Sightsavers’ input into the Special Rapporteur’s report on international cooperation

Sightsavers welcome this thematic study on disability-inclusive international cooperation. Below we have 1) shared analysis from the new OECD DAC policy marker on disability 2) shared information on different donors’ approaches to disability-inclusive international cooperation and drawn together key lessons and recommendations.

# Donor’s spending on disability inclusion

The lack of data on the amount of overseas development assistance (ODA) spent on disability is a significant challenge to assessing the extent to which international cooperation is inclusive of people with disabilities. This has been highlighted by many actors, including the CRPD Committee, for example in their concluding observations of Germany and the EU[[1]](#footnote-1).

In June 2018 the OECD DAC approved a [policy marker](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)39/REV1&docLanguage=En) to ‘track development finance that promotes the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities’ (disability marker) for voluntary use[[2]](#footnote-2). The voluntary adoption of the disability marker means that DAC members can choose to state whether their ODA is disability inclusive, but they are not required to.

DAC members can mark each programme as either ‘not-targeted’ (score 0), ‘significant’ (score 1) or ‘principle’ (score 2). A principle score means that disability inclusion is the main objective of a programme. Significant means that disability inclusion is not the principles objective of the programme but is an important objective.

A principal score is not by definition better than a significant score, as donors should be adopting a twin-track approach to disability across their portfolio combining dedicated/targeted interventions (usually score 2) with disability mainstreaming (usually score 1).

The marker is the only tool, common across donors, which can track ODA supporting disability inclusion. The data generated by the marker plays a key monitoring and accountability role and can contribute to identifying gaps between policy commitments and their implementation. While the marker is aimed at DAC members, multilateral actors could also use the marker.

The existence and use of the disability marker goes some way to address the lack of data on disability, with first year data starting to paint a picture of the extent to which ODA is inclusive of people with disabilities[[3]](#footnote-3). The data shows that only a small percentage of ODA is disability inclusive, that there is a big discrepancy between donors, and that more donors need to report against the marker in order to give a full picture of disability inclusive ODA.

## Use of the marker[[4]](#footnote-4)

There has been some good uptake of the marker in the first year – with a number of countries marking close to 100% of their programmes. But progress needs to be made to ensure that we have a full picture of DAC members’ spending on disability. Out of the 29 DAC members – 12 have marked over 50% of their eligible ODA against the marker, eight have marked less than 50% of their programmes and nine have not used the marker.

While the majority of donors are making some programmes against the marker – only 35% of eligible ODA has been marked. Significant gaps remain in our knowledge of what extent of ODA is inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Countries not using the marker represent just over 50% of ODA spending and so ensuring that they use the marker in future will be crucial to ensure there is a full picture of how much aid is disability inclusive.

## Disability inclusion in donors’ programmes

Data from the marker shows that a low number of programmes are being reported as disability inclusive[[5]](#footnote-5). Only 2.75% of ODA is currently reported as inclusive. Even excluding countries which have not used the marker this number only rises to 3.7%.

There is significant variation amongst donors. The UK, Iceland and Ireland have reported the highest amount of their ODA as disability inclusive - with 20-25% of their ODA being marked as inclusive[[6]](#footnote-6).

It is also important to note that these numbers represent the total programme spend, not the proportion that is being spent on disability inclusion.

## Mainstreaming disability and disability specific programming

Unsurprisingly, the majority of donors are marking more of their ODA as ‘significant’ than as ‘principle.’ Finland has marked the highest amount of their ODA as principle (4%). The vast majority of countries have marked much less than 1% of their ODA as ‘principle.’ This raises concerns about whether the scale of disability-specific programming is sufficient to ensure an effective twin-track approach.

## Points to consider and recommendations

There has been good take up of the marker amongst some donors in the first year, but 65% of ODA has not been marked and there a still a large number of donors who are either **not using the marker or are using it inconsistently**.

All donors should work to ensure that **all of their programmes are being assessed** against the marker to ensure a fuller picture on how inclusive aid is of people with disabilities, and therefore improving data on how effective international cooperation is.

The take up demonstrates that there is willingness amongst some DAC members to use the marker, but also demonstrates the need for the **marker to be made compulsory** to ensure that it is usedconsistently and the need for increased advocacy in countries where the marker is not being used.

Crucially, the data shows us that the **amount of ODA which is disability inclusive remains incredibly low**. This will restrict donor’s ability to meet their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their commitment to Agenda 2030. Even amongst the leading DAC members, disability inclusive ODA makes up a small proportion of their overall spending.

Across all countries, **spending on programmes where the principle objective is disability inclusion is very low**, with the majority of countries reporting less than 1%. While we would expect this to be relatively low, more work needs to be done to establish how much donors should be aiming to spend on disability specific programmes vs mainstreaming disability.

