

Disability and International Development

Disability is a **development** issue.

Over 1 in 5 of the poorest people in developing countries have a disability. Due to stigma, poor accessibility and discrimination, people with disabilities are frequently excluded from society, education, employment and development programs. This means that they are at **much higher risk of poverty, and are amongst the poorest of the world's poor.**

At the same time, circumstances related to poverty such as poor nutrition and lack of access to health care and a safe environment often lead to disability.

This creates a cycle where **disability is a cause and a consequence of poverty.**

The international community is increasingly recognising that this means that **addressing disability is crucial to fighting poverty.** The United Nations General Assembly, for example, has noted that the MDGs will not be achieved unless people with disabilities are included in all development initiatives.



Boy with hearing device in class room with peers ©CBM

All development agencies therefore have a role and responsibility to play in ensuring that their programs are inclusive of people with disabilities.

How can development work **include people** with disabilities?



Boy with caliper smiling & walking with friends © CBM

Disability is often seen as a specialist issue... but we now know that it's something that all development organisations can and need to address to ensure their programs are effective and uphold human rights.

A starting point may be to adopt some basic strategies to ensure development programming is inclusive of people with disabilities. Consulting with people with disabilities, monitoring participation, and engaging with Disabled Peoples Organisations and disability-specific services for support and input all contribute to making development programs disability inclusive. These tips and more can be found in [Inclusion Made Easy](#) and facilitated through the creation of an internal working group on disability.

[“Inclusion Made Easy”](#) is a quick program guide to disability inclusion in development for mainstream development organisations. Launched by ACFID's Executive Director Marc Purcell, this provides program staff practical guidance on how to

mainstream disability into development projects, whether at international, regional or country level.

[The Australian Disability and Development Consortium](#) (ADDC) is an Australian based, international network focusing attention, expertise and action on disability issues in developing countries. Evolving from the former ACFID Working Group on Disability, ADDC provides invaluable support, information and networking regarding disability and development issues. Membership is free and benefits are great!

The Millennium Development Goals and Disability

Why a **disability focus** is central in achieving the MDGs



1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

1 in 5 of the poorest people in developing countries have a disability, and disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Extreme poverty will not be eradicated without addressing the needs and rights of people with disabilities and including them in development programs.



2 Achieve universal primary education

Many more children with disabilities in developing countries miss out on an education than those without a disability. This goal requires an explicit focus on inclusive education and specialist support for children with disabilities if it is to be achieved. Awareness raising, access to basic assistive devices and inclusive teaching strategies are all essential for successful disability inclusive education.



3 Promote gender equality and empower women

Women and girls with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged, with their rights being ignored due to their gender and disability. This places them at greater risk of violence and exclusion. Gender equality inclusion promotes participation in all community activities.



4 Reduce child mortality

Children with disabilities have a greater risk of dying from neglect, abandonment and lack of access to health care. They are frequently not valued in their communities due to stigma or misconceptions around disabilities. Child mortality is significantly higher for children with disabilities than those without.



5 Improve maternal health

Unsafe pregnancy and childbirth are major causes of disability for women, affecting over 10 million women per year. Women with disabilities often lack access to reproductive health care due to both marginalisation and assumptions that they will not have families.



6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

It is often assumed that people with disabilities are not sexually active and are left out of HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. Yet people with disabilities are often at a higher risk of HIV due to marginalisation and vulnerability to abuse. Information on disease prevention must be provided in accessible formats to reach all people with disabilities.



7 Ensure environmental sustainability

Being amongst the most vulnerable in any community, people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by environmental risks and natural disasters. Such risks are also often the cause of disability. Disaster risk management and access to a safe and sustainable environment including water and sanitation need to be accessible to all.



8 Develop a global partnership for development

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities mandates inclusion of people with disabilities in all phases of development cooperation, planning, implementation and evaluation. “Nothing about us, without us” has long been the mantra of people with disabilities who must be included as key partners in achieving the MDGs.

Disability in the post MDG agenda

It is vital that the international community work together to ensure that disability is not left out of the post-2015 framework replacing the MDGs. For more information in this regard, visit <http://www.cbm.org/MDG-online-resource-251195.php>