



Australian Disability + Development Consortium

Erin Ryan  
Acting Executive Officer  
Australian Disability and Development Consortium  
56 Rutland Road  
Box Hill VIC 3128  
Phone: +61 3 8843 4579  
[www.addc.org.au](http://www.addc.org.au)

28 February 2017

White Paper Taskforce  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
R.G. Casey Building  
John McEwen Crescent  
Barton 0221 ACT

**BY EMAIL: [whitepaper@dfat.gov.au](mailto:whitepaper@dfat.gov.au)**

Dear Taskforce,

Please find enclosed the Australian Disability and Development Consortium's submission to the foreign policy white paper consultation.

ADDC is an active consortium of individuals, international development organisations, domestic advocacy bodies and disabled people's organisations united by our commitment to a more inclusive world for people with disability. Although many of our members have provided individual submissions to the white paper consultation process, we wish to speak in a collective voice to draw attention to Australia's capacity to further its global leadership in disability-inclusive development by:

1. Adopting inclusion as a core value to underpin Australia's foreign policy;
2. Investing in stable and predictable funding for disability-inclusive development within the aid and foreign policy portfolio;
3. Embodying the principle of 'nothing about us without us' by supporting people with disability to engage in development policy processes from the local to the global levels;
4. Promoting gender parity within disability-inclusive development and foreign policy;
5. Aligning Australia's foreign policy direction with the frameworks set out by the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability; and
6. Influencing global data for disability inclusion.

ADDC thanks the White Paper Taskforce and the wider Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for this opportunity to submit our recommendations for the foreign policy white paper. If you require further information or would like to discuss our recommendations, please get in touch via email at [eryan@addc.org.au](mailto:eryan@addc.org.au) or by phone on (03) 8843 4579.

Yours sincerely,

Erin Ryan  
Acting Executive Officer  
ADDC

## 1. Inclusion as a core value to underpin Australia's foreign policy

---

The Australian Disability and Development Consortium is highly supportive of an Australian foreign policy grounded not only in Australia's national interest, but in its core values. As a consortium with a wide-ranging membership comprised of international development agencies, domestic disabled people's organisations (DPOs), advocacy bodies and supportive individuals, we understand firsthand that Australians of all backgrounds are united by the desire to see a more inclusive world.

Australia's national, values-based commitments to justice, fairness and inclusion have for some years underpinned action which has established our legacy of leadership in disability-inclusive development. On the global stage, Australia has been at the forefront of developing inclusive policy frameworks, championing disability inclusion in humanitarian contexts, and supporting countries in our region to strengthen their own systems to better respond to the needs and capacities of people with disability. This work has been undertaken not to gain political capital or actively pursue leadership, but because it reflects the values and nature of Australians as they engage with their families, communities and the world.

Prioritising inclusion is the right thing to do in line with Australia's values-based commitment to human rights for all people, of all abilities. But it is also the smart thing to do, with early commitments to disability inclusion in development programming and policy leading to wider social change and more enduring development impact. Evidence produced by ADDC members demonstrates, for example, that:

- Early partnerships between the disability inclusion and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sectors have been calculated to result in additional costs of less than three per cent to make new latrines accessible, with this investment resulting in improved individual and broader community health outcomes due to reductions in open defecation<sup>1</sup>;
- Efforts to engage children with disability in mainstream Australian Sports Outreach Program activities in the Pacific have challenged social norms, increased parents' understanding of the capacities of children with disability, and fostered greater community-wide social cohesion<sup>2</sup>; and
- Community development approaches to fostering inclusion for people with psychosocial disability have reduced community-level stigma experienced by individuals and families, and have equipped communities to become more resilient following natural disasters<sup>3</sup>.

Inclusive approaches to development policy and practice are cost-effective, foster strong and resilient communities, and underpin the effective delivery of Australian aid. But more than this, they let the world understand that when Australians offer their support, they do so to all people, of all abilities.