The first-year data should be **approached with an element of caution**. There is a risk of over-reporting the extent to which programmes are disability inclusive. This highlights the need for a Handbook to guide donors and more technical support to enhance staff’s understanding of inclusive programming.

More in depth work also need to be done to assess the **quality of the reporting** by donors, to ensure that programmes which are being marked as disability inclusive include sufficient measures to ensure that they are disability inclusive in practice.

This **data is on a commitment basis** and therefore gives us information on what donors *intend* to do in relation to disability – further research and data is needed to assess to what extent these commitments are taken forward and the impact they have on people with disabilities.

# Key elements to consider for disability-inclusive international cooperation

Disability inclusion remains a neglected issue in international co-operation, although it has risen up the agenda of many international donors in recent years. For example, the UK, Finland, Norway, Australia and Germany[[7]](#footnote-7) have all taken steps to strengthen their work on disability.

There are clear lessons from the successes and challenges that donors have had when working towards disability-inclusive international cooperation. This is not a comprehensive list but gives an overview of some key issues.

## Political leadership

Political leadership is crucial to secure progress on disability-inclusive international cooperation. In the UK, for example, successive Ministers in the Department for International Development showed leadership on disability-inclusive development. Ministerial interest was a clear driver of progress in the UK. Some progress was made on disability between 2014 and 2016 (including the publication of the first Disability Framework[[8]](#footnote-8)), however, a major shift in emphasis came in late 2016, when the Secretary of State announced an aim to establish DFID as “the global leader in this neglected and under prioritised area”[[9]](#footnote-9). This led to the UK holding the Global Disability Summit and publishing their first Disability Strategy in 2018[[10]](#footnote-10).

The experience of Norway offers a valuable warning about the importance of political leadership. Norway had been a driving force for a shift to a social understanding of disability in the international community. Parliament approved a White Paper with a section on mainstreaming disability in development cooperation, the Ministry of Affairs created a plan and NORAD produced guidelines. However, in 2012 NORAD’s evaluation concluded that the documents were largely ignored and forgotten. There were no indicators to monitor if they had been used by partners or incorporated into development programmes and foreign policy. Disability became less of a political priority, and people with disabilities were even removed as a target group from NORAD’s statistical database[[11]](#footnote-11). We are now seeing an increase in focus on disability in Norway, with recent funding announcements and commitments.

## Systematically embedding disability inclusion

The above example demonstrates the importance of systematically embedding disability inclusion. As DFID recognises embedding disability across all ‘structures and culture will take time and is complex and multi-dimensional[[12]](#footnote-12),’ one approach that the UK government has taken is to introduce a set of ‘Minimum Standards[[13]](#footnote-13)’ that all business units must meet. The standards are ambitious and if met would be an effective way of ensuring that different team and country offices are beginning to systematically embed disability inclusion within their work. Specific initiatives such as this are an important way of beginning to systematically embed disability inclusion into international cooperation. However, there also needs to be increased effort to embed disability inclusion into the ways in which decisions are made and programmes are designed across departments. For example, donors should ensure that they have developed mechanisms to ensure that overall programmatic and funding decisions take into account the differing impact on people with disabilities, that budgeting processes are inclusive, and that monitoring, and evaluation consistently assesses the extent to which programmes are inclusive of people with disabilities.

## Financing disability-inclusive international cooperation

A review[[14]](#footnote-14) of the UK’s work on disability inclusion by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) found two interesting conclusions in relation to financing disability-inclusive international cooperation. Firstly, they highlighted that the lack of funding to cover the start-up costs of mainstreaming was hindering DFID’s efforts to mainstream disability within the department. This echoes Sightsavers’ and other NGOs’ experience of discussing disability with DFID country offices, because although willingness to work on disability exists – staff feel they lack the resources to do more within already allocated budgets[[15]](#footnote-15).

Australia adopted a different approach, where a fund for mainstreaming disability-inclusion was available, which was evaluated as successful. Not only did the money support mainstreaming but the process of planning and applying for the funding was considered to have enabled deeper thinking and concerted effort to ensure each investment mainstreamed disability inclusion. Australia also provided specific allocations of funding for reasonable accommodation which the evaluation found has also enabled disability inclusion and is often key to people with disabilities being able to genuinely participate in and benefit from development programmes.

