

## PRACTICE NOTE

### Disability Inclusive Development

Commissioned by Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC)<sup>1</sup>

#### Acknowledgements

ADDC would like to thank all those who participated in two Practitioner Interest Forum workshops in Sydney and Melbourne on disability inclusive development in August and September 2015. Discussions at these workshops provided much of the content related to 'lessons learned' within this Practice Note. ADDC would also like to thank Deborah Rhodes who facilitated the workshops and prepared this Practice Note. Those who commented on draft versions are also gratefully acknowledged.

#### Audience

This Practice Note is intended to assist staff of organisations which are involved in international development and humanitarian programs. The intention is to enable organisations to build on their existing achievements and strengthen policies, practices, partnerships and programs in order to maximise disability inclusion. Primarily, it is envisaged that Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) which undertake partnerships and programs internationally will find the guidance to be useful, as of 2015 reflecting a wide diversity ranging from those agencies which have made substantial progress to those which may be just beginning the journey towards disability inclusive practice. Others, such as managing contractors and consultants involved in all aspects of aid program management, universities involved in research and programs and regional/international organisations which involve people and communities in their work, will also find value in this Practice Note.

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<sup>1</sup> An Independent Consultant, Deborah Rhodes, with expertise in disability inclusive development, facilitated two workshops for ADDC and prepared this Practice Note.

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## 1. Purpose/Background

Disability inclusive development aims to ensure that development and humanitarian programs are designed, implemented and monitored in ways which include and are designed to benefit people with disabilities and their communities. Recognising that approximately 15% of the world's population have disabilities<sup>2</sup>, such an approach is regarded internationally as critical for 'leaving no-one behind' in development and humanitarian processes and outcomes.

This Practice Note reflects the outcomes of two workshops organised by ADDC in 2015 comprising representatives from NGOs, universities, the Australian government's aid program and other interested stakeholders. It updates a previous Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Practice Note on the same topic (2008), and reflects contemporary policies and lessons learned.

## 2. Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) provides a globally agreed framework which not only articulates clear obligations for governments, but also underpins both the work of national disability-focused organisations globally, as well as most disability inclusive development practice. The CRPD confirms the importance of a rights-based approach to disability (see Section 5.1).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), declared in 2015, uphold the critical importance of disability inclusive approaches in development processes and affirm the global commitment to inclusive societies. The SDGs require governments, NGOs and development partners to ensure people with disabilities and their representative organisations are included in all aspects of development and humanitarian work.

Disability issues can be considered at many levels. For example philosophically, issues about inclusive societies and human rights are important to consider. At practical levels, there are many technical issues involved, such as how a low-resource education system can support children with different disabilities to learn effectively; or what angle an access ramp should be built at so that wheelchair users are able to get into buildings safely. In between the philosophical and practical levels, there are many issues to be considered which influence the way disability inclusive development and humanitarian activities operate. For example, there are issues associated with definitions, data collection, policies, implications of access for people with different types of impairments, cultural beliefs, different life

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<sup>2</sup> World Report on Disability, 2011, World Health Organisation and The World Bank

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experiences, partnerships, perceptions of change and organisational capacity. The distinction between 'disability' and 'impairment' is particularly important<sup>3</sup>.

This Practice Note provides a link between lessons learned in recent years from disability inclusion efforts, current Australian government policy priorities and practical advice for Australian NGOs working internationally. While disability inclusive development can in some ways be regarded as simply good development and humanitarian practice (and therefore draws on general development and humanitarian principles and practices), the need to address entrenched marginalisation of people with disabilities means that it also encompasses some specific elements of principles and practice.

Increasingly there are resources available on disability inclusive development within a range of sectors for NGOs, including some developed by Australian NGOs: many are listed Resources (Section 7). This Practice Note does not attempt to summarise all the literature, but synthesises issues and approaches identified by those currently working in Australian-based organisations in this area.

Organisations working in disability inclusive development have found that purposeful and strategic partnering between non-specialist agencies and specialist agencies can help to strengthen disability inclusion.

