

DÓCHAS

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

PRESS RELEASE

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Launch of Disability & International Development Week: Disability & Learning Education is Key to Lifting the Most Vulnerable Out of Poverty, say aid agencies

Today, Irish aid agencies called for more efforts to be made on improving access to education for the world's most vulnerable people – those with disabilities. Aid agencies pointed out that though education was a basic human right, the majority of people with disabilities in the developing world continued to miss out on the chance to learn, to know and defend their rights.

The call was made by aid agencies working together in the Dóchas Disability and Development group at the launch of the second edition of the Disability and International Development (DID) week, which aims to raise awareness of the world's largest minority and how important disability issues were, and should be, to international development work.

“One in five of the world's poorest people have a disability, and of 75 million children still missing out on an education, one-third have a disability. Exclusion from education is a significant factor in the high levels of poverty often experienced by people with disabilities and their families. Denying children with disabilities access to a quality education greatly constrains their opportunities to gain independence and skills as adults”.

“Making education more responsive to the needs of children with disabilities is now one of the most pressing concerns if we are to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education” said Ruth Coleman, Chair of the Dóchas Disability and Development group.

The global literacy rate for adults with disabilities is as low as 3 per cent; and 1 per cent for women with disabilities, according to a UNDP study. Literacy and education have long been recognised as key ways in which people can free themselves from the vicious cycle of poverty. Yet, the majority of people with disabilities in the developing world continue to miss out on the chance to learn, to know and defend their basic human rights, and to shape their own future.

Speaking on the occasion of the DID week, Minister of State for Overseas Development Peter Power TD said:

“I warmly welcome initiatives by the Dóchas Disability and Development group and by its members to make linkages between work on disability in Ireland with work in developing countries. Raising awareness of the rights and capacities of people living with disabilