

## Executive Summary

## Research Gap Analysis Report

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# Executive Summary

## Aim of the project

The principle aim of the project is to assess the gaps in research with respect to disability and development, review current work being carried out in relation to these gaps, recommend the most fruitful areas for DFID's future research agenda on disability and develop ideas on how the research process should be structured.

## Expected outcomes

1. To provide a prioritised list of research themes and topics relative to those themes on disability and development for DFID's consideration.
2. To provide a broader view of perceived needs for disability research from different groups of stakeholders.
3. To indicate what would be the most appropriate modalities for carrying out the suggested research.

## The process

### Who, where and how

The work was done jointly by disabled researchers in the North and in the South. The latter worked with a wide variety of stakeholders, including DPOs, in South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

### Difficulties with the process

Many topics identified were already flagged up at the Malawi Roundtable, which helped set the agenda for the entire KaR research programme. Furthermore, most people questioned were relatively unaware of what research had been or was being done. There were also problems with deciding what weight to give to the research suggestions. Nonetheless, despite the difficulties we feel that by engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, especially a broad geographical spread of Southern DPOs, we are able to offer a extremely well-grounded and valuable idea of what research is being called for on disability and development by those to whom it has the most direct relevance.

### Research Modalities

We offer a critique of traditional top—down research approach and argue for an emancipatory model in which disabled people take the lead. This idea received strong support from DPOs and their allies. It is also consistent both with DFID's human rights approach to development and the Central Research Department's preference for demand-led research.

### Research Themes

We have chosen the topics on the basis of the perceived research needs expressed, particularly by Southern DPOs, DFID's areas of interests and expertise and the suitability of the topics for deploying an emancipatory research

agenda.

**1. *Researching emancipatory research***

A review of the way in which current research funding on disability and development operates could unpick the ways in which disabled people, both in the North and the South, participate in research projects.

**2. *Poverty and disability***

This was the first major research topic identified by the Malawi Roundtable. DPOs were concerned with researching how to get disability effectively addressed in poverty reduction programmes. Although there was some overlap, agency interest tended to be focused more on being able to have data to make a convincing case for the inclusion of disability in development.

**3. *Disability and new aid instruments***

Participants at the Malawi Roundtable were conscious that the new aid instruments, particularly as they are focused on pro-poor growth, were one of the main gateways to getting disability on the poverty-reduction agenda.

**4. *HIV/AIDs***

Research on disability and HIV/AIDs figured prominently in the list of topics from organisations in sub-Saharan Africa. Combating the spread of HIV/AIDs is the sixth MDG and as such is the basis for DFID's overall policy remit. It is also one of DFID's priorities in Southern Africa. Supporting DPOS in research around disability and HIV/AIDs would add a valuable dimension to this work.

**5. *Education***

With UNICEF estimating that only 3% of disabled children in developing countries attend school and most of these are segregated, it is obvious why education should receive so much attention. Achieving universal primary education is also a principle MDG. To meet this goal for disabled children is going to be a monumental task.

**6. *Disasters and post-conflict situations***

The KaR project on this subject (Kett, Stubbs and Yeo 2005) has concluded that "There is a vast amount of literature spanning the disciplines of development studies, emergencies and disasters, conflict/refugee situations, disability studies. There is hardly any literature that combines these disciplines and results in useful material on disability in emergency situations in a development context. Inclusive handbooks and manuals do exist but there was little evidence of their use."

**7. *Development aid and DPOs/how to strengthen DPOs***

The institutionalised asymmetry of resources and power that has been deeply imbedded in the system because of the traditional charity approach to disability works to keep many DPOs dependent, weak and ineffective both in their ability to be representative and to advocate for the rights of disabled people. The legislation and policy research carried out under the KaR programme has confirmed, that with certain exceptions, this is the true at both national and

international levels. Research is, therefore, needed into a whole series of questions which touch on the makeup, role and effectiveness of DPOs.

### **8. *Legislation and policy***

If development agencies are going to make any impact with respect to mainstreaming disability in their interventions then their must to some degree be a receptive ideological and legislative environment to feed into. For DFID this is particularly important as more aid is being channelled in ways which make it increasingly difficult to impose conditionality.

### **Other research topics**

There were a great many other research topics suggested by our respondents. The most important one not recommended is around the incidence and prevalence of disability. Although the subject has represented a major lacuna for decades and is often the first one to be cited by respondents, a good deal of research is already under way at an international level and, with few exceptions it has tended to be heavily dominated by national statistical offices.

### **Conclusion**

We have argued that the critical first step to devising a research programme on disability and development is to be absolutely clear on the process or research modalities which will be employed. For the reasons outlined previously, we feel that the most productive way forward is to adopt an emancipatory approach that puts disabled people in the forefront but also embraces genuine partnership working with academics or other professionals.