



# DFID Response

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27 June 2018

## DFID Response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact recommendations on: DFID's approach to disability in development, 16 May 2018

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Disability for too long has been an underprioritised and neglected area of Development. DFID is committed to ensuring people with disabilities are systematically included in, and consistently benefit from international development. Therefore HM Government welcomes the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's focus on this agenda.

Since the International Development Committee's report on Disability in Development in April 2014, DFID has increased its level of ambition on disability inclusion. We have made progress on this agenda, but recognise for us, as for others, there is much further to go. ICAI's report provides a useful set of recommendations to address this challenge. In keeping with our ambition, the UK Government will host its first-ever Global Disability Summit on 24<sup>th</sup> July. The Summit will mobilise global action on this agenda, secure commitments from around the world to improve the lives of people with disabilities, and showcase best practice and evidence.

Following the Summit, we will update DFID's Disability Framework. This will set out DFID's approach to mainstreaming disability across the department. Therefore, ICAI's review and recommendations come at an important time and provide a valuable view of the steps DFID should take on this agenda.

**Recommendation 1:** DFID should adopt a more visible and systematic plan for mainstreaming disability inclusion. The plan should be time-bound with commitments and actions at the level of programming, human resourcing, learning, and organisational culture.

### Accept

DFID is developing an updated Disability Framework and will publish the Framework later in 2018. DFID's ambition is to become a global leader on disability inclusion, including by placing disability at the heart of the Department's work. The Framework will set out plans to systematically implement this ambition and will provide a clear roadmap for mainstreaming disability inclusion. We believe effective mainstreaming requires a 'twin-track' approach; with disability specific approaches to support and empower people with disabilities alongside the inclusion of people with disabilities in the design and delivery of all development work. We will focus action on areas which we believe can create transformational impact. The Framework will include standards and time-bound commitments for all DFID business units to achieve over the next five years.

This will address programming, organisational culture, engagement with people with disabilities, how we will partner with and influence others, how we will improve data and evidence, and how we ensure DFID continues to learn on this agenda.

The Framework will set out our commitments as an inclusive employer, including ensuring we attract, retain and value staff with disabilities.

**Recommendation 2:** DFID should increase the representation of staff with disabilities at all levels of the department, and increase the number of staff with significant previous experience in working on disability inclusion.

### **Accept**

DFID is committed to enabling and empowering people with disabilities to join the Department. The Disability Confident scheme is designed to help organisations to recruit, retain and recognise the skills and talents of their staff with disabilities. As part of this scheme, DFID has attained Disability Confident Leader status and has a Disability Confident Leader Action Plan in place. We value the insights from both the 'Disability and Empowerment', 'Parents of children with disabilities' and 'Carers' staff networks on their experiences of working in DFID and how we can improve. We are committed to reporting back on our progress against this Action Plan to staff.

We are developing our People Strategy which will set out how we aim to attract, retain and develop our staff. We recognise we can do more and must increase the representation of staff with declared disabilities across DFID. Over the last year, we have already improved the confidence of our staff to tell us they have a disability, with a 9% point increase in declarations. But we want to continue to increase the number of staff who feel comfortable telling us they have a disability.

We have reviewed our approach to advertising in the UK to expand our recruitment base, and are planning a similar review for our overseas offices. Leonard Cheshire are supporting us on how we can attract more people with disabilities to apply to work at DFID. We are also working with Leonard Cheshire to provide internships for people with disabilities in the UK. We are piloting a similar approach in Kenya to see if we can replicate this in our other country offices. We have piloted a strengths-based approach to recruitment for our talent entry scheme which has shown increased applications and success rates from people with disabilities.

DFID has a significant network of social development advisors with considerable experience on inclusion who are supporting the Department's work on disability inclusion. Work on disability inclusion is still a relatively new agenda for the Department, and the development sector more widely. Therefore there is limited experience and expertise available for the organisation to draw upon. To date, we have sought expertise from external experts in the field to support our work. However, we acknowledge that we can do more to develop our in-house expertise. We have already increased the number of staff in the disability inclusion team with significant previous experience on disability inclusion and we will continue to expand our expertise in the future.

**Recommendation 3:** DFID country offices should develop theories of change for disability inclusion in their countries. These should propose a strategy for the country office, with a particular focus on influencing and working with national governments.

### **Partially Accept**

Action and commitments at national level are crucial for making the difference in disabled people's lives that we aspire to. Many DFID country offices are currently developing and implementing strategies to improve disability inclusion at national level. For example, all country offices in DFID's Middle East and North Africa Department have developed disability inclusion action plans. Seven other countries already have action plans in place, with another thirteen undertaking portfolio reviews and developing action plans.

We agree that a theory of change for disability inclusion would be a valuable resource to support country offices to develop their approaches to disability inclusion. The disability inclusion team has produced a draft theory of change on disability inclusion. We will finalise and disseminate this to our country office network, and encourage the use of this resource in the development of their disability action plans.