ADDC therefore recommends that:

---

<sup>1</sup> WaterAid. 2011. *What the Global Report on Disability means for the WASH sector*. URL: [http://www.inclusivewash.org.au/\\_literature\\_66387/What\\_the\\_Global\\_Report\\_on\\_Disability\\_means\\_for\\_the\\_WASH\\_sector](http://www.inclusivewash.org.au/_literature_66387/What_the_Global_Report_on_Disability_means_for_the_WASH_sector)

<sup>2</sup> Lauff, J. *Why Sport Matters: Sport for Development in Australia, the Pacific and Asia*. Sport Matters, Sydney, 2014. p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Fernandes, H. and Cantrill, S. 2016. *Inclusion of People with Psychosocial Disability in Low and Middle Income Contexts: A Literature and Practice Review*. TEAR Australia, Melbourne. p. 14.

- 1.1 The forthcoming white paper adopts inclusion as a foundational, values-based principle to underpin our foreign policy; and
- 1.2 The Australian Government embeds disability inclusion as a cornerstone of its campaign for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, and reflects this in any subsequent plan for Australia's HRC term.

## 2. Investing in disability-inclusive development

---

While inclusion is a values-based imperative for Australia's aid and foreign policy, supportive statements alone are not enough to generate real outcomes for people with disability. Inclusion requires stable, predictable and long-term investment. With Australia's foreign policy white paper outlining priorities over the next five-to-ten years, efforts should be made to ensure that underlying policy frameworks such as *Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program* are renewed – if not expanded to cover the broader foreign policy portfolio – and financially-resourced to ensure that principles are translated into action.

A failure to appropriately commit resources to inclusion in line with the values underpinning the foreign policy white paper will have wide-reaching ramifications. Development practitioners increasingly understand that policy and program interventions cannot achieve their objectives in comprehensive poverty alleviation, economic growth and regional stability while inequalities persist, and when people with disability are unable to participate and benefit. The exclusion of people with disability from paid employment undermines community cohesion, with people with psychosocial and intellectual disability in particular being among the least likely to access employment, which perpetuates stigma and exclusion in other important life domains. Exclusion from work carries a high cost not only for individuals, but for societies, due to limitations on productive potential and implications for families and carers. Globally, the International Labour Organisation estimates that the economic exclusion of people with disability may cost countries between 1 to 7 per cent of GDP<sup>4</sup>.

Stable, multi-year investment in *Development for All* and its successor will be fundamental for ensuring that people with disability are reached by both disability-specific aid interventions, and by more accessible mainstream development initiatives. This will ensure that in implementation, the benefit of our renewed foreign policy vision is felt by people with disability across our region and the world.

ADDC therefore recommends that:

- 2.1 The Development for All strategy be renewed, if not expanded to cover the broader foreign policy portfolio, with predictable funding secured for its full term.

---

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organisation. 2012. *Disabilities and Decent Work in the Pacific: The Case of Disability Inclusive Employment*. ILO Country Office for Pacific Island Countries, Suva. p. 6.

### 3. 'Nothing about us without us': supporting people with disability to engage in development policy

---

In Australia, our wider region and around the world, the disability inclusion movement is underpinned by the guiding principle of 'nothing about us without us'. As the Australian Government conceives of our long-term foreign policy future, it should seek to maintain its global leadership in disability-inclusive programming, policy and advocacy. But in doing so, it must also give due consideration to how it can extend a hand to share its elevated platform with people with disability, and ensure that this principle underpins our representation on the global stage.

To put this principle into practice, Australia should continue its support to disability-inclusive structures from the local to the global. In the Pacific, local disabled people's organisations (DPOs) abound. They are the foremost experts in regional disability inclusion, are valued policy advocates and have an unparalleled role to play in contributing to rights-based, barrier-free and gender equitable Pacific societies<sup>5</sup>. Yet many DPOs require support in building the capacity to extend their reach to regional organisations, such as the Pacific Disability Forum and ASEAN Disability Forum, or to global platforms including the UN Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Australia's forthcoming white paper should conceive of this support as fundamental for underpinning inclusive and sustainable foreign policy outreach.

In mapping those regional and global organisations of the greatest strategic importance for our foreign policy objectives, the Australian Government should not confine DPO engagement and broader disability inclusion to disability-specific fora. In order to build greater capacity and embed the contributions of DPOs and their members as invaluable, particular efforts should be made to support their engagement in more 'mainstream' platforms in which Australia is engaged, such as the Commission on the Status of Women or the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. This will not only amplify the voices of people with disability, but will support them to access newer stages and challenge newer audiences for broader development policy change.

