

Executive Summary

Has Disability Been Mainstreamed into Development Cooperation?

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Aim of the project

The overall aim of the research was to investigate if international donor agencies' policies on disability mainstreaming were being effectively implemented. USAID and NORAD were the principle case studies due to their strong formal policy commitments to mainstreaming disability.

Expected outcomes

The main outcome was to see the lessons that could be learned which would help improve the implementation of disability mainstreaming policies in both the North and the South and engage more effectively with DPOs.

Background to the research

Since the late 1990s there have been an impressive catalogue of policy initiatives around disability mainstreaming into development cooperation so as to make it seem that disability had finally broken through and was now firmly on the development agenda. It appears, however, that almost none of the policies have yet to be implemented. Nowhere has disability been adopted as a cross-cutting development issue and recent reports have indicated that the most progressive disability policies of such agencies as USAID, NORAD and FINNIDA have not been carried through. It was this disconnect between promise and results which provides the background to our research.

Mainstreaming defined

We started with a reworked definition from the UNDP's on gender mainstreaming.

Definition is:

Mainstreaming disability into development cooperation is the process of assessing the implications for disabled people of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making disabled people's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that disabled people benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve disability equality.

One important finding from our research was that this definition was contested.

The Research Process

Policy Evaporation

We proposed to adopt a policy evaporation approach, similar to that used in DFID for assessing the success of gender mainstreaming. However, the time and resources have not been sufficient for such a task. Therefore, although our work was informed by the concept of policy evaporation and relevant questions have been asked, we assess the results as indicative rather than conclusive. An added difficulty was the difference among agencies in their understanding of what a policy is.

Research North and South

Our research was to have been informed and guided, particularly in the South, by reference groups set up by umbrella DPOs in Zambia and Uganda. Time constraints made this impossible. Fortunately DPOs in these countries as well as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Malawi did survey their members, as well as in country offices of NORAD and USAID.

In the North we carried out interviews at USAID, the National Council on Disability (USA), the World Bank and DFID. We feel that despite limitations in data collection, the results do present a fair and representative picture of what is and is not happening in some key development agencies with respect to the mainstreaming of disability.

Case Studies

USAID

The 1997 Policy Paper

In 1997 USAID produced a substantial and wide-ranging policy paper on disability together with a “USAID Disability Plan of Action”. These were the most comprehensive development agency instruments then available on disability. In many respects they remain so today.

Progress Reports

Despite these innovative plans, the three in-house progress reports up to 2003, while showing some improvement over this period, were uncritical of what had been achieved

National Council on Disabilities Report 2003

In 2003 NDC published an extremely critical report on both USAID and the State Department, arguing policy was inadequate and ineffective, “... includes no specific objectives or timetables, creates no new initiatives to reach out to

people with disabilities, and does not require U.S. Missions abroad to change their practices.”

Was USAID's 1997 Policy a Policy?

What appeared to be a policy was not really one but rather a ‘policy paper’, something to stimulate a dialogue in order to get people to think about and report on what they were doing on disability. It was not a genuine policy because there was no legislative mandate and, therefore, no Congressional oversight. A policy evaporation analysis would, therefore, hardly be appropriate or even useful in this instance.

A Genuine Policy at Last

Provisions were included in the 2005 Consolidated Appropriation Act which effectively transformed the 1997 ‘policy paper’ into a mandated policy. Money was allocated and the Administrator of USAID was directed to ensure that all agency “programs, projects and activities” comply with the 1997 Policy.

The New USAID Disability Team

The new USAID disability team has a virtual existence, can intervene at any point in the organisation and the disability advisor reports directly to the administrator. Almost all USAID projects are contracted out and from now on each will have to include a disability dimension.

Pilot Project in Uganda

A pilot project has been initiated in Uganda where they are working with the USAID Mission, DPOs and contractors to try to get a disability dimension built into existing projects.

USAID and Disability in Other Countries

In contrast to what is happening in Uganda, in Zambia DPOs said that they were not aware of any efforts to include disability in the agency’s programmes. In Zimbabwe USAID is directly funding DPOs like SAFOD and NCDPZ to undertake projects, although unlike what is planned for Uganda the programmes themselves are devised in Washington. Our researchers in South Africa were favourably impressed by USAID’s intention to mainstream disability, but felt progress was still too slow.

Disability e-Learning

USAID has commissioned of a substantial e-learning package on disability for the entire agency. Once it has been rolled out it will be vital to gauge its impact, as there should be important lessons for other agencies.

