

Disability inclusion

About this guidance

This guidance seeks to ensure that UK Aid Direct applicants and grant holders understand how the UK government addresses disability inclusion, and more specifically, that they:

- Learn the terms used that relate to disability inclusion in UK Aid Direct guidance and templates
- Know how to address disability inclusion within project documentation and during project implementation.

UK Government's disability inclusion strategy

There are an estimated one billion people with disabilities globally – approximately 15 percent of the world's population. An estimated 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries and one in five of the world's poorest people have a disability. The number is likely to increase in the future as populations age and chronic conditions that lead to impairment and disability become more prevalent.

Despite millions of people escaping poverty over the last 20 years, the global situation and wellbeing of most people with disabilities has not improved. More than half of all people with disabilities live in countries affected by conflict and natural disasters. In low and middle-income countries, people with disabilities and their families are poorer than people without disabilities in nearly all socio-economic indicators. They are more likely to remain poor due to higher living costs, unpaid caring responsibilities, exclusion and entrenched stigma and discrimination. People with disabilities face barriers in all sectors (access to education, healthcare, employment, income, justice, social support, appropriate assistive technology and opportunities for civic involvement) and at all levels from system-wide exclusion to negative attitudes within the community and wider society.

Many people with disabilities in emergency contexts have limited access to essential basic services such as water, shelter, food or health and rehabilitation. Children with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination, leading to their exclusion from school and their communities. This means adults and adolescents with disabilities are far less likely than those without disabilities to have attained a minimal literacy.

People with disabilities also face disproportionate social isolation, prejudice and stigma and are at far higher risk of violence in their everyday lives.

These barriers create lasting disadvantages and a vicious cycle of poverty between schooling, employment and people's life chances. People with disabilities face intersecting and

compounding forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexuality, impairment type, age, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, and location which all contribute to disability-related exclusion. Women and girls, children and youth, older people, and indigenous people with disabilities all experience a range of complex, structural and institutional barriers and face multiple exclusions.

There is no one definition of disability. However, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) recognises that 'disability is an evolving concept' and that 'persons with disabilities include those who have 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'. In line with the UN CRPD, the UK government takes a rights-based approach to disability inclusion, addressing the physical, communication, legal and attitudinal barriers that people with disabilities face. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by disability. It is estimated that 19 per cent of women across the world have a disability, compared to 12 per cent of men. Evidence across many indicators (health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, water and sanitation, and gender-based violence) demonstrates that women and girls with disabilities are marginalised and discriminated for their gender as well as for their disability.

The UK government's vision is a world where all people with disabilities, women, men, girls and boys, in all stages of their lives, are engaged, empowered and able to exercise and enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others, contributing to poverty reduction, peace and stability. A world where no-one is left behind.

The UK government's disability inclusion strategy is about how we can achieve that vision and how we will implement disability inclusive development.

To do so, we will embed three fundamental principles meaning that people with disabilities are:

- Engaged, consulted, represented and listened to at all levels of decision-making and as leaders – in their household, community, institutions and society - truly practising the principles of 'nothing about us, without us'
- Empowered as powerful and active agents of change to challenge discrimination and harmful norms and to hold governments and implementers to account
- Able to exercise and enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others so that they are fully included in and benefit from development processes and outcomes.

Over the next five years, the UK government will prioritise four strategic pillars for action:

- Inclusive education

- Social protection
- Economic empowerment
- Humanitarian action.

To complement this focus, the UK government is adopting three cross-cutting areas, vital to disability inclusion, which will be consistently and systematically addressed in all work:

- Tackling stigma and discrimination
- Empowering girls and women with disabilities
- Access to appropriate assistive technology.

We are also stepping up on mental health for all and breaking the cycle of poverty, discrimination and stigma facing people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities.

UK Aid Direct programmes

At the design stage of the project, show how you are addressing the fundamental principles outlined in the UK government's disability inclusion strategy, within your organisation and within your programming.

Fully understand the context you are working in. Carry out an analysis of your current context by collecting and analysing data.

- Integrate questions on disability into existing surveys or routine data collection
- Analyse and use this data to ensure your programme is effectively reaching people with disabilities
- Advocate for the inclusion of questions on disability into national/other surveys/reporting systems.

The Washington Group and measuring disability

Build the [Washington Group Short Set questions \(opens in new window\)](#) into your surveys. These six questions help to measure and assess disability. However, there are a few things to be aware of when using them:

Make sure you know the local context when asking the questions

- Negative attitudes and stigma can prevent people from answering questions honestly
- Sensitisation on disability in the local language is essential
- Asking questions can raise expectations – establish referral mechanisms before asking the questions

- Ensure the questions make sense in the local context, although we advise against making changes to the wording.

Plan and be flexible

- Data systems can be resistant to change
- Translation of the questionnaire into local languages can be difficult.
- Integrate data into existing systems to improve efficiency and reduce workload and cost
- Where the data is collected must be considered to ensure confidentiality

Ensure ownership

- Data collectors (and other stakeholders) need to understand why data on disability is important
- Training and sensitisation sessions are important
 - Not only for people directly involved with the project
 - Needs to show how it is relevant to the local context
 - Include training on how to analyse and use the data for project planning.

Use the data to analyse your context and make changes and adaptations to your project design. You can also then use the data to monitor your progress and show improvements on disability inclusion over time.

All UK Aid Direct projects will need to show what they are doing to strengthen disability inclusion and will be expected to provide progress reports and disaggregated data on disability inclusion in quarterly and annual reporting.