



# UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

## Evaluation of Australian advocacy for disability-inclusive development

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### Key Facts

- There are over one billion people with disabilities, representing 15 per cent of the global population. People with disabilities are over represented among the world's poorest.
- Disability is a human rights issue. All people with disabilities are entitled to the rights guaranteed under all international conventions.
- Meeting the needs of people with disabilities is central to achieving inclusive growth, addressing inequality and realising the ambition to 'leave no one behind' that is enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Australian aid program has had strategies to support disability-inclusive development since 2009.
- The 'Development for All' strategies of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) have aimed to make Australian development assistance disability-inclusive and use advocacy to support broader disability inclusion.

### THE EVALUATION

This evaluation focused on key components of DFAT's global advocacy for disability-inclusive development.

The evaluation findings are based on the views of a wide range of stakeholders external to DFAT (Disabled People's Organisations—DPOs, United Nations agencies, other development and humanitarian organisations and bilateral donors) as well as current and past DFAT staff. Information was obtained from a survey (31 non-DFAT respondents) and semi-structured interviews (32 non-DFAT and 24 DFAT interviewees), documentation and published evaluation reports.

**Supporting advocates.** The Australian Government has supported the Women's Refugee Commission to research the needs of displaced women and girls with disabilities, identify solutions, and advocate for changes in policies and programs. The photo shows DPO leaders at a training session in Pakistan designed to build their capacity to advocate for women and girls with disabilities within the humanitarian system. Photo© SADF/STEP



## Findings

### Global policy frameworks

**DFAT's advocacy has played a significant role in making global policy frameworks disability inclusive.** Disability inclusion was identified as a priority theme for Australia's engagement in recent policy processes that aimed to reshape the global architecture of humanitarian action and development: the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) 2016. The evaluation found that DFAT's advocacy made a significant contribution. The 'Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action' and the Sustainable Development Goals have unprecedented recognition and inclusion of the needs of people with disabilities due in no small part to DFAT's efforts. In the case of WHS, many stakeholders felt that DFAT's engagement was crucial.

**"The Australian Government played a pivotal role in ensuring that disability inclusion was profiled throughout the World Humanitarian Summit process. We believe its advocacy, often conducted in partnership with the Government of Finland, directly contributed to disability being included as a formal side event at the Global Consultation—a step which launched multi-stakeholder collaboration on the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities."** Humanitarian agency

### Leadership

**Australia is seen and valued as a leader in disability-inclusive development.** About 40 per cent of survey respondents felt Australia had shown significant leadership and over 40 per cent thought Australia was a highly influential leader. In some contexts, DFAT is seen as the leading advocate for disability inclusion and as the go-to partner for engagement, intellectual input and funding. As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, Australia has committed to upholding and promoting the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly in relation to the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Development Agenda. Working closely with like-minded states, multilateral organisations and non-government organisations (NGOs), Australia has promoted a rights-based approach to disability-inclusive humanitarian action, education systems and social protection schemes.

### Partnerships with DPOs

**DFAT has established a range of strategic partnerships with DPOs** and modelled the principle '*Nothing about us without us*'—the active involvement of people with disabilities in the planning of strategies and policies that affect their lives. The evaluation found that through these partnerships, DFAT has helped build the capacity of DPOs and facilitated their involvement in major policy and reform processes. People with disabilities and their organisations have a stronger voice and are increasingly central drivers of reform processes in country and multilateral settings. For example, DFAT's advocacy and support for the International Disability Alliance has been successful in making UN system-wide policy more disability inclusive.



**Enabling people with disabilities to drive reform.** Through the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund, DFAT has supported POKJA Disabilitas, a national coalition of Indonesian disability and civil society organisations. The coalition effectively advocated for ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), initiated drafting of a CRPD compliant bill, and led all advocacy activities towards its passage. The contribution that POKJA has made has been recognised by the Indonesian Government. The photo shows Maulani Rotinsulu (left) one of the leaders of POKJA receiving an award from the Ministry of Social Affairs in recognition of her role in supporting major legislative reform needed for the Law on Persons with Disabilities. Photo: Disability Rights Fund.

# DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Disability is included in the following goals



“DFAT has been a trailblazer in supporting disability-inclusive development. DFAT’s early and strong support of disability-inclusive development has led to increased visibility on the topic. Much work remains to ensure people with disabilities are treated as equal citizens but strong leadership from Australia will no doubt help advance the cause.” INGO

#### Influencing development partners

**DFAT’s advocacy has been highly influential for some partner agencies.** In the case of the United Nations, DFAT’s advocacy has, in some ways, been transformative for targeted agencies. The updated strategic plans of the United Nations Children’s Fund, United Nations Development Program, United Nations Population Fund and UN Women now all have an explicit focus on disability.

“DFAT’s advocacy has made us realise that we have not done enough on disability.” UN agency

The same level of success was not evident in DFAT’s engagement with the multilateral development banks and with global programs in education and health.

#### Supporting coalitions

DFAT has strengthened collective advocacy for disability-inclusive development by building and participating in a diverse range of coalitions. In line with its commitment to build and strengthen global advocacy approaches Australia was a founding member of Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network. GLAD supports bilateral and multilateral donors, organisations, the private sector and foundations to collaborate with DPOs and partner governments.

#### Improving disability data

Sustained support from DFAT has played a significant role in the development of the Washington Group Questions, a tool for collecting disability data. There is broad consensus supporting the use of these questions.

## Overall Effectiveness

**Prioritising the use of funding for advocacy in a tight budgetary environment was appropriate and has been effective.** DFAT has, by and large, partnered with the right organisations, used the most appropriate approaches and strategically used relatively small amounts of funding to address the most important and pressing needs. The effectiveness of Australian advocacy also reflects the efforts of DFAT staff, who are seen by partners as highly committed and informed. About 85 per cent of external informants rated Australia's advocacy as effective or highly effective.

Australia has been able to be an effective advocate because its advocacy is credible. This credibility is based on well-regarded domestic disability policies, the *'Development for All'* strategies and the alignment of Australian advocacy with best practice. Credibility also stems from consistent, sustained advocacy across DFAT's operations, including at the political and ministerial levels, as well as senior management levels. Supporting 'talk' with funding and action has also built credibility.

**"What next? If Australia stepped back now it could be harmful. Australia has played a unique, broad-ranging role—political, intellectual, supporting better data—that would be hard to replace."** UN agency

## FUTURE WORK

The evaluation made recommendations to secure and build on progress to date. Improving disability inclusion is a generational project—it requires changes in beliefs and attitudes. Recent progress has come about after more than a decade of advocacy. The successes flowing from DFAT advocacy work are not fully secured and still have to be translated into more inclusive development practices. Australia should continue to be a leading advocate for disability-inclusive development to ensure hard-won advances are not lost and that progress continues. The challenge for DFAT will be shifting its advocacy to support implementation of policies on the ground in developing countries that will directly improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.

### Factors that have made Australia a highly credible advocate for disability-inclusive development



### Factors that have made DFAT's advocacy for disability-inclusive development effective



### Office of Development Effectiveness

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) is a unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which monitors the quality and assesses the impact of the Australian aid program.

The full evaluation report, including the management response, is available at [dfat.gov.au/ode](https://dfat.gov.au/ode).