, and their potential. Disabled people have often been targeted as a separate group in need of specialist services – which most development organisations believe they cannot deliver – and this medical/charity approach means that disabled people are rarely considered as stakeholders in mainstream project activities.

But, as the rights-based approach makes clear, disability is not only an individual impairment issue – it’s about understanding the impact that impairment has on a person’s opportunity to take an active part in everyday life by focusing on the barriers that limit their inclusion.

**What is disability?**  
**Disability is a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers, prevents full and effective participation in society. This is a rights-based approach to disability.**

**“Attitudes towards disabled people affect how resources are distributed and the extent to which their participation is sought.”<sup>4</sup>**



Where attitudes are negative, disabled people will find it very difficult to participate and will often hide away (or be hidden by their families). This happens in communities where disabled people are believed to be cursed, bewitched or contagious, or where the environment is not constructed in a way that takes account of their differences, for example when water points or latrines are built with steps. Where disabled people are directly consulted, where their access needs are anticipated in advance and where their **participation in activities is expected**, then their inclusion in development will be supported.

Addressing disability is a development issue and, to be effective, development organisations need to move away from medical/charity-based thinking to a rights-based approach. Organisations should now be looking at how to ensure disabled people are benefitting from their activities and making sure that disabled people are maximising their potential as contributors to development.



# DISABILITY: A KEY ISSUE IN TACKLING POVERTY

The direct causes of poverty are always varied and dynamic, but there is a powerful link between disability and poverty. Disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. **People experiencing poverty are more likely to become disabled, and those who are disabled are more likely to be poor.** We see this relationship every day in our work in Africa and Asia, and it is now documented by a growing body of academic evidence.<sup>5</sup> Whilst not everyone who is disabled is poor, if you are poor the risks of becoming disabled increase. That's because people in poverty have less access to health care and are more vulnerable to malnutrition and preventable diseases. They are more likely to live and work in dangerous or polluted environments with low-quality housing, reduced access to safe drinking water and sanitation and increased vulnerability to the effects of natural disasters, dangerous traffic and higher rates of violence.<sup>6</sup>

Disabled people are also more likely to be poor as they face multiple barriers to securing their livelihoods. Negative attitudes often severely limit the opportunities they have for education, training, employment, and income generation. Stigma and shame lead to isolation from families and communities so that they are less likely to be members of self-help groups, religious organisations or community initiatives.

**The cost of living with a disability can also increase household poverty which means disability is not an issue limited to individuals.** Households with a disabled member may have to spend more to reach a minimum standard of living. This extra spending might be needed, for example, to secure accessible transport, for additional health care needs, for assistive devices, for human support (guides or interpreters for example) or for household adaptations. This means that where there are few or no state-supported disability services, households with disabled members are at a high risk of poverty.<sup>7</sup> Moreover this poverty can be passed on to their children because of the environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers that limit the opportunities these households have to escape.



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# DISABILITY: AN INFLUENTIAL ELEMENT IN SCHOOL ATTAINMENT

Disabled children are less likely to enrol in and complete school, and literacy rates of disabled people are well below those of their non-disabled peers.<sup>8</sup> As a result their employment and income-generating opportunities are far more limited. In Bangladesh, for instance, the cost of disability, due to forgone income from a lack of schooling, is estimated at US\$1.2 billion annually – that's a staggering 1.7% of GDP.<sup>9</sup>

## DISABILITY: A KEY ISSUE IN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Inaccessible water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) designs can mean physically disabled people are forced to crawl on the floor to use a toilet or to defecate in the open. Inaccessibility can be a factor in why disabled children drop out of school and it contributes to increased stigma and loss of personal dignity and self-respect. To reduce the need to relieve themselves, many disabled adults and children limit the amount they eat and drink, creating serious implications for their health and safety, and negatively affecting their self-esteem.<sup>10</sup>

If water sources are too far away or inaccessibly designed, disabled people have to rely on others to collect water for them. If no one is available to help, they have to go without.<sup>11</sup> Despite understanding what kinds of adaptations would be most helpful to improve access and independence, disabled people are rarely consulted or directly involved in WASH programmes. This can lead to inappropriate design, and leave disabled people excluded from WASH services.<sup>12</sup>



