

**BOND Disability and Development Group**  
**Submission to the UK International Development**  
**Committee inquiry on UK ODA Effectiveness**



*May 8, 2020*

1. The Bond Disability and Development Group (DDG) brings together UK-based mainstream and disability-specific development organisations to ensure that the rights of disabled people are included in the UK development and humanitarian sectors. The member organisations of the DDG represent a large body of experience based on direct work with disabled people, their organisations and the disability movement in developing countries, as well as advocacy and policy engagement with service providers and policymakers globally.
2. Disabled people, are the largest minority in the world being approximately 15% of any population, most of whom are in developing countries. Disabled people disproportionately live in poverty due to widespread discrimination and barriers accessing health care, education and employment. This discriminatory context is often exacerbated at times of crises, as we are seeing with the current coronavirus pandemic.
3. We welcome the UK Parliamentary Inquiry into the effectiveness of the UK Government's ODA spend because civil society engagement is critical. We know from experience that social dialogue is most effective when it is inclusive, meaningful and deliberative, and rooted in a well-structured and consistent process that promotes accountability and transparency. As such DDG can offer information from partners and programmes on the ground helping to contextualise experiences of disabled people and their organisations, drawing on our operational presence and experience. We strongly encourage the Committee to ensure that as part of their inquiry they speak to disabled peoples organisations (DPOs) in the countries where ODA is delivered in order to get first-hand experience of its impact at ground level. DDG is happy to facilitate this.
4. This submission focuses specifically on inquiry questions relating to the definition and administration of the UK Government's overseas development aid (ODA) with particular reference to the accountability of its management systems and the effectiveness of ODA spend on disability inclusion.

**Summary of Recommendations**

5. Overall, we recommend that the UK Government retains DFID as an independent department for the coordination and delivery of UK ODA enabling the UK to main its leadership and agenda setting role on disability inclusion in international development.

Specifically, we recommend that DFID:

- Continues to prioritise disability inclusion as a cross cutting issue with the mandate to ensure that disability inclusion is mainstreamed across all departments where ODA is delivered;
- Ensures that decisions on funding allocations are firmly grounded within the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 'Leave No One Behind' principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Protects and steps up its activities towards the full implementation of its Commitments made at the 2018 Global Disability Summit so that achievements made so far are not lost as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Put in place clear and transparent measures to ensure that mainstream actors engage with DPOs at all levels of operation as well as other social movements where disabled people are participating, such as women's movements);
- The OECD-DAC disability and inclusion marker is used by all government departments disbursing UK ODA;
- Sets a target on the amount of ODA that should be spent on disability-specific programming;
- Reports against the Minimum Standards within all DFID units that has responsibility for UK ODA in June this year, despite challenges around Covid-19;
- Facilitates the development of genuine partnerships and consortiums between mainstream organisations and those with disability inclusion experience, especially DPOs; and
- Establishes transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms that ensures the new Disability Capacity Building Programme engages the participation of grassroots DPOs.

### **The definition and administration of UK ODA**

6. Globally, there are over one billion disabled people, with nearly 80% living in low-income countries.<sup>1</sup> There is a strong link between poverty and disability. ODA is not the only answer to these challenges, but it is a vital and necessary because of its role in supporting the poorest and most marginalised. ODA will help to achieve the ambitions outlined in Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty in all its forms by 2030 and *leave no one behind*.<sup>2</sup> For ODA to be effective it needs to ensure that it is reaching all people, including disabled people.

7. For the furthest behind the key principles of ODA mean that:

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization and the World Bank 2011. World Report on Disability, WHO Press, Geneva. [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> '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.

- it actively promotes the respect for universal human rights, democratic public participation and a free and dynamic civil society for *all*;
  - it embeds the leave no one behind principle through *all* of its programmes to ensure that ODA is focused on helping the most vulnerable and marginalised communities such as disabled people, women and girls, older people, LGBTQ people, refugees and displaced people;
  - has the opportunity to invest in reducing the root causes of poverty which can lead to disability, by targeting resource investment, promoting data disaggregation, and ensuring peacebuilding and conflict prevention approaches;
  - it provides for both formal and practical solutions, and respects existing international ODA effectiveness principles (Paris/Busan Agreements);
  - provides information about UK ODA spending that is clear, comprehensive and easily accessible, with all government departments spending UK ODA demonstrating equally high levels of transparency.<sup>3</sup>
8. DDG members believe that the UK should continue meet its commitment to provide at least 0.7% of GNI as Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) under the internationally agreed definition. We would urge that the UK Government maintain the 0.7% figure and ensure that poverty reduction and sustainable development remains the primary focus in line with the International Development Act 2002.