ADDC therefore recommends that:

- 3.1 The foreign policy white paper applies the principle of 'nothing about us without us' to determining how engagement with regional and global organisations will be prioritised and carried out; and
- 3.2 The Australian Government considers DPO capacity building as integral to furthering its commitment to inclusion on the global stage, and applies this in relation to both disability-specific and mainstream platforms.

### 4. Promoting gender parity within disability-inclusive development and foreign policy

---

The Australian Government is well-versed in, and committed to addressing, the barriers to women's leadership that characterise many patriarchal societies and structures. One of the most egregious recent examples of women's exclusion from leadership took place not in a Melanesian

---

<sup>5</sup> Rhodes, D. with Macanawai, S., Tawaka, K. and James, R. 2013. *Capacity Development for Effective and Efficient Disabled People's Organisations in Pacific Island Countries: Pacific Report*. Pacific Disability Forum. p. viii.

village council or a remote Afghan *shura*, however; it occurred in the bright halls of the United Nations in Geneva. In June 2016, elections held for the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) saw no women elected, leaving one woman in a continuing role alongside 17 men. This result contravenes the general principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which enshrine non-discrimination and equality between men and women as fundamental, and should be abhorrent to an Australian Government seeking to maintain its international leadership in the pursuit of gender equality and disability inclusion.

The need for improved attention to gender norms in disability-inclusive development and foreign policy is not a mere matter of principle; it is rooted in the real experiences of women with disability experiencing intersectional discrimination, violence and exclusion every day. In our neighbouring Pacific region, women with disability have been found to fare more poorly than both men with disability and women without disability against metrics pertaining to education, employment, freedom from violence, economic status, health and social inclusion<sup>6</sup>. Research undertaken by Monash University and the International Women's Development Agency, in partnership with ADDC members CBM Australia and the Nossal Institute for Global Health, further found that women living with disability in poverty experienced 'triple jeopardy', or a thrice-compounded risk of violence within the family home. This pertained to family emotional violence (experienced by 52.5 per cent of survey respondents with disability, compared to 35.2 per cent without disability), physical violence (25.4 per cent, compared to 11.4 per cent) and non-partner sexual violence (5.7 per cent, compared to 1.1 per cent)<sup>7</sup>. Such experiences are systemic, and require a systemic response. Ensuring gender parity within the CRPD Committee and other decision-making bodies is an essential step towards guaranteeing that the rights of women and girls with disability are protected and promoted.

States Parties such as Australia are responsible for the nomination and election of independent and impartial candidates for treaty bodies. But this is not all Australia can do to ensure that women with disability are supported to have their voices heard. In recognition of the diverse and complex identities of people with disability, attention to gender representation and parity should characterise all work undertaken in disability-inclusive development. Simultaneously, a focus on disability inclusion should be integrated into Australia's extensive work in supporting women's leadership through flagship initiatives such as Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development in line with existing commitments to 'increase the effective representation of women, and women's interests, through leadership at all levels of decision-making'<sup>8</sup>. With a dual approach that supports the leadership of women with disability from the project level up, and from the global CRPD Committee down, Australia can play a role in ensuring that women with disability no longer slip between the cracks of identity and exclusion.

ADDG therefore recommends that:

- 4.1 The foreign policy white paper recognises the diversity of identity experienced by women and people with disability, and ensures that women with disability are engaged in

---

<sup>6</sup> Stubbs, D. and Tawake, S. 2009. *Pacific Sisters with Disabilities: At the Intersection of Discrimination*. UNDP Pacific Centre, Suva. p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Astbury, J. and Walji, F. 2013. *Triple Jeopardy: Gender-based violence and human rights violations experienced by women with disabilities in Cambodia*. AusAID, Canberra. p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 2017. *Pacific Regional — Empowering women and girls*. URL: <http://dfat.gov.au/geo/pacific/development-assistance/Pages/gender-equality-pacific-regional.aspx#pacificwomen>.

mainstream women's leadership initiatives carried out under the Australian aid program; and

- 4.2 The Australian Government develops a multi-year action plan ahead of the 2018 CRPD Committee half-election and subsequent elections, to support qualified women candidates with disability.

