

**BOND Disability and Development Group
Submission to the UK International Development
Committee inquiry on Extreme Poverty and the
Sustainable Development Goals**



July 2022

1. The Bond Disability and Development Group (DDG) brings together UK-based mainstream and disability-specific development organisations to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are included in the UK development and humanitarian sectors. DDG's 45 member organisations represent a large body of experience based on direct work with people with disabilities, their organisations, and the disability movement in low to middle income countries, as well as advocacy engagement with service providers and policymakers globally.
2. People with disabilities are the largest minority in the world, comprising approximately 15% of the population, most of whom live in low to middle income countries. People with disabilities disproportionately live in poverty due to widespread discrimination and barriers in accessing health care, education, and employment. This discriminatory context is often exacerbated at times of crises, as we are seeing with the current Coronavirus pandemic¹.
3. We welcome a further opportunity to feed into the UK Parliamentary Inquiry on Extreme Poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and review UK contributions towards ending extreme poverty among people with disabilities.
4. Since the IDC inquiry on Extreme Poverty and the SDGs in February, there has been the second Global Disability Summit (GDS)², the publication of the FCDO's Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy, an IDC hearing around the Equalities Impact Assessment, and the launch of the UK Government International Development Strategy.
5. This submission provides reflections on how these events have impacted the policy landscape for people with disabilities and includes DDG recommendations for ensuring that people with disabilities and other marginalised groups are not left behind as the UK looks to reshape its development priorities.
6. DDG members know from experience that there is a close connection between disability and poverty. Stigma and discrimination often prevent people with

¹ For more evidence on the disproportionate effect of Covid-19 on the lives of persons with disabilities see the Bond DDG's submissions to the International Development Committee (April 2020) here <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/1840/pdf/> and (May 2020) here <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/4359/pdf/>.

² The first GDS was held in the UK in 2018. There was an interim GDS held in Argentina in 2019.

disabilities accessing employment³, services and participating in society on an equal basis with others⁴. As a result, people with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and are more likely to experience poverty because of the pandemic⁵.

7. In addition, the increase of conflict, food shortages creating humanitarian famine crisis and the effects of climate change⁶ all disproportionately affect people with disabilities. Globally, people with disabilities are more likely to live in disaster-prone areas. They are frequently excluded from emergency preparedness plans⁷, experience disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality⁸; are more vulnerable to gender-based violence and abuse, particularly during humanitarian crises⁹; and are more likely to die in a natural disaster than people without disabilities¹⁰. Moreover, people with disabilities experience poverty at more than twice the rate of people without disabilities - a risk factor that the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) strongly associates with greater climate change vulnerability¹¹.
8. We know that social dialogue on ending poverty and discrimination is most effective when it is inclusive, meaningful, and deliberative, rooted in a well-structured and consistent process that promotes accountability and transparency. We strongly encourage the Committee to ensure that as part of their inquiry, they speak to Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) in the countries where ODA is delivered to get first-hand experience of its impact at ground level. DDG is happy to facilitate this and to provide information from our programmes and experience to help contextualise the realities of people with disabilities.

The International Development Strategy

9. The publishing of the International Development Strategy (IDS) provided an opportunity to the UK Government to recognise the multidimensional experience of poverty, and give a clear commitment across all international levers to promoting sustainable development and tackling extreme poverty.
10. However, this opportunity was missed as the IDS failed to draw explicit links between ODA, tackling inequality and reaching the most marginalised, with a complete lack of focus on disability inclusion. Despite a recognition from the IDS “that global challenges have pushed millions into poverty”, it fails to deliver a coherent plan to eradicate poverty and improve the lives of the most marginalised.

³ [The Economic Costs of Exclusion and Gains of Inclusion of People with Disabilities \(cbm.org\)](#)

⁴ [World Bank, 2011, The Measurement of Educational Inequality and Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, 2013, The Disability and Development Gap](#)

⁵ [World Health Organisation, March 2020, Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)

⁶ [Disability inclusion in UK climate action | Bond](#)

⁷ [UNESCAP \(2015\) Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction \(unescap.org\)](#)

⁸ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/30>

⁹ [032-Women and girls with disabilities in crisis and conflict.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/issues/whs.html>