### **UK ODA Accountability systems and structures**

9. Bond DDG welcomes the leadership taken by DFID to move forward the UK's disability agenda in recent years. The UK's commitment to disability-inclusive development, and its ability to influence its bilateral and multilateral development partners has been, and continues to be, crucial.
10. While it is still too early to tell the extent to which DFID's increased focus and commitment to disability inclusion will bring about long-term systematic change, it is clear that disability is beginning to be embedded into systems and that that since the launch of DFID's Disability Framework in 2014, huge strides have taken place to prioritise disability in DFID's ODA programmes, with impact seen both centrally and in DFID country programmes.
11. The Global Disability Summit's One Year On Accountability Report,<sup>4</sup> highlights that DFID is moving in right direction, with good recent progress against DFID's Commitments. These included a new funding partnership with the World Bank for the Inclusive Education Initiative fund, new disability inclusion programmes Disability Inclusive Development (DID) and UK ODA Connect programmes, as well as the 'Leave No Girl Behind' funding window to the Girls Education Challenge programme. And in recognition for the need to support the collection of new and better data for informing effective development programming DFID

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<sup>3</sup> International ODA in brief: Who, what, when, where, why and how, Bond, 2018

<sup>4</sup> One Year On: Accountability Report 2019

published an Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan and funded a major new Disability Data Portal<sup>5</sup>.

12. However, the key to the effectiveness of these ODA programme lies in how well they are implemented, monitored and ultimately provide benefit to disabled people on the ground. Ensuring policies and processes take into account the specific and complex needs of disabled people requires expert knowledge and experience which is not always available within partner organisations. Further, there seems little in place to monitor whether ODA is reaching the most marginalised<sup>6</sup>.
13. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the likely aftermath in terms of possible economic recession, humanity is under threat. Oxfam warns that half a billion people will be pushed pack into poverty, UNFPA reports 31 million women face gender-based violence, and mental health issues will likely surge as everyone suffers from anxiety, stress and economic uncertainties. Disabled women and girls will be worst affected as they are more likely to experience abuse, and there are few services accessible for them. **We recommend that DFID demonstrates its commitment as a leader on disability inclusion by ensuring that its' Covid-19 response strategy urgently addresses these issues. Furthermore, we urge DFID to protect gains made to date on disability inclusion ensuring that these are not lost as the impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic becomes apparent.**
14. The devolved nature of DFID itself does effect DFID's ability to impact real change on the ground. While a welcome addition to the Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Minimum Standards<sup>7</sup> contained therein are open to interpretation by ostensibly, autonomous DFID country offices. Evidence has shown that there is a great deal of variance in how DFID prioritise disability issues in their business cases, consult with DPOs, collect disaggregate data by disability, or even provide access into DFID offices<sup>8</sup>
15. In Bangladesh we have seen a high-level DFID participation in key external meetings which has increased the visibility of disability programming and the UK government's commitment to it in Bangladesh. This is also the case in other DFID countries. For example the Heads of DFID in both Bangladesh and Kenya launched the UK Aid Connect economic inclusion programmes in 2019. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, these DFID country offices reached out to explore how these disability inclusion projects can respond to the needs of disabled people.
16. On the other hand, in Rwanda a DPO partner currently delivering a DFID Direct funded programme with children and youths with disabilities has continually struggled to communicate with the local DFID office despite multiple invitations

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<sup>5</sup> Disability Data Portal <https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/>

<sup>6</sup> ICAI Rapid Review of DFID's approach to disability in development, 2019

<sup>7</sup> DFID Minimum Standards

<sup>8</sup> ICAI Rapid Review of DFID's approach to disability in development, 2019

to events and requests for meetings to update on progress. This has meant that valuable learning from the project and the disability inclusive approaches is not being fed back to the DFID Rwanda office to share more widely. **We recommend that DFID ensures that it reports against the minimum standards in June this year, despite challenges around Covid-19.** We recognises that this report will not be comprehensive, but it can serve as an interim measure until a fuller report can be published. This will be crucial to ensure transparency around how the minimum standards are being implemented.

17. Efforts by the Disability Team to implement the Strategy, improve the Strategy's Delivery Plan and monitor the Minimum Standards have been hampered by a number of factors, including the 'stop-start' progress on activities as staff are temporarily redeployed to other department to focus on other priorities such as Brexit and more recently responding to the coronavirus pandemic. A lack of active support from a Secretary of State also risks undoing progress that has been made. We recommend that DFID continues to prioritise disability as a cross cutting issue across all business units and country offices, as well as in its external influencing work.

### **The effectiveness of ODA spend by DFID on Disability**

18. DDG has always promoted that aid spend take a twin-track approach to disability and welcomes DFID's commitment to this approach. Systematically mainstreaming disability is a crucial part of this. DFID's Disability Inclusion Strategy<sup>9</sup> outlines steps to achieving this, but to be truly effective there needs to be increased mainstreaming of disability inclusive practice across all UK ODA sectors. This involves ensuring that the policies, communications and operational activities off all ODA funded programmes are disability inclusive and are systematic monitored to shows how disabled people benefiting from them. At the same time, there needs to be dedicated spending on disability programming, including investment into capacity building of DPOs and the disability movement.
19. We have seen some positive examples of DFID including disability in tenders and terms of references for programmes. This is of course good progress however for this to be effective it must be maintained throughout programme design and implementation. The UK Aid Connect thematic areas, for example, should all have a strong inclusion element and ensure learning across the connect portfolio. For example, we have found that although Grantees for DFID DIRECT funded work are required to disaggregate data by disability and report on efforts made to ensure disability inclusion in their work, actual measurements on successful inclusion is not measured or required to be reflected on. This means that many projects still end up not being accessible to disabled people.

