

The Bond Disability and Development Group – Submission to the IDC on DFID’s use of contractors

1. Summary

1.1 In this submission we focus on the risk that the use of contractors, if specific measures are not put in place, could undermine DFID’s ability to reach people with disabilities and leave no-one behind. We therefore provide the following recommendations:

- Ensure that contractors are aligned with DFID’s commitment to achieving the SDGs, particularly the pledge to leave no one behind;
- Require private sector partners to outline their approach to disability inclusion, as committed in the disability framework;
- Ask contractors to report on disability and provide data disaggregated by disability;
- Provide clear guidance for contractors on how to ensure that Value for Money assessments do not disadvantage the most marginalised;
- DFID consider whether they have the correct balance of different funding mechanisms, and that they consider the impact of moving towards utilising contractors more frequently.

2. The Bond Disability and Development Group

2.1 The Bond Disability and Development Group (DDG) is a consortium of UK-based mainstream and disability-specific organisations. The member organisations of the DDG represent a large body of experience based on direct work with people with disabilities and the disability movement in developing countries, as well as advocacy and policy engagement with service providers and policymakers.

2.2 There are one billion people with disabilities globally.¹ People with disabilities face multiple social and environmental barriers and, as a result, are often over-represented amongst those living in poverty. Ensuring that no-one is left behind, including those with disabilities, is an important consideration both because of the impact on individuals and families and because of the wider and long-term impact on societies, economic and social development and for the attainment of the SDGs.² There is a growing understanding that disability is a core development issue and that development interventions will fail to reach the poorest, unless people with disabilities are included.

3. Recent progress on disability inclusion

3.1 In recent years the UK Government has made some very welcome commitments to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the allocation of UK aid. These include:

¹ World Bank/World Health Organisation, *World Report on Disability*, 2011.

² For further evidence, please refer to the Disability and Development Group’s [submission to the IDC inquiry on the Sustainable Development Goals](#).

- [DFID's Disability Framework](#), which gives detailed commitments on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the different areas of DFID's work.
- [The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), which contains eleven explicit references to people with disabilities, as well as the overarching principle that 'no one will be left behind'. The UK Government played a leading role in securing this principle.
- The Prime Minister's 'Leave No One Behind Promise'³ at the UN General Assembly – a commitment to "putting the last first", in which people with disability feature prominently.

3.2 We welcome these commitments, there is a risk that – without careful consideration DFID's choice and use of contractors could undermine progress and lead to people with disabilities continuing to be left behind.

4 Alignment with the SDGs and Disability framework

4.1 We are concerned about the extent to which private sector contractors⁴ are aligned with both the Disability framework and the commitment to 'Leave no one behind.' Historically, we have seen less evidence on the extent to which people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, are included in programmes delivered by the private sector.

4.2 DFID's Disability framework states that "private sector partners should outline their approach to disability inclusion in all proposals and if they need extra-support, we should be asking that they engage Disabled People's Organisations or disability-specific NGOs"⁵. We strongly welcome this statement, but are yet to see whether it is being put into practice.

4.3 This commitment also stops short of introducing reporting processes to hold private sector partners to account for their inclusion of people with disabilities. In recent years, we have increasingly seen DFID asking civil society partners to report on their work on disability⁶, which has sent a strong signal about DFID's commitment to the sector.

4.4 We recommend that:

- **DFID ensures that contractors are aligned with DFID's commitment to achieving the SDGs, particularly the pledge to leave no one behind**
- **DFID requires private sector partners to outline their approach to disability inclusion, as committed in the disability framework**
- **That DFID asks contractors to report on disability and provide data disaggregated by disability.**

³ Reproduced in Annex A of the [Disability Framework](#).