# DISABILITY: A KEY FACTOR IN LIVELIHOOD AND EMPLOYMENT

Globally, disabled people of working age are more likely to be unemployed, be lower paid, have fewer promotion prospects and less job security than their non-disabled peers. A lack of education, inaccessible workplaces and negative attitudes all work against disabled people earning an income. As a consequence **the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the cost of this exclusion in terms of a nation's lost productivity and increased welfare spending could be between 1% to 7% of GDP.**<sup>13</sup>

Poorly designed and/or targeted social protection schemes can also result in disabled people being excluded. Examples include disabled people being turned down for 'food for work' programmes because of the assumption that they are not capable of working; disabled people being excluded from free seed or fertiliser distribution because the system does not categorise them as a vulnerable group; disabled people being simply physically unable to get welfare payments because the banks are inaccessible or will not accept making payments to a disabled individual.



# DISABILITY: A VITAL ELEMENT IN GENDER INEQUALITY

Disabled women and girls face double discrimination, and as a consequence face significantly more barriers in accessing housing, WASH, health, education, vocational training and employment.<sup>14</sup> **They are also at higher risk of gender-based violence and sexual abuse.**<sup>15</sup>

Many social protection programmes designed to assist disabled people, such as supplemental security income, disability insurance, workers' compensation and vocational rehabilitation, disadvantage women because of their low participation in the formal employment sector. Disabled women experience inequality in hiring, promotion rates, pay and access to training, credit and other productive resources, and they rarely participate in economic decision-making.<sup>16</sup>



# DISABILITY AND THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

In 2006 the United Nations adopted the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**. It was the first human rights treaty of the 21st century and the first to focus explicitly on disability, marking a significant shift in the profile of disability rights. The CRPD aims to: ‘promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities...’ (Article 1).

The CRPD states that all **development aid** should now be: ‘...inclusive of and accessible to, persons with disabilities’ (Article 32). This has very important implications for development organisations. All 152 donor countries that have ratified the CRPD should be working towards ensuring all development activities they support are inclusive of disabled people. Disability-inclusive development is now gaining profile.

In 2009 **Australia** launched the most comprehensive donor disability strategy to date: ‘Development for All: Towards a Disability-Inclusive Australian Aid Program’ (2009-2014). In 2014 the **UK’s Department for International Development (DFID)** produced its first ‘Disability Framework: Leaving No One Behind’ which signified an important step-change in the way DFID

approaches disability. It has now committed to strengthening disability in its policies and programmes and will be reviewing its progress regularly.

In addition, **Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the USA** all have varying levels of commitment towards disability inclusion. At the multi-lateral level, ‘the World Report on Disability’ was published by the **World Health Organization** in 2011, the first global assessment of the status of disabled people produced at UN level, and in 2013, **UNICEF** focused its ‘State of the World’s Children’ report specifically on children and youths with disabilities – the first time this has ever been done.



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# PUTTING DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT INTO PRACTICE

In 2015 the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that guided development work since 2000 will be renewed. **The new Global Goals for Sustainable Development were built on the principle that they should ‘leave no one behind ..... regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status.’<sup>17</sup>**

The MDGs made no mention of disability and as a result compounded disabled people’s omission from mainstream development.<sup>18</sup> The new Global Goals include recurrent references to disability, and address the current lack of data on disability. This discussion is having a significant effect on raising the profile of disability-inclusive development. There is increasing awareness that **the new development agenda will focus more on bringing benefits to those at the very margins of communities, including disabled people and their families.**

The impact of both the CRPD and the Global Goals on increasing the importance of disability-inclusive development is considerable. **Development organisations therefore need to be planning how they will ensure their programmes are increasingly inclusive of disabled people.**



# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

## How can you become a more disability-inclusive organisation?

### 1. COMMIT TO A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO DISABILITY

One of the most important places to start is for the organisation to develop clear and consistent messages around disability. Disability should be talked about as a rights issue and, where necessary, staff should be trained in the rights-based approach to disability. Make the assumption that disabled people will be stakeholders.

### 2. ENGAGE WITH DISABLED PEOPLE

The best way to promote disability-inclusive programming is by engaging with disabled people as partners, expert advisors, staff, participants and beneficiaries.