## 5. Aligning Australia's foreign policy with inclusive global frameworks

---

Australia's renewed foreign policy vision should be locally-owned and representative of our national values and character. However, this does not mean it should stand alone. The previous foreign policy white paper, delivered in 2003, made no reference to the Millennium Development Goals then in place to coordinate global efforts towards poverty alleviation. But the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are wider-reaching, and more inclusive; in addition to calling for outcomes to be achieved for 'all people, everywhere', disability is specifically referenced 11 times across five goals<sup>9</sup>. The SDGs provide an overarching framework for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in line with not only Australia's interests and values, but shared common interests and values.

Although the adoption of the SDGs has been significant for the global community, these goals do not replace existing structures such as the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability. These frameworks should work in harmony, and in the case of Australia's revised foreign policy vision, can provide valuable guidance. In order for Australia to effectively pursue the SDGs in line with its values-based commitment to inclusion, the CRPD should be used as a guiding framework for implementation; while the SDGs outline where we are going, the CRPD establishes how we can get there. The forthcoming foreign policy white paper should take into account prior recommendations made by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities to the High Level Political Forum<sup>10</sup> and ensure alignment with these existing, groundbreaking frameworks.

While the SDGs themselves have been finalised and agreed, specific underlying indicators will be continually revised. This process provides an opportunity to take our alignment one step further, and actively shape these indicators to better reflect the inclusive world Australia seeks to achieve through its development and foreign policy. As these revisions take place, Australia has a role to play in championing inclusion to ensure that over the years to come our efforts to end poverty, hunger or inequality truly reach 'all people, everywhere'.

ADDC therefore recommends that:

- 5.1 The foreign policy white paper take into account prior recommendations made by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities to the High Level Political Forum and ensure alignment with the SDGs and CRPD; and
- 5.2 The Australian Government commits to continually prioritise inclusion and disaggregation by disability in its efforts to shape the indicators underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals.

---

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Enable, *Disability Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals*. URL: [http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability\\_inclusive\\_sdgs.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability_inclusive_sdgs.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities, 'Persons with Disabilities' in United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2 May 2016. *Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders*. pp. 52-58.



## 6. Influencing global data for disability inclusion

---

Since the introduction of the first *Development for All* strategy in 2009, Australia has been viewed as a global leader in disability inclusion in aid policy and practice. In the context of Australia's forthcoming Foreign Policy White Paper however, we should consider how we can lead not only by example, but by influence.

The Australian aid program's recent experience in dramatically increasing its commitment to and resourcing of gender equality activities has demonstrated what can be achieved in a structurally supportive global environment. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has long implemented a gender marker code to facilitate the improved tracking of expenditure towards gender equality in member states' aid programs. The DAC gender marker has proven its value not only in international reporting, but in driving improvements in Australia's own aid program; when the Australian Government outlined its commitment to ensuring that 80 per cent of aid investments address gender issues, the DAC code was used to maintain consistency of reporting and rapidly assess progress towards a key measure of aid effectiveness.

Australia has taken steps to ensure some monitoring of disability inclusion efforts through its Aid Quality Check. Data on disability-inclusive aid investments, however, is inconsistent and lacking around the world. The OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) does not provide clear and comprehensive data on aid projects related to disability inclusion or impairment prevention. The establishment of a disability marker, in the form of a DAC code, would allow for enhanced reporting standards and ensure improved tracking of development assistance that targets people with disability, including by sector breakdown.

Australia has a long-established leadership role in disability-inclusive development and is well placed to lead the international community in the development of a DAC code for disability inclusion. To do so would strengthen not only Australia's own aid outcomes and reporting, but also our international reputation.

ADDC therefore recommends that:

- 6.1 The forthcoming white paper outlines opportunities to influence global data collection practices through establishing a DAC code for disability inclusion, as a means of ensuring improved future budget tracking on disability globally.

### About ADDC

---

The Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC) is an Australian-based, international network focusing attention, expertise and action on disability in developing countries. We seek to promote the rights and inclusion of people with disability in development activities, and advocate for disability to be fully integrated into all Australian development programs and policies. With over 220 registered individual and organisational members, we are united by our desire to see a world free of poverty, where people with disability are able to exercise their human rights within inclusive, barrier-free and socially just societies.