## **3. Disability Inclusive Development Contexts**

### **3.1 Australian NGO experiences**

A small number of Australian NGOs have been working on disability issues in an international context and advocating for change over decades. Most development and humanitarian NGOs have only begun to consider this area in detail within the last decade, following the adoption of the CRPD and the Australian Government's strategy on disability inclusive development (see Section 3.2). Through a wide range of partnerships, and with support from ADDC, there is now increasing understanding about disability inclusion, and

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<sup>3</sup> A useful distinction is drawn in the Australian Government's Development for All Strategy 2015-20 (p9): 'the term 'people with disabilities' is conceptualised as including those who have episodic or 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. (Disabilities = impairments + barriers.) Impairments may limit an individual's personal or social functioning in comparison with those who do not share the same impairment (characteristic or condition, such as hearing and/or vision impairment, developmental delay or physical impairment). The full inclusion of people with impairments in society can be inhibited by attitudinal and/or societal barriers (such as stigma), physical and/or environmental barriers (such as stairs), and policy and/or systemic barriers, which can create a disabling effect.'

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experience of appropriate approaches, principles and ways of working in this area. These lessons and suggested approaches are included in Section 4.

ACFID, as the peak council of Australian NGOs which aim to promote conditions of sustainable human development, refers specifically in its Code of Conduct to the priority accorded to enabling all people to 'enjoy a full range of human rights, fulfil their needs free from poverty and live in dignity'. The code also emphasises that inclusion of people with disabilities is critical for the achievement of ACFID's values and principles. For example, Program Principle B1.1 includes the obligation for member organisations to 'prioritise accountability to local people and those directly affected by aid and development activities, prioritising their needs and rights with specific reference to gender, age, disability and other identified vulnerabilities.'<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2 Development for All Strategy

In May 2015, the Australian government launched its second strategy on disability inclusive development, *Development for All: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program 2015 to 2020*. This Strategy applies across the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the aid program in particular. The Strategy can be found [here](#)<sup>5</sup>. The government expects that organisations implementing DFAT-funded activities will apply the Strategy.

The Strategy's objective is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities in developing countries. DFAT seeks to achieve this through:

- enhancing participation and empowerment of people with disabilities, as contributors, leaders and decision makers in community, government and the private sector;
- reducing poverty among people with disabilities; and
- improving equality for people with disabilities in all areas of public life, including service provision, education and employment.

The strategy includes a range of definitions, suggested approaches and case studies which are directly relevant to the work of Australian NGOs. NGOs which receive DFAT funding through the Australian Non-Government Cooperation Program (ANCP) are required to report on disability inclusion within these activities.

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<sup>4</sup> Code of Conduct, January 2015, ACFID, page 8

<sup>5</sup> Development for All: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program 2015 to 2020, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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### **3.3 International context**

The CRPD provides a globally agreed framework for all efforts towards disability inclusion. It is used widely by Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and governments in many ways as the basis for their work. Most countries of the world have signed the CRPD and governments are focussing attention on their reporting responsibilities and progress in implementation. DPOs typically use the CRPD to justify, organise and implement their activities. The CRPD should also be used to inform and direct all disability inclusive development practice by aid agencies, ensuring a rights-based approach.

The SDGs reference the importance of including people with disabilities and their representative organisations in development processes and of aiming for inclusive societies. Australian development NGOs are likely to use the SDGs as a key framework for their efforts for the medium term, and disability inclusive approaches will be critical for achievement of the SDGs.

### **3.4 Disabled People's Organisations**

Disabled People's Organisations are a category of civil society (or non-government) organisation with a specific membership – people with disabilities – and which are usually governed, led and administered by at least a majority of people with disabilities.<sup>6</sup> DPOs may operate at the local (town, city, district or provincial/state level), national, regional or international level. DPOs may be inclusive of all people with disabilities or focus on people with particular impairments and/or a particular gender.

The CRPD explicitly refers to the roles of DPOs in representing the views and experiences of their members and advocating for changes. Their mandated roles have implications for aspects of their organisational capacity (see Annex 1).

DPO histories often reflect the efforts of one or a few individuals, and a set of circumstances unique to each country or context, but DPOs are increasingly becoming linked with similar organisations in other settings, including internationally. DPOs are diverse in scope, size, nature, degree of formality and capacity. Many factors influence DPOs at different times and in different places, including the priorities of leaders or members, access to resources, scope, agendas, and national constitutions or legislation.