In the run up to the Global Disability Summit, DFID country offices have significantly stepped up their engagement with national Governments on this agenda. We will continue to build on this after the Summit including through holding governments to account for their commitments. This will be supported by our country offices' continued engagement and influencing work with national governments.

The Disability Framework will include standards and timebound expectations of country offices. This will include an expectation that country offices continue to develop their level of engagement and influence with national governments. We do not plan at this stage to make theories of change and strategies mandatory for all country offices.

**Recommendation 4:** DFID should engage with disabled people's organisations on country-level disability inclusion strategies, advocacy towards partner governments, capacity building, and the design of programmes, including research programmes.

### **Accept**

We are committed to consulting people with disabilities at country level in the development of country offices' strategies and programming. People with disabilities are often the most marginalised in society. By talking to and consulting people with disabilities and their organisations we can seek to understand the specific challenges and barriers they face. As a result we can ensure that programmes are designed that meet their needs. By empowering people with disabilities, we can ensure they are included in the decision making processes that affect their lives.

DFID supports the Disability Rights Fund and International Disability Alliance through the Disability Catalyst Programme. This programme supports people with disabilities and Disabled Person's Organisations in countries such as Uganda, Bangladesh and Rwanda to advocate for their rights in areas including education, employment and access to justice. We are finalising our plans to support and build the capacity of people with disabilities to advocate for their rights with national governments through an expansion of the Catalyst Programme. We are also exploring how DFID can support Disabled People's Organisations to hold their Governments to account to deliver against the commitments made at the Global Disability Summit.

**Recommendation 5:** In order to deliver its existing policy commitments, DFID should increase its programming on (i) tackling stigma and discrimination, including within the private sector, and (ii) inclusion of people with psychosocial disabilities and people with intellectual disabilities, noting that these are two different groups who face different sets of challenges.

### **Partially Accept**

DFID is funding programmes aimed at tackling the stigma and discrimination faced by people with disabilities. For example, DFID Sierra Leone has funded a project to increase the visibility and voice of people with disabilities in the political process and address negative attitudes towards candidates with disabilities in the March 2018 presidential elections. The Disability Catalyst Programme's work with advocates, national governments and civil society to promote the rights of marginalised groups is an important mechanism to tackle stigma and discrimination and we are finalising our plans to expand our support to disabled people's organisations through this programme. Through UK Aid Connect we are exploring options to further tackle stigma and discrimination in partnership with the private sector.

Specific programmes to advocate for the participation and leadership of people with disabilities in public and political life can lead to transformative change. But they are effective when set within a broader approach to tackling stigma and discrimination, such as advocacy with national governments to strengthen or adopt anti-discrimination laws and policies or improving data. An important strand of DFID's work on disability is to improve the disaggregation of data by disability. Collecting more accurate disability data can be a first step to identify discriminatory barriers for people with disabilities. We partially accept the recommendation as while we will commit greater attention to these areas, we cannot commit at this stage to specifically increasing programme funding.

We agree that DFID should increase its work on psychosocial disability. We are providing new dedicated resource in the disability inclusion team on mental health and psychosocial disabilities to address these issues. We are working with Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development (K4D) to identify the potential entry points for DFID to increase its work to include people with psychosocial disabilities. This work will look to build staff capacity and embed learning from DFID's programmes that are already addressing this issue. For example, DFID Ghana is changing perceptions by working at community level to increase understanding of mental health.

We recognise there is more work by DFID and globally to do to understand and address the specific barriers faced by people with intellectual disabilities in poverty reduction. The refreshed Disability Framework will set out DFID's plans to tackle stigma and discrimination, inclusion of people with psychosocial disabilities, and people with intellectual disabilities.

**Recommendation 6:** DFID should create a systematic learning programme, and a community of practice, on the experience of mainstreaming disability into DFID programmes.

### **Accept**

As disability inclusion is still a relatively new agenda for the Department, we recognise that a systematic learning programme for staff is required to support them to create a step-change in mainstreaming of disability inclusion across the Department. DFID has developed a network of disability leads across the organisation, both within policy and central teams, and across its overseas offices. This has grown significantly in size in the run up to the Global Disability Summit, with over thirty contacts across the organisation. Building on this network, we will cultivate a community of practice across DFID, to support staff and teams to learn from each other. This will draw on both research and evidence from existing programming to share knowledge of how best to mainstream disability across DFID's programmes.

Evidence of how to include people with disabilities is limited. For this reason, DFID is launching a new innovation and evidence programme, the Disability Inclusive Development programme. This programme aims to find what works to deliver tangible

outcomes for people with disabilities. This will incorporate a help-desk facility for staff to ensure programme learning, evidence and technical support is embedded across DFID.

In order to develop a systematic learning programme, we are working with K4D on a 'learning journey' for DFID staff on disability. This 'learning journey' will help us to identify the learning needs of staff, and develop a plan to build the disability inclusion capacity of DFID staff. It will ensure good practice and learning on disability inclusion is embedded in DFID programming.