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<sup>9</sup> DFID's Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019

20. Mainstream NGOs are increasingly telling us that they are being asked by DFID to include disabled people within existing and future programmes<sup>10</sup>. While this is an important approach and we commend DFID on this change, we have found that, in reality, consortiums are often dominated by the large international agencies and the DPOs and disability specialist partners are brought in to fulfil to 'tick-the-inclusion-box' but end up having less decision-making influence within the consortium, and less of the budget share to develop sustainable impact on disability inclusion beyond the life of the programme. **We recommend that DFID encourage mainstream development actors and set key indicators, that include a capacity building element in their engagement with DPOs.** This will help ensure that they are not simply using DPOs to deliver projects disabled people, but instead ensure that DPO partners become stronger, more effective, and more inclusive organisations at the end of any project they are involved in.
21. DFID should ensure that all DFID staff and fund managers are sending consistent messaging on the importance of disability inclusion. Programme development processes must not offer perverse incentives to not include disabled people or penalise those who are including disabled people<sup>11</sup>.
22. Alongside mainstreaming, DFID has increased spending on disability-specific programmes, which we welcome. Given the level of need, and historical under-investment in this area, we encourage DFID to continue to increase this. Data from the OECD DAC marker shows that DFID's spends less than half a percent of the UK's ODA is spent on disability specific programmes . **We recommend that DFID, and other government departments, set a target for the amount of ODA which should be spent on disability-specific programming.**
23. In order for mainstream actors to be disability inclusive, DDG **recommend that DFID put in place measures to ensure that mainstream actors engage with DPOs at all levels of operation (grassroots as well as national).** For this to happen effectively DPOs need to not only exist, but also have the organisational capacity<sup>12</sup> to engage effectively with mainstream development organisations and lead development initiatives.

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<sup>10</sup> We have also seen an increasing in mainstream NGO joining the Bond DDG and showing commitment to working on disability, demonstrating an increasing recognition in the sector of its importance.

<sup>11</sup> We have also gone into more depth on similar issues in previous submissions to the IDC including

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<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/internationaldevelopment-committee/uk-ODA-allocation-of-resources/written/29990.pdf>;  
<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/internationaldevelopment-committee/uk-ODA-allocation-of-resources/written/27422.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> (i.e. organisational capacity; democratic structures; capacity to represent membership effectively, have a channel for representation, engagement with, benefit from, and to have an inclusive membership reflecting diverse experience of disability etc.).

24. In response to calls in the IDC's Public Inquiry report for greater investment in DPO capacity building DFID launched the Disability Capacity Building Programme in May 2020<sup>13</sup>. DDG welcomes this DFID initiative to support DPO's core functions as it will build their organisational capacity, knowledge and skills of DPOs at national, regional and global levels around the world. **We recommend that DFID builds upon this positive action and puts in place transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms that ensures the fund increases the capacity and engages the participation of grassroots DPOs.**
25. In adopting the internationally agreed OECD-DAC disability inclusion marker DFID is making a firm commitment to monitor disability inclusion in its programming. However, changes in how ODA is allocated has resulted in there being multiple government departments managing large amounts of ODA, making transparency and accountability more challenging. It is crucial that all government departments use the OECD DAC disability marker. Analysis of the first year of data demonstrates that not all government departments are using the marker and government departments using the marker have very low, on in the majority of cases, no disability inclusive programming. The OECD DAC policy marker provides a clearer picture of how much of the UK's ODA is disability inclusive. This data should be complemented by others forms of data collection on the extent to which the UK's development programmes are disability inclusive. **We recommend that all government departments use the disability marker, and that efforts are made to track and improve the extent to which government departments are reporting their ODA as disability inclusive.**
26. Other government departments responsible for delivering of ODA do not have to adhere to the DFID's Minimum Standards within DFID's Disability Inclusion Strategy. The IDC and ICAI have previously highlighted that other government departments are not performing as well as DFID on disability inclusion, and the DDG shares this concern. DFID's crucial work in the area of disability inclusion demonstrates the importance of DFID as a department to ensure that ODA reaches the most marginalised and supports the UK's commitment to leave no one behind. **We would recommend that DFID's disability inclusion strategy and, in particular the minimum standards for disability inclusion, are extended to all departments with responsibility for UK ODA. We also recommend that crucial role that DFID as a department plays in ensuring the ODA reaches the most marginalised and leaves no one behind.**

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<sup>13</sup> <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300778>