Effective DPOs are critical to the achievement of inclusive societies and efficient economies. They know and understand disability issues better than any other group. They are necessary

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<sup>6</sup> In some cases, DPOs are established and run by carers and/or family members of people with disabilities, reflecting collectivist values.

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advocates to governments and communities as experts to inform policy development and also as providers of services for people with disabilities. In most Pacific and Asian countries, DPOs have led and continue to lead efforts for inclusion, often without support. As the capacity of DPOs to contribute to rights-based, barrier-free and gender equitable societies is increased, the benefits of development and humanitarian assistance will be more fairly distributed than before and the quality of life for millions of people will improve.

DPOs are responsible for their own future as organisations, their own leadership capacity and the quality of their contributions to collaboration with others. However increasing numbers of organisations wish to contribute to the efforts of DPOs to strengthen capacity, enabling them to achieve their respective and shared objectives.

Progressively, more governments are responding to and relying upon DPOs as a source of advice about how to proceed towards inclusive development. Effective partnerships between DPOs and both government and non-government organisations are therefore key to the achievement of this increasingly shared objective.

### **4. Principles for all disability inclusive development work**

The following key principles are suggested to guide disability inclusive development and humanitarian work (the implications of these key principles are explained further in Section 5 on Approaches):

- a) 'Nothing about us without us' applies to all work in this area
- b) Approaches must be responsive and tailored to each cultural context
- c) Rights-based thinking is essential
- d) Practicing disability inclusion within an organisation increases its credibility with partners and deepens understanding about appropriate strategies
- e) Commitment to learning and sharing experiences with others is valuable
- f) Gender equity issues are closely connected with disability inclusion
- g) Key issues are often different for people with disabilities depending on their age
- h) A twin-track approach is necessary
- i) Disability inclusion needs to be factored into policy and program budgets

### **5. Approaches**

This section discusses how each of the above principles can be applied by NGOs and includes examples of approaches used by NGOs already (see Section 5.1).

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### *a) 'Nothing about us without us'*

This phrase is critical to disability inclusive practice and refers to the idea that people with disabilities must be included in all aspects of development and humanitarian work which is related to their lives. This means that the priorities, desires and hopes of people with disabilities should be the focus of all effort in disability inclusion, rather than any objectives determined by external NGOs or others. People with disabilities must be included in policy and program related decision-making and all activity management processes including design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) where feasible. Australian NGOs have found that when all relevant stakeholders are 'at the table' throughout the project cycle, then programs are more likely to be effective and successful.

Ongoing relationships between NGOs and DPOs are particularly important in this context. These relationships need to take into account existing DPO capacity strengths and be sensitive to the fact that many operate with very low levels of resources and that often members undertake tasks for the organisation on a volunteer basis. While involving the voices of people with disabilities is crucial for externally funded project success, it may be that DPOs are unable to respond to all requests for participation because of their limited human resource or financial capacity. International NGOs need to be respectful of the organisational priorities of DPOs. A key contribution that aid organisations can make is to support the capacity of local DPOs themselves, if requested and if they have appropriate organisational development skills. This could include support for efforts to secure long-term funding for personnel, or funding accessible transport for officials to attend meetings and undertake outreach activities.

Local expertise is most likely found in the lived experience of people with disabilities, so any efforts to determine the scope or nature of projects need to reflect this expertise. Gathering information about the lived experiences of people with disabilities and their priorities requires respectful, ethical engagement and research.

People with disabilities are not a homogenous group. People from all countries and all walks of life may experience disability at some time in their life – it is part of the human condition. The lived experience of one person with a disability may not be representative of another with the same impairment, because of multiple factors including age, gender and cultural context. When working on development and humanitarian programs, it is important to consider the diversity of impairments and experiences that are possible in any context and the need to maximise inclusion of people from the diversity of groups, such as those with physical impairments, unseen or undisclosed impairments, psychosocial or intellectual impairments. Different approaches may be appropriate for different individuals and groups.