⁴ While we recognise that not all of DFID's contractors are private sector actors the large majority are

⁵ Disability Framework, pages 8 and 9

⁶ Such as in the PPAs

5. Value for Money: Reaching the easy to reach?

5.1 There is a particular risk that in order to secure bids and maximise the profit from development programmes contractors will be incentivised to focus on those who are easier and cheaper to reach. This can disadvantage people with disabilities, particularly those with multiple or severe disabilities, because programmes which are fully inclusive and accessible typically cost somewhat more than those that exclude people with disabilities.⁷

5.2 There is also a risk that contractors will be incentivised to focus on outcomes which can readily be measured in a short time span, rather than targeting issues such as social norm change, which – as the Committee noted in one of its recent evidence sessions – are key to inclusion and equity, but are harder to measure.⁸ It is particularly difficult to measure programmes aimed at preventing a negative event, such as violence against women and girls which is a particular problem for women and girls with disabilities.⁹

5.3 As DFID's value for money guidance recognises¹⁰, achieving maximum impact is not just about reaching the greatest number of people, but also about ensuring development results are targeted at the poorest. In other words, as well as assessing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, value for money assessments need to consider equity – the extent to which an intervention is accessible to all people, including the very most marginalised, taking into account their different needs. Guidance from the National Audit Office,¹¹ the Independent Commission for Aid Impact,¹² and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development¹³ all emphasises equity as an important value for money issue. And ICAI's recent memorandum to the Committee notes that the UK's commitment to leave no-one behind will have "important implications for how DFID thinks about value for money." DFID's most recent Disability Framework highlights that there is anecdotal evidence that disability-inclusive programmes often fare less well in value for money assessments, due to concerns over costs and lack of evidence.¹⁴

5.4 We believe that the recommendations made above would help to militate against these risks. In addition we recommend that DFID provide clear guidance for contractors on how to ensure that Value for Money assessments to not disadvantage the most marginalised¹⁵.

⁷ This is due, for example, to the costs of ensuring that infrastructure, communications, and staff capacity allow full accessibility and inclusion, and because of the investment needed to tackle underlying blockers such as social norms.

⁸ Sustainable Development Goals inquiry, Q193

⁹ I van der Heijden, [What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women With Disabilities](#).

¹⁰ [DFID's Approach to Value for Money](#), page 3 and Figure 1

¹¹ NAO, ["Assessing Value for Money"](#)

¹² [ICAI's Approach to Effectiveness and Value for Money](#)

¹³ OECD: [Value for Money and International Development](#)

¹⁴ Page 7. We of course fully agree that disability-inclusive programmes should be delivered at the lowest possible cost consistent with achieving full and sustainable inclusion, and are currently working on a briefing paper that will synthesise UK NGOs' approaches to measuring the added value of inclusion, and assuring cost-effectiveness in such contexts.

6. Risk appetite

6.1 Evidence on ‘what works’ in disability inclusion has increased in recent years, and we welcome the research that DFID has funded in this area. However, compared to some other areas there is less available evidence. This is largely due to low levels of global funding for disability-specific programming, and a lack concerted of attention to disability mainstreaming. As a result, reaching the most marginalised may require a higher level of innovation and therefore a larger risk appetite. We support the previous Committee’s recommendation that caution should not come at the expense of ambition in DFID’s disability programming¹⁶.

6.2 We would like to highlight this as a particular issue when considering the use of contractors who may be incentivised to work on areas where clear results are more clearly guaranteed in order to maximise the chance of achieving grants and the profit made from programme.

6.3 We recommend that to militate against these risks:

- **DFID require contractors to disaggregate data by disability and provide guidance on how to do so.**

7. Use of contractors and balance of funding mechanisms

7.1 We would like to echo the comments made in Bond’s submission about the lack of capacity of many civil society organisations to apply for contracts. We would like to highlight this as it is particularly relevant for disability, as most NGOs and CSOs working in the sector are small or medium and not in a position to apply for contracts. Therefore, if DFID is over reliant on the use of contractors there is a risk that those working on disability will be underrepresented in DFID’s funding. This is particularly relevant for Disabled People’s Organisations, who are even less likely to be able to apply for contracts – but have extremely relevant and important experience to share.

7.2 We therefore recommend that DFID consider whether they have the correct balance of different funding mechanisms, and that they consider the impact of moving towards utilising contractors more frequently.

¹⁵ The Bond DDG is currently writing a paper on disability and value for money in discussion with DFID.

¹⁶ International Development Committee, [Disability and Development](#), paragraph 25.