The ICAI review into DFID’s approach also found that ‘disability-targeted programming in key sectors is too modest in scale and reach to be likely to deliver transformational results.’[[16]](#footnote-16) Data from the OECD DAC marker, discussed above, demonstrates that this is likely to be a wider trend. Crucial lessons could be learnt by looking in more detail at the amount spent by donors on disability-specific programming and to understand how significant disability-specific funding needs to be to drive progress.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations draw on the documents, strategies and reviews mentioned above, aswell as Sightsavers’ experience of interacting with a number of bilateral and multilateral donors on disability inclusion. Donors should ensure that they:

* Have a clear organisational definition of disability-inclusive development, communicated, and supported by internal guidance and information documents;
* Collect data on disability inclusion, including but not limited to, using the OECD DAC marker;
* Systematise disability inclusion by ensuring that it is including in internal processes;[[17]](#footnote-17)
* Consider disability inclusion at all stages of a programme’s development, implementation and assessment[[18]](#footnote-18);
* Ensure they are taking a twin track approach – ensuring that investments in disability specific programming are sufficient and that mainstreaming is resourced;
* Place responsibility for disability-inclusion on all staff and not just the central disability team, and ensure that staff can access guidance and support;[[19]](#footnote-19)
* Put in place a clear disability-inclusion strategy and ensure that its implementation is resourced;
* Evaluate strategies and approaches to disability-inclusion, this is especially crucial given that this area of work is relatively new;
* Introduce a process to ensure country offices take ownership and are able to push forward the agenda;
* Build on political leadership, and ensure that political will is used to systematically embed disability inclusion;
* Ensure that approaches consider the intersecting inequalities that people with disabilities experience and make specific efforts to reach those who are most marginalised.

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1. CRPD Committee, [Concluding observations](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&DocTypeID=5). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. OECD DAC, [Disability marker](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)39/REV1&docLanguage=En) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The data used is from the OECD DAC’s CRS database. The data is self-reported data by donors on a commitment basis. This is 2018 data, the latest available data. The analysis omits donors’ administrative costs. The data only includes bilateral allocatable aid, and therefore does not cover all ODA. We can share the data and analysis in more detail if that would be helpful. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. We would be happy to share further analysis on the use of the marker if helpful to support the development of the report [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘Disability inclusive’ is defined as programmes either marked as 1 or 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In some cases, donor’s DAC data is not demonstrating the same commitment to disability-inclusion as their own data. For example, the DAC data shows a low number of disability inclusive programmes for Australia. However, their evaluation of ‘Development for All’ sets out that: 40 per cent of all aid investments were reported to be disability inclusive. Larger-value investments are more likely to be disability inclusive so assessing disability inclusion using the percentage of investments rated disability inclusive underestimates the overall level of inclusion. For about 60 per cent of the aid program’s expenditure, more than half of investments are disability inclusive. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Given that Germany was a clear leader in disability-inclusive cooperation it is disappointing to see that they have not adopted the disability marker and have rolled back on previous commitments to use the marker in their latest strategy: [www.bmz.de/de/mediathek/publikationen/reihen/strategiepapiere/Strategiepapier495\_12\_2019.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/de/mediathek/publikationen/reihen/strategiepapiere/Strategiepapier495_12_2019.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. DFID, 2015, [DFID Disability Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-disability-framework-2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. DFID, 2016, [Rising to the challenge of ending poverty: the Bilateral Development Review](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/573889/Bilateral-Development-Review-2016.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. DFID, 2018, [Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-disability-inclusion-strategy-2018-to-2023). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. NORAD, 2012. [Evaluation of Norwegian support to promote the rights of persons with disabilities](https://norad.no/om-bistand/publikasjon/2012/mainstreaming-disability-in-the-new-development-paradigm-evaluation-of-norwegian-support-to-promote-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/). Page 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. DFID, 2019, [Written evidence to the CRPD committee](http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/dfids-work-on-disability/written/100360.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. DFID, 2018, [Minimum Standards](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/773358/DFID-_Disability-Inclusion-Standards2.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ICAI, 2018, [DFID’s approach to disability in Development](https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/ICAI-Disability-Review.pdf). A [parliamentary review](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/1880/188002.htm) was also conducted in 2019 and the [Government’s response](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/2680/268002.htm) is also available. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Sightsavers, 2019, [Sightsavers’ evidence to the International Development Select Committee inquiry on DFID’s work on Disability](http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/dfids-work-on-disability/written/96858.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. It is worth noting that since the review was written DFID have finalised its largest disability-specific programme to date, the Disability Inclusive Development programme, which is working across multiple sectors. This is a significant programme and is a significant step-up from previous programmes. However, given the scale of DFID’s work this is still relatively modest. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Good examples include: the inclusion of disability in DFID’s Business Case template, Finland’s Quality Assurance Board that regularity checks all financing proposals against the human rights-based approach criteria, [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This is crucial, as we have seen that while DFID has made significant improvements in including disability in Business Cases this does not always follow through into other programme documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. DFID’s Disability Helpdesk is a good example of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)