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Strengths-based approaches are highly relevant to this area of work, because they are both consistent with the idea that people's abilities should be the focus, rather than their disabilities, and supportive of respectful and culturally-appropriate partnerships. Strengths-based approaches reflect a philosophy that by focusing on what is good, successful or previously achieved, people and organisations will move in a positive direction. They provide an opportunity to identify and celebrate what has worked well, as a basis for planning for more positive change. Tools such as Appreciative Inquiry<sup>7</sup> and Positive Deviance<sup>8</sup> are useful for planning and evaluation.

### *b) Approaches must be responsive and tailored to each cultural context*

The lived experience of people with disabilities varies widely across the world. The World Report on Disability is now accepted as the global source of evidence on disability and estimates that 15% of the world's population has a disability: this figure can be used to justify disability inclusive efforts, particularly at policy and national levels. When it comes to local level programming, there are many ways to generate information about people with disabilities: but still the emphasis should be on how to build inclusive societies for the long term and identifying the specific priorities of people with disabilities in particular social and cultural contexts. Simply counting how many people at any one time have particular disabilities is less important than finding out whether people with disabilities are being included in programs, and whether they are benefitting from changes. For reasons such as stigma, lack of specialist measurements and reluctance to disclose impairments, the actual prevalence of people with different impairments at any one time can be difficult to determine. The cost of counting often does not justify the benefits and can delay actions such as awareness-raising and making community events accessible for all. While there will be variations in each context, in the absence of specific data for a particular context, using the 15% figure and other figures from the World Disability Report is recommended.

Where data is collected about prevalence of disability, this should be for a clear purpose such as disaggregation of other findings, or to allow follow-up consultations, in order to better understand the needs, priorities or level of inclusion for people with disabilities and inform program activities. Measurement of disability prevalence should be carried out using verified tools which measure levels of functioning in daily tasks as a proxy for disability, such as the Washington Group Questions. Approaches which involve asking people whether they have a disability or not are typically ineffective, and tend to result in an underestimation of prevalence.

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<sup>7</sup> For definitions and examples see [www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu) and [www.appreciativeinquiry.net.au](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.net.au)

<sup>8</sup> For information see <http://www.positivedeviance.org/>



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Approaches that will work in one place may not work in another place, because of different cultural values as well as many other contextual factors. Cultural values play a critical role in determining community perspectives about what is important, how power is allocated and applied, how decisions are made, and how risks are managed, for example. Attitudes about equality, free choices, decision-making and the rights of different groups of people differ widely between different cultural groups. Thus in each context, it is important to develop a shared understanding about cultural values, listen to the priorities of people with disabilities and negotiate which approaches may be considered most effective. This is important for disability inclusion work, as it is for any processes related to change and development.

### *c) Rights-based thinking is essential*

Rights-based thinking and rights-based approaches are broadly defined as the use of internationally agreed definitions of rights to underpin policies, programs and advocacy. For many decades, support for people with disabilities was delivered through medical or charitable approaches, whereby medical workers or charities made decisions about the lives of people with disabilities. Contemporary approaches use a social approach which recognises that societies are responsible for the barriers which prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in social and economic life. In the context of disability, a rights-based approach is part of this broader social approach. A rights-based approach recognises the rights of people with disabilities to be able to make choices, access the same services as all other people and participate in social, cultural and economic life. The articles of the CRPD include all aspects of this approach.

There is a great deal of political momentum at international, regional and national levels in disability rights. This provides a basis for ongoing advocacy and programming by Australian NGOs. Specific efforts should be made not to undermine the existing leadership capacity of DPOs to advocate in culturally relevant ways. Citizens of each country have the right to determine their own priorities.

The concept of empowerment is very important in disability inclusion, particularly because many people with disabilities have experienced exclusion and disempowerment. Research (e.g. Rhodes 2003) has shown that when people with disabilities become aware of their rights, particularly in highly hierarchical cultural contexts, this can lead to significant improvement in both self-perception and engagement with others. There are many other contributions to empowerment which NGO programs can make, such as maximising participation and inclusion in all community development and decision-making processes.

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Support for those advocating for disability inclusion at local government levels can be a valuable contribution by NGOs and other community-based programs.

