

Sightsavers' submission to the IDC's inquiry on the Effectiveness of UK Aid

May 2020

About Sightsavers

1. Sightsavers is an international development organisation which works with partners to eliminate avoidable blindness and promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities in over thirty developing countries. Our programmes also include working to ensure quality inclusive education, strengthen health systems and eliminate neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).
2. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the International Development Committee's inquiry on the Effectiveness of UK Aid.

Introduction

3. Disability inclusive development is crucial to delivering the UK's strategic aid objectives of 'tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable' and 'promoting global prosperity'¹ as well as its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the pledge to leave no-one behind.
4. Development that does not systematically include the poorest and most marginalised people will exclude those that need to access development assistance the most and will not be effective. The UK's approach to development will only be effective if it is systematically inclusive and reaches the people who need it most.
5. Since the International Development Committee's 2014 inquiry on Disability and Development², DFID have made significant progress on disability inclusion. Important steps have included: the introduction of the Disability Framework in 2014; clear commitment to disability in the Bilateral Development Review; inclusion of disability in the Single Departmental Plan and the hosting of the Global Disability Summit in July 2018³.
6. DFID is increasingly including disability in other policies and strategies⁴, and has become a prominent global voice on disability inclusion, including on key issues such as data, and has played an important role in promoting disability inclusion amongst partners. Crucially, DFID published its first ever Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development⁵ in December 2018.

¹ [UK Aid: Tackling global challenges in the national interest](#)

² [International Development Committee's 2014 inquiry on Disability and Development](#)

³ [Global Disability Summit](#), [Single Departmental Plan](#), [Bilateral Development Review](#).

⁴ Including DFID's [Education Policy](#), DFID [Economic Development Policy](#) and DFID's [Strategic Vision on Gender Equality](#).

⁵ [DFID's Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development 2018-23](#)

The urgent need to apply an intersectional approach to development

7. People with disabilities often experience multiple forms of discrimination based on a number of factors – and how they intersect. Factors including gender, age, ethnicity and impairment, and the contexts in which people live, can shape their identity and the forms of discrimination they experience. For example, women and girls with disabilities experience discrimination based on both their gender and their disability. In order to achieve the 2030 Agenda’s central principle of leaving no one behind – and the UK’s own ambition to end extreme poverty – the UK Government should apply an intersectional approach in all overseas development assistance (ODA).
8. By systematically considering how a range of factors intersect to shape marginalisation, including age, disability, gender, location and minority status – amongst others – the UK will be able to better understand who is being left behind and who must access development assistance, and develop more inclusive – and therefore more effective strategies – for ensuring development progress.

All UK ODA should be accessible to people with disabilities

9. While DFID has made significant progress towards ensuring that their aid is more inclusive of people with disabilities, our experience is that this is not mirrored by other government departments. ODA is split across multiple government departments, including the Department for International Development, Department for Health and Social Care, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
10. One way to track the extent to which ODA is disability inclusive is through the OECD DAC marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities (disability)⁶. The UK played a pivotal role in the introduction of the disability marker, the only tool, common across donors, which can track ODA supporting disability inclusion across government departments. It can therefore play a key monitoring and accountability role and can contribute to identifying gaps between policy commitments and their implementation. The existence, and use, of the marker goes some way to address the lack of data on the extent to which ODA is inclusive of people with disabilities.
11. However, government departments including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), have not reported their ODA spend against the DAC disability marker, presenting real challenges in understanding how disability inclusive their ODA spend is. Seven other government departments have used the marker but reported that none of their ODA is inclusive of people with disabilities.
12. The IDC’s 2014 inquiry on Disability and Development recommended that all UK ODA is made accessible to people with disabilities and that all departments that spend ODA put in place measures to monitor the number of people with disabilities who benefit from their development programmes. The IDC specifically stated that this was particularly important for the FCO, as a department with one of the highest ODA budgets outside DFID and the lead department for human rights issues.

⁶ OECD DAC, [Policy Marker to track the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities](#)

13. Despite this, the 2018 ICAI review on DFID’s approach to disability⁷, reported that the FCO’s lack of capacity on disability is a ‘significant weakness in the UK government’s capacity to make progress on disability’. A lack of publicly available business cases and other programme documents makes it hard to assess the extent to which programmes led by departments other than DFID are inclusive, and to hold these departments accountable to the UK’s commitments on disability inclusive development.

The need for greater cross-government working

14. DFID’s 2018 Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development outlined more joint working across government, including a distinct mention of integrating disability into diplomatic approaches, which is to be welcomed. In order to be more effective, much more could be done to ensure a joined-up approach and collaborative working across government departments, especially given the links with areas of significant overlap between departments, for example, on education.

15. The UK Government has set out girls’ education as a key development priority but to date there has been no reference to girls with disabilities in the public communications around the Platform for Girls’ Education⁸.

16. The appointment of Baroness Sugg as the UK’s Special Envoy on Girls’ Education presents a real opportunity to build on the work that DFID has done on inclusive education and apply this learning to ensure the FCO’s commitment of 12 years’ education for all is inclusive of children with disabilities.

Using the Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for delivery

17. Governments have made a commitment to development that leaves no one behind with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Five years on from the agreement of the SDGs as the framework for delivery, there are critical gaps in the UK’s own policy, programming and political commitment to implementing them. These gaps were evident in the UK’s first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2019, which the IDC itself felt demonstrated a lack of commitment to the SDGs Agenda⁹.

18. To address this, the UK Government should ensure that ODA is completely focused on poverty eradication and reducing inequalities, and reverse approaches to spending aid through other government departments or “in the national interest” where this is not the case. Monitoring where ODA is spent on delivery of the SDGs could be done through the OECD DAC SDG focus field, which is yet to be used effectively by donors. Additionally, greater cross-government working is critical to ensuring delivery of the SDGs in the UK and internationally.

⁷ [DFID’s approach to disability in development – ICAI \(2018\)](#)

⁸ [Gov.uk ‘Foreign Secretary hosts first Platform for Girls’ Education meeting’ \(Media release, 27 September 2018\)](#)

⁹ IDC (2019) [UK progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Voluntary National Review](#)

Key Recommendations

- The UK Government should develop a plan for how they will implement its commitments on disabilities across all ODA spending departments, including systemic monitoring using the OECD DAC disability marker
- The UK Government should apply an intersectional approach – that considers how factors including age, gender and disability influence marginalisation – in order to deliver systematically more inclusive, and effective, development that genuinely leaves no one behind
- The UK Government should ensure better collaboration between all departments spending ODA. The establishment of a joint DFID and FCO ministerial team presents an opportunity for greater cross-government working and puts impetus on the FCO to report more effectively on its ODA spending and embed disability inclusion in its approach
- The UK Government needs to implement effective reporting on delivery of the SDGs and ensure that ODA is completely focused on poverty eradication and reducing inequalities, and reverse approaches to spending aid through other government departments where this is not the case
- DFID should promote more policy coherence between departments and a more joined-up approach to inclusive and sustainable development. This should include the publication of a cross-government delivery plan for SDG implementation, which the Cabinet Office should lead on delivering

For further information about this submission, please contact Sightsavers Parliamentary Adviser, Alex Voce at avoce@sightsavers.org