### 3. BUDGET FOR INCLUSION

**Be realistic about the resources that are needed to bring about the inclusion of disabled people.** This means planning for the physical/sensory/cognitive and psycho-social access needs of disabled people in all programme activities. **Relatively small adjustments to the way activities are carried out can result in the inclusion of many disabled people if designed in from the outset.** None of the following examples incur major costs: providing participants with information ahead of meetings; taking a bit of extra time at meetings to allow for more breaks; producing information in simplified language forms; checking for venue accessibility.

However, reprinting information in large font or Braille, hiring Sign Language Interpreters or advocates (for those who are deaf-blind or have moderate/severe learning impairments); covering the costs of personal assistants and guides (for mobility and visually impaired people) will have budget implications. Costs like these are often regarded as expensive or 'additional' but this only happens when they have not been built into project plans. So, budget for inclusion from the start.

### 4. REMEMBER, INCLUSION IS MORE THAN JUST PHYSICAL ACCESS

Generally disabled people find it hard to participate in mainstream development activities because the activities are not designed in accessible ways. Physical access is important, but environmental barriers need to be assessed for a wide range of impairments. It is important to include the needs of people with sensory and learning impairments when checking accessibility. But environmental access alone will not necessarily lead to inclusion – attitudes and policies also need to recognise the rights of disabled people and their participation in decision making should be actively promoted.

### 5. GO AHEAD AND TRY – LEARN FROM YOUR EXPERIENCES AND FROM THOSE AROUND YOU

**WaterAid** have made significant progress towards becoming an inclusive organisation by introducing some very effective measures across their partnerships. They made a high-level commitment to inclusive development in their Global Strategy (2015-2020) by stating that one of their **key strategic aims** is to tackle and challenge the inequalities that prevent the poorest and most marginalised people from realising their right to safe water, sanitation and hygiene. This is firmly grounded in the rights-based approach.



WaterAid teams such as **WaterAid Mali**, for example, took the Global Strategy and built their own inclusive activities. In Mali, all public water points and latrines (including those constructed in schools) supported by WaterAid are now built to standard accessible designs and the team is working with local advocacy groups (such as the Malian Federation of Associations of People Experiencing Handicaps) to have this become national policy.

WaterAid have supported training of staff on inclusive development, supported research projects to highlight the most effective approaches to increasing participation, and resourced staff (such as Equity and Inclusion Officers) in an effort to improve their ability to include marginalised people in their work. Whilst they will readily admit they have yet to achieve full inclusion, by committing to working with marginalised people at all levels of the organisation and by prioritising resources they have managed a step-change towards becoming an organisation which routinely delivers inclusive development.

# CONCLUSION

Disability is present in all communities; it cuts across all economic classes, affects people of all ages and gender and, with a steadily increasing proportion of older people and those with long-term health conditions living in developing countries, the impact of disability on development is likely to become more significant. Currently more than 46% of people aged 60 or older have disabilities and by 2050 it's estimated that one in five people in developing countries will be over 60.<sup>19</sup>

Disabled people are often among the poorest and most marginalised people in communities. Many development organisations state that their intention is to improve the lives of the most disadvantaged and yet don't actively include disabled people in their work. Given the huge but largely unrecognised potential contribution of 1 billion disabled people towards economic and social progress, it makes good sense for development organisations to actively engage them. Disabled people have a right to participate in and benefit from development, and their inclusion will help reduce the inequalities that are slowing down progress on the elimination of extreme poverty.

## FURTHER READINGS

### **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

### **World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011)**

[http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/en/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/)

### **State of the World's Children 2013 report (UNICEF, 2013)**

<http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/>

### **Open working group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals (UNDESA, 2014)**

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

**You can access further information via the websites of ADD International ([www.addinternational.org](http://www.addinternational.org)) and WaterAid ([www.wateraid.org.uk](http://www.wateraid.org.uk)).**


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With inclusion and equity at the heart of the new Global Goals for Sustainable Development and renewed commitments from donors like DFID towards the promotion of more disability-inclusive programming, it has never been more important for the international development sector to start building disability into mainstream work.

This introductory resource has been designed to help answer some of the big picture questions INGOs face when considering where disability fits into mainstream programming. It covers issues around why disability is a highly relevant development issue, how disability can impact on the success of specific sector interventions, and what initial measures organisations can take to start the process of becoming disability-inclusive practitioners. With examples of real life experiences, this short resource offers practical information to help stimulate discussions and encourage innovation in disability-inclusive development.