### *d) Practising disability inclusion within an organisation*

NGOs which have been through a process of increasing disability inclusion internally, are more likely to understand the issues involved as well as be seen as credible by partners. To be able to work effectively, Australian NGO staff need to understand disability inclusion at all levels, such as within fundraising, communication and marketing activities as well as in programming and reporting. Becoming more disability inclusive is not easy in some ways, but there are many organisations which have undertaken the journey and successfully achieved their objectives. When leaders decide to emphasise the issue, great achievements can be made.

One way to promote disability inclusion internally is to identify a staff member to be a 'focal point' on disability. There are benefits and limitations to this approach. For example, if there is a single officer allocated for the role, other staff may not take the initiative to promote inclusion; but if there is no staff member with the responsibility for driving inclusion, opportunities for focused leadership and disability inclusive initiatives may be lost. See the Resources (Section 7) for suggested ways NGOs can become more inclusive themselves, and to find out about the benefits of employing people with disabilities.

### *e) Commitment to learning and sharing experiences with others is valuable*

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to an organisation becoming disability inclusive, or to achieving disability inclusive development practice. All organisations and development and humanitarian workers need to be open to learning about what will work in different circumstances and how best to achieve shared objectives, once they have been negotiated respectfully and inclusively. Many Australian NGOs are new to the world of disability inclusion so it is useful to learn from others with more experience, for example through events and networks organised by ADDC. Sharing success stories is very important and can be highly motivational for other people with disabilities, so efforts to respectfully promote and share these stories can be a valuable contribution to positive change.

NGOs can not only learn themselves, but can fund and support efforts to raise understanding and awareness of disability rights in the countries where they work. Increasing community and government awareness of disability rights can often be a significant catalyst for achieving practical changes in policies and inclusive practices.

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Monitoring and evaluation processes should include gathering evidence, including stories and case studies, about the approaches to disability inclusion which work well in different settings. Such processes need to include the voices of people with disabilities who are or were involved in the programs or activities. There is also interest among many stakeholders about collecting data about the prevalence of disability and of different kinds of impairments, particularly to support advocacy efforts to governments. There are increasing numbers of tools and methods available which are suitable for gathering data on disability prevalence and inclusion (see Resource, Section 7, for some suggestions).

### *f) Gender equity and disability inclusive approaches*

Gender issues are very relevant to disability inclusive development and humanitarian work, with women and girls with disabilities typically facing considerably different issues to men and boys. Analysis of barriers related to both gender and disability is required in order to understand the different experiences of men and women with disabilities. Approaches which contribute to moving away from language which portrays groups as vulnerable and marginalised, towards supporting the 'agency' of people to bring about changes in their own context, are helpful in this regard.

Recent research on the experiences of women with disabilities in relation to violence, access to reproductive health services, empowerment, safety and access to education and work confirm the need for gendered approaches to disability inclusion within aid programs. Specific consideration needs to be given to issues prioritised by women with disabilities themselves. Given that it is women and girls who are predominantly the carers of family members with disabilities, programs which enable greater participation of people with disabilities and are gender sensitive have the potential to reduce the care related workloads of women and girls and may create more choice in how they spend their time. Girls and boys with disabilities also have different experiences, including whether they are able to attend school or not, and their participation in programs may also require different and nuanced approaches.

### *g) Age and disability inclusive approaches*

People of different ages can have vastly different experiences of impairment and disability. For example, children who are born deaf have substantially different life experiences from adults who become hard of hearing in older age. Children with disabilities born into a context where they have access to education can have significantly different life prospects from those born in a country without such services. Children can be more often subject to medical approaches to disability, but inclusion in education, peer groups and the social life of the

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community is equally important. Issues facing young people with disabilities can often be poorly addressed.

Increases in disability occur in older populations as a result of illness, non-communicable diseases, accidents, the impact of ageing or lack of understanding about preventive approaches or specialist health care. If these are viewed as an inevitable part of the ageing process, efforts to minimise the impact of impairments or to promote inclusion may be inadequate for older people.