USAID's Disability Strategy

To achieve their aims they they want to rely on friendly persuasion rather than compulsion, by showing the various bureaus how including a disability dimension in their work will offer added value.

Some Questions about Mainstreaming and Human Rights

We were told that “Human rights don’t fly at USAID”, meaning that they did not follow the human rights approach adopted by UNDP, DFID or other most other European development agencies. There are many ramifications of the difference between the USAID’s take on mainstreaming and our initial definition that highlighted human rights and disability equality. Whether this difference is significant in terms of the impact on the lives of disabled people will have to wait until the USAID efforts have had time to be developed, rolled out and evaluated.

The World Bank

The brief outline of activities World Bank is offered to provide some instructive parallels to what is happening at USAID.

In the Mainstream at the Bank?

Despite claims about the need to mainstream disability and the strong support from the very top - disability is not being mainstreamed at the Bank. Unlike gender, and as is the case in every development agency, disability has not been taken on as an official cross-cutting issue. Also a human rights approach is not what makes things happen.

The Institutional Challenge

We feel that Disability and Development Team are supportive of a human rights approach and a more thoroughgoing mainstreaming of disability, but in order to get disability on the agenda at the World Bank they are having to adjust to the structural and cultural reality of this extremely large, decentralized, complex and, at times, change-resistant organisation.

Tactics for Inclusion

There was the perception that traditional methods of getting issues such as disability on the table had not worked and so they have created ‘disability sentinels who review all World Bank projects to make suggestions on how adding a disability dimension could improve overall outcomes.

NORAD

Progressive Policy and Ambitious Guidelines

Between 1999 and 2002 there were a number of important developments in Norway so that by the latter year all the basics seemed to be in place for bringing disability fully into development cooperation. There was a policy

mandated by the parliament, a written commitment drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and detailed guidelines developed together with the Norwegian disability movement.

The Failure of Implementation in the South

A report carried out in 2003/04 concluded that "...the guidelines were not known among the target group; not by the Norwegian Embassies nor by Norwegian NGOs or international NGOs that receive most support from NORAD / MFA." Our researchers from DPOs in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe found much the same.

The Failure of Commitment in the North

At the centre there is either a vague awareness of the guidelines and policy and/ or very little is being done to make sure they are applied. Although of all development agencies NORAD has one of the most impressive policies on paper. On the whole that is where they have remained.

DFID

Disability, Poverty and Development – Issue not Policy

A recent mapping exercise of disability projects within DFID found that "... there is little practical evidence that mainstreaming has taken place and disability has hardly registered at all in the development process"

Barriers to Disability Mainstreaming

Why Disability is Invisible?

Disability does not appear in the MDG's and therefore does not cascade down through the PSA and beyond, because of a general lack of awareness -that it is a significant issue. Due to this, disability tends to be forgotten and has become more or less invisible. As well as other reasons offered, it was observed that, in practice, the dominance of a narrow economic focus together with an increasing concentration on instruments such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers tended to marginalise even issues which officially had cross-cutting status, such as gender.

Does The Policy Framework Prevent Mainstreaming?

There was generally little clear idea of what mainstreaming disability might entail in practice and a feeling that the diffuse nature of policy in DFID made it impossible to develop an effective corporate disability strategy. Heavy work loads made disability seem one more imposition, and one which, they were not equipped to deal with and for which they had little institutional support.

Perceptions from the South

Why is Mainstreaming Important for Disabled People?

Southern DPOs had a clear idea of what disability mainstreaming should be and why it was important for disabled people. They were also concerned that disability was mainstreamed in national policy and practice.

Do Agencies Mainstream Disability in the South?

With the exception of favourable comments about USAID's recent efforts in Uganda, all the many groups surveyed reported that no mainstreaming had been or was taking place. They were concerned that funding wasn't sufficient to support DPO lobbying and wanted to see closer working links between Southern and Northern DPOs.

Conclusions

A comparative review of these four agencies has shown that while there are common issues, on the whole mainstreaming strategies must be agency specific. This means that while reasons for failing to deliver were also specific in broad terms there were five main reasons identified.

These were mainstreaming

1. Lack of Broad Institutional Support for Mainstreaming
2. Failure to Communicate Policies
3. Failure to Break Down Traditional Attitudes to Disability
4. Need for Practical Guidance
5. Inadequate Resourcing

Understanding Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming should not just be about inclusion, it must be about the precise nature of that inclusion. It is absolutely essential that the broader, more radical goals of disability mainstreaming, that is self-empowerment, self-determination and equality are not soft peddled. It cannot be stressed strongly enough or often enough that disability is a human rights issue and as such it is always a political issue.