¹¹ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_Chapter5_Low_Res.pdf

11. We welcome the IDC highlighting the imbalance in the IDS between ambition on poverty alleviation and economic interests. The IDS missed the opportunity to bring together different inclusion strategies into a coherent articulation, sending worrying signals about the UK's commitment to 'leave no one behind'.
12. The SDGs provide a holistic and comprehensive framework for sustainable development and we know ODA will be key in achieving Agenda 2030's ambition to end poverty in all its forms by 2030 and *leave no one behind*.¹² Yet the IDS only mentions the SDGs once and there is no information about how they inform priorities, despite the Foreign Secretary insisting that the SDGs were "at the core of what we're aiming to achieve."¹³
13. From a disability perspective, the lack of focus on reaching the most marginalised risks undermining the progress and commitments made by the UK on disability in recent years. This concern is exacerbated by the fact that data disaggregation is not mentioned in the IDS. This is an area where the UK has a strong track record and which is essential to ensure people with disabilities, often invisible to policy makers, are considered in development plans, programmes and the equitable allocation of resources.
14. For ODA to be effective, it needs to ensure that it is reaching all people, including people with disabilities. The prominent focus on trade, investment and prosperity in the strategy suggests a return to trickle-down development, where it is assumed the benefits of wealth creation will gradually filter through an economy. This approach is favoured in the IDS as opposed to the creation of long-term, systemic poverty reduction strategies and the provision of direct support to those who are most marginalised, (e.g. women and girls, children and young people, older people, people from religious minorities and racialised groups, LGBTQI + people, refugees and displaced people, and people with disabilities).
15. DDG members believe that the UK should continue to meet its commitment to provide at least 0.7% of GNI as Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) under the internationally agreed definition that is enshrined in legislation. We would urge that the UK Government reinstate the 0.7% figure now, rather than wait "until the fiscal situation allows" and ensure that poverty reduction and sustainable development remains the primary focus in line with the International Development Act 2002 and seeks to intentionally eradicate poverty by 2030.

¹² 'Leave no one behind' (LNOB) means prioritising and expediting actions for the poorest and most marginalised people, including those caught in crisis. This speaks to the heart of the question of who ODA is for, as globally, people have not benefitted equally from the widespread progress ODA and development has achieved. Efforts must therefore be made in prioritising outcomes for marginalised groups and look beyond the averages to identify these groups and their needs.

¹³ [International Development Committee Hearing with Foreign Secretary, 18th May](#)

Recommendations to the UK government

- Ensure that implementation of the International Development Strategy is aligned with the SDGs and is anchored in their central principle of leaving no one behind.
- Clearly outline how they will deliver on the “leave no one behind” promise in a way that is practical for decision-making and bringing together its different inclusion strategies, in particular the Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy and the Women and Girls strategy.
- Urgently publish an updated Inclusive Data Charter action plan that mobilises political commitments and meaningful actions to advance inclusive and disaggregated data.

Equalities Assessment

16. The recently published equalities assessment on ODA cuts has shown the negative impacts of the cuts on efforts to achieve gender equality and inclusive development, and specifically disability inclusion, alongside a disregard for transparency and openness.
17. The lack of transparency around the ODA cuts made it difficult to fully assess their impact but it is clear that those cuts have undermined any possibility to eradicate poverty and leave no one behind by 2030. A list of examples has already been provided to the International Development Committee on how devastating the cuts have been to a large number of programmes which were providing specific support to people with disabilities in some of the most poverty affected areas.
18. Based on the evidence available we remain extremely concerned that poverty reduction was not sufficiently considered when making decisions around the cuts and therefore any lack of appropriate funding could, undermine the FCDO’s ability to deliver the commitments of the Disability Inclusion and Right strategy.
19. The pledge of the Foreign Secretary to restore the women and girl’s budget to what it was before the cuts is extremely welcome, but, as clearly flagged by the assessment, unless the increased budget is equitably allocated and targeted at the most marginalised, there is a severe risk that people with disabilities, including girls with disabilities, will not benefit from development interventions.
20. People with disabilities have traditionally not been prioritised by development actors, despite being overrepresented amongst those living in poverty and experiencing significant levels of discrimination. Unfortunately, we know that when budgets are constrained, provisions which support people with disabilities are often the first to be cut.

Recommendations to the UK Government

- Conduct and publish analysis to understand whether cuts to mainstream programmes have disproportionately impacted people with disabilities and take action to revise these trends if identified.

- Conduct and publish future equalities assessments to ensure transparent, accountable decision making.
- Ensure policies and processes consider the specific and complex needs of persons with disabilities and monitor whether ODA is reaching the most marginalised¹⁴
- Ensure equitable allocation of ODA and regularly report on spend on disability inclusion.
- Conduct disability inclusive safeguarding risk assessments across all programmes to ensure ODA cuts do not put persons with disabilities at risk.

FCDO's Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy

21. The DDG welcomes the high ambition of the new FCDO Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030 (DIRS), launched at the GDS in February 2022. We acknowledge and appreciate the progress that the FCDO Disability Team have made, which is demonstrated in this strategy, and the leadership they continue to show. However, given the broader context as discussed above we have some concerns about the implementation of the strategy in practice. The development of a strong Delivery Plan and concrete action in key areas will be key to ensuring the realization of the DIRS.
22. Reaffirming the UK's ambition to act as a global leader on disability inclusion, the DIRS was a timely and positive progression that has potential to continue the UK's leadership of disability inclusion and fulfill the commitment by the Foreign Secretary to harness "the full force of the UK's diplomatic and development expertise" to deliver real change for people with disabilities is crucial to implementing the FCDO's restated aim of a rights-based twin track approach to inclusion.¹⁵
23. The DDG supports the DIRS commitment to implementing a disability inclusive approach to safeguarding, recognising that a proactive approach needs to be taken to ensure that FCDO work does no harm and effectively safeguards people with disabilities.
24. The DIRS's commitment to prioritise efforts to strengthen meaningful engagement with people with disabilities and OPDs is very positive. It is particularly encouraging that the strategy mentions support for the formation and function of OPDs and a commitment to actively seek to include underrepresented groups, but we would further encourage this commitment to include those with complex needs and the amplification of diverse voices in the disability community, particularly women with disabilities.
25. Alongside the desire to enable all to succeed in Rights, Voice, Choice and Visibility it is welcome that the DIRS retains the previous focus on education, social protection, economic empowerment and humanitarian action, underpinned by a rights-based approach. Expanding particularly into climate