Approaches which improve physical access for people with disabilities are often helpful to people of all ages – for example footpath ramps and wide doorways can assist both families with children in prams and elderly people with limited mobility. Similarly, including children with disabilities in classrooms can raise understanding about discrimination, disability, diversity and related issues relevant to people with disabilities of all ages.

### *h) Twin-track approach*

Use of a twin-track approach is essential. A twin-track approach is a combination of: both **targeted** activities which enable people with disabilities to access services such as information, public spaces, education and/or employment; and **mainstreaming** efforts which ensure all projects consider the impact on people with disabilities and actively include people with disabilities. The Australian aid program has applied this approach since the first *Development for All* Strategy was released in 2008. By paying attention to the specific requirements of people with disabilities and providing adjustments (referred to as 'reasonable accommodation' steps) to enable access education, employment and community life – for example mobility aides, physically accessible buildings, accessible transport, sign language interpreters, screen reading software or Braille machines – targeted activities then enable people with disabilities to participate in and benefit from community or economic development opportunities.

Australian NGOs have identified a range of ways to apply a twin-track approach. An NGO might focus activities in either a targeted or mainstream approach, or both. For example in some contexts, targeted programs to contribute to either empowerment or access might include: scholarships for children with disabilities to attend school; funding for systems which will improve mobility or hearing; capacity-building support for DPOs to improve their ability to provide services for members; or funding the establishment of sign language training services. On the other hand, mainstream programs might include: training for those working on infrastructure programs on how to ensure classrooms and public spaces are accessible; raising awareness about the rights of people with disabilities at the community level; or ensuring water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs or education programs include

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people with disabilities as beneficiaries and decision-makers. Determining the priorities in each context requires consultation, negotiation and efforts to build on existing strengths and overcome barriers, using local resources where possible.

The twin track approach is also applied *within* programs in order to effectively include people with disabilities. For example a WASH program may make its regular processes inclusive by ensuring that infrastructure designs are accessible and people with disabilities are included in community decision making. Establishing a working group that seeks to identify ways to maximise inclusion and benefits for people with disabilities is also a useful approach in some contexts.

### *i) Budgeting*

Disability inclusion needs to be factored into program budgets from the outset: if this is done then the costs of inclusion are often minimal compared with overall costs. Research has found for example that if accessibility features are included in the initial design of new buildings, the cost is marginal, while if done later requiring retrofitting, the costs can be prohibitive. Costs of sign language interpreters can be built into budgets for meetings, alongside venue hire and catering for example. Given that most developing countries do not have accessible transport systems, finding sustainable ways to fund the costs of transport for people with disabilities can be an important contribution to increasing collective approaches and bringing about meaningful benefits, such as increased participation in education and employment. In each context and depending on the nature of the program, the particular location or existing capacity, different items may be relevant. Some programs have found having a small budget line for disability inclusion (or broader social inclusion) helpful. This can be used flexibly and as needed throughout the project and also reminds program staff to take inclusive measures throughout the life of the program.

### **5.1 Other approaches used by Australian NGOs**

In addition to the principles and approaches described above, Australian NGOs have found the following approaches to be particularly helpful **at organisational levels**:

- Develop internal policies and strategies on disability inclusion, which explicitly acknowledge the benefits of diversity and which set out a framework for action and procedures and standards on disability inclusion throughout the organisation.
- Conduct workforce training and ongoing professional development to build understanding of disability inclusion and technical skills across all functional areas of

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the organisation – including both programs and internal activities (e.g. recruitment, accessibility of buildings, communications and events).

- Build support for disability inclusion throughout the organisation, including from senior leadership and managers and within corporate and human resources processes.
- Develop, use and share resources such as case studies of good practice inclusion, training activities, lessons learned from inclusion in particular contexts, guidance notes etc.
- Build long-term relationships with DPOs to work in partnerships that are mutually beneficial, whereby DPOs can help programs become more inclusive, and NGOs can help DPOs with their own advocacy efforts and build capacity in certain areas.
- Build organisational knowledge about disability issues in developing countries, including knowledge about local DPOs and ways of sharing data, research and other information with members, donors and through existing networks.
- Facilitate networks with like-minded organisations in other settings – local to global.
- Fund and facilitate collective systemic advocacy on rights of people with disabilities locally and internationally.
- Facilitate access of DPOs to larger-scale donor funding or skills through assistance with proposal writing.

Australian NGOs have found the following **programming approaches** to be particularly helpful:

- Ask DPOs about their organisational and programming priorities and respond accordingly. Starting at low levels may be appropriate to start with, such as including representatives in training or networking events in order to help the NGO become more inclusive and the DPO to access information, networks and opportunities for capacity development.
- Use a mix of different but coherent activities to achieve improvements in the lives of people with disabilities and their communities within all sectoral activities. This will vary according to context but could include:
  - ensuring people with disabilities are consulted at all stages of program design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation as well as participants in programs;
  - conducting a disability audit to understand the specific situations and barriers faced by people with disabilities in the community;
  - ensuring any infrastructure is constructed or rehabilitated using accessible design principles;

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- conducting disability awareness training for project staff and community members;
  - engaging with local DPOs and contributing to their capacity strengthening; and
  - including indicators within monitoring and evaluation plans to specifically measure project impact on and involvement of men, women, girls and boys with disabilities.
- Identify international and national champions and influential people who are already leading change processes in terms of disability rights and inclusion and support/involve them.
  - Support collaboration between different groups with shared objectives, including between developing countries and between DPOs and other NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs). This can be beneficial but should not be forced, as many groups have been established to represent people with one type of impairment and may not be comfortable coming together. In cases where this is appropriate, coming together can mean their shared voice is very powerful.
  - Recognise that when people with disabilities share their expertise as consultants, researchers or project implementers, they should be appropriately recompensed.
  - Consider disability inclusive sports activities as ways of demonstrating the community, health and other benefits of inclusion.
  - Consider contributing to sustainable local development and production of aides and devices, such as wheelchairs or accessibility-related software in large countries (where economies of scale are possible), or other items in smaller countries, supporting regional production or service provision if feasible.
  - Include people with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and disaster response planning processes, recognising international efforts and learning in this area.
  - If working in the education sector, consider ways to build sustainable approaches to inclusion, particularly through changing attitudes of teachers and parents, and be mindful not to put children at risk of stigma and abuse without adequate protection.
  - Include monitoring, evaluation and learning processes which facilitate the collation of views of program participants, to generate learning about what works well and to promote accountability to participants and donors. This could include processes which enable the voices of people with disabilities to be recorded and communicated in diverse ways.
  - Introduce sustainable access to relevant technology, such as screen reading software and other computer-based applications, or hearing aids which do not require highly

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skilled specialists to be fitted, which have the potential to significantly enhance the lives of people with disabilities.

- Model and pilot inclusive program and service delivery for governments to help them to plan how to implement the CRPD in their context and bring inclusive service models to scale.
- Support analysis and research on opportunities to contribute to disability inclusion in different contexts (e.g. sectors, locations, demographic groups, organisations).
- Provide technical advice for DPOs in relation to specific aspects of advocacy, partnership, and managing inclusive project cycle approaches.
- Commit long-term financial and other resources for DPOs or other disability activities, including for reasonable accommodation.
- Contribute to culturally appropriate leadership development for emerging and existing DPO leaders and other ways of contributing to the capacity of organisations, networks, leadership and management practices which are relevant to local contexts.

### **6. Conclusion**

Australia is among the leaders of global efforts in disability inclusive development and the Australian government is internationally well-regarded for its efforts in this area. Australian NGOs have the opportunity to build on efforts made to date as well as to contribute to global momentum and improvements.

Over the next five years, Australian NGOs should consider:

- How can we become more disability inclusive as an organisation?
- Is our international and local development and humanitarian work consistent with the CRPD?
- Do we have disability inclusive development and humanitarian objectives included in our plans and programs?
- How can disability inclusive objectives become more explicit and receive higher priority in all aspects of our work: marketing and fundraising; programming and partnership; monitoring and evaluation?
- How and where can we build or strengthen our partnerships with DPOs?
- Are we monitoring programs and collecting information about effective disability inclusion?
- What opportunities can we take to contribute to global, regional or national advocacy and awareness-raising activities, in collaboration with people with disabilities and DPOs in the countries where we work?