¹⁴ ICAI Rapid Review of DFID's approach to disability in development, 2019

¹⁵ Page 5 FCDO's Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030

change and health, both areas where the rights of people with disabilities are often neglected, is a big step forward. The commitment to embed disability inclusion within the International Climate Finance portfolio is particularly welcome, as well as the reaffirmation of commitment to Universal Health Coverage and greater focus on mental health. It is also positive that the strategy extends beyond policy and programmes to areas such as procurement which can also benefit people with disabilities, and this could be strengthened by ensuring guidance is provided to delivery partners on disability inclusion

26. The strategy mentions a delivery plan and we are encouraged by the commitment to develop this with meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and OPDs.
27. Our immediate concern is that these words must be translated into deliverable actions that have specific aims for more disability inclusive programming, performance, funding, and timeframes that provide qualitative accountability. Without a clear delivery plan the ambition of the strategy will not be realised in practice.

Recommendations to the UK government

- Provide commitment to and details of funding for targeted allocations that support people with disabilities, as well as mainstream provision for disability inclusion across all FCDO programmatic work. FCDO should report on spend on disability inclusion under each key intervention area of its DIRS and the percentage of programmes marked as disability inclusive under the DAC marker.
- The Delivery Plan should detail how FCDO will monitor progress towards the vision set in the DIRS, with clear targets, timelines and financial allocations.
- The DIRS mentions the 'equalities continuum' as one of the main tools to guide and support disability-inclusive policies across FCDO. The FCDO must have a dedicated pathway to demonstrate how they will commit to move from the minimum standard to at least medium and preferably to the highest level.
- Build on the recently published Health Systems Strengthening paper and Ending Preventable Deaths Action Plan and publish a new global health strategy. As Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are diseases of poverty, the DIRS should confirm how NTD elimination will be supported as part of the CHOGM commitment to deliver the WHO's 'Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: A road map for neglected tropical diseases (2021–2030)'¹⁶ and the endorsement of the Kigali Declaration on NTDs.

The commitment to girls and women

28. We welcome the commitment to invest in accelerators for gender-transformative and disability inclusive change in services and policies and look

¹⁶ [Ending the neglect to attain the Sustainable Development Goals: A road map for neglected tropical diseases \(2021–2030\)](#)

forward to discussion and consultation on these and supporting the FCDO in their delivery. We also welcome the recognition of the increased risk of violence faced by women and girls with disabilities and the need to ensure access to essential services, including protection from physical and sexual violence.

29. The International Development strategy highlights the UK Government's leadership on Girl's Education, and rightly acknowledges the risk of reversing 20 years of gains in this area due to Covid-19. We welcome the UK government's role in securing the Girls Education Declaration at the G7 and the new Girls Education Action Plan, but we would welcome further clarity about how these initiatives will ensure women and girls with disabilities also benefit from quality education.
30. Unfortunately, and especially in the light of Covid-19, the IDS falls short of a commitment to scale up, build on or extend projects such as the Girls Education Challenge 'Transition' and 'Leave No Girl Behind' highlighted as success stories. To continue to be seen as a leader on inclusion, the scale of the UK's investment on inclusive education and particular allocations to girls with disabilities, should be clearer. This needs to be complemented by clarity on how the FCDO intends to monitor progress on all areas and especially around specific areas such as education for children with disabilities. This could be achieved by being better aligned with FCDO's GDS Commitments, including to embed results tracking disaggregated by disability and the use of the Washington Group Set of Questions, across all new activities including health, social protection, climate and education and to ensure an inclusion focus in reporting.

Recommendations to the UK government

- Ensure that disability inclusion is at the heart of the upcoming Women and Girls Strategy (WGS), and takes into account the intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination women and girls experience and contains specific actions to facilitate inclusion.
- The WGS should make it clear that FCDO will adopt a gender-transformative and disability inclusive approach to education, which is based on evidence and good quality disaggregated data on disability by committing to embed results tracking and Washington Group questions in all new activities.
- Define specific targets for disability inclusion within FCDO's two global education targets of 40 million more girls into school and another 20 million reading at the age of 10 by 2025.
- Implement lessons learnt from programmes such as the Girl's Education Challenge to mainstream disability across the FCDO's education programmes.
- Develop a clear plan for improving capacity on gender and disability awareness across staff and partners.

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