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- How can we increase the participation of people with disabilities and their representative organisations in the assessment of the quality and level of inclusiveness of our programs?
- How can we work in partnership with DPOs and governments to help implement the CRPD?

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### 7. Resources

#### Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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

#### Peak bodies/Consortiums

Australian Disability and Development Consortium - [www.addc.org.au](http://www.addc.org.au)

Australian Council for International Development - <https://acfid.asn.au/>

International Disability Alliance - <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/en/ida-position-papers-and-statements>

International Disability and Development Consortium – <http://iddcconsortium.net/>

#### Resource Hubs

DID4All is a website dedicated to providing resources and technical assistance on disability inclusive development. DID4All is funded by the Australian Government to promote disability inclusive development, provide quality resources to the development sector and help ensure that Australian Government funded development activities are inclusive of people with disability - [www.did4all.org.au](http://www.did4all.org.au)

Ask Source is an international online resource centre on disability and inclusion - <http://www.asksource.info/>

Inclusion Made Easy is designed for program staff in international development organisations. It is a brief, practical guide on how to ensure programs are disability-inclusive. It offers basic inclusion principles, practical tips and case study examples. Part A focuses on disability-inclusive development principles and Part B on disability inclusion across a range of development sectors. <http://www.cbm.org/Inclusion-Made-Easy-329091.php>

Australian Human Rights Commission – Disability Action Plans (to assist in taking steps for your organisation to become more disability inclusive) <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/action-plans-and-action-plan-guides>

## PRACTICE NOTE

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### **DPO Funding Bodies**

Disability Rights Fund (DRF) supports Disabled Persons Organisations in the developing world to take the lead in advocating for the human rights of persons with disabilities at local and national levels, utilising the mechanism of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) - <http://www.disabilityrightsfund.org/resources.html>

APIDS is a non-government organisation that contributes to improving the lives of people with disabilities and their communities across the Pacific - <http://apids.org/>

### **Reports**

CBM Australia, 2014, *Australian NGO Cooperation Program Research Project - an analysis of ANCP partner organisations' engagement on disability inclusion and recommendations for future progress* - <http://www.addc.org.au/content/resources/australian-ngo-cooperation-program-ancp-research-project/1569/>

Pacific Disability Forum, 2013, *Capacity Development for Effective and Efficient Disabled People's Organisations in Pacific Island countries*  
<http://www.pacificdisability.org/getattachment/Resources/Research/PDF-Pacific-Report-2013-eCopy.pdf.aspx>

Rhodes, D. 2003 *I have the same rights as you: Consequences of using a Rights-based Approach among Fijian Disabled People's Organisations* (Masters Thesis, University of Melbourne) available from [Deborah.rhodes@bigpond.com](mailto:Deborah.rhodes@bigpond.com)

Bush, A, Carroll, A and James, K, 2015, *Practice Note: collecting and using data on disability to inform inclusive development* <http://www.addc.org.au/content/resources/plan-cbm-nossal-disability-data-collection-practice-note-july-2015/1607/>

## PRACTICE NOTE

### Annex 1 Roles of DPOs, based on mentions in the CRPD

Reference	Content	Stated/implicit DPO role
Article 4, para 3	In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their <b>representative organizations</b> .	To provide mechanisms for governments to listen to the voices and opinions of people with disabilities on legislation and policies related to disability.
Article 29, para b	States Parties will: b) Promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forming and joining <b>organizations of persons with disabilities</b> to represent persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels.</li> </ul>	To represent people with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels.
Article 32	States Parties recognize the importance of international cooperation and its promotion, in support of national efforts for the realization of the purpose and objectives of the present Convention, and will undertake appropriate and effective measures in this regard, between and among States and, as appropriate, in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, in particular <b>organizations of persons with disabilities</b> .	To work in partnership with donor countries to facilitate implementation of the CRPD at national levels.
Article 33, para 3.	Civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their <b>representative organizations</b> , shall be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process.	To be involved in and participate fully in monitoring progress of national implementation of CRPD.

This table is an excerpt from research undertaken by the Pacific Disability Forum and APIDS in 2013 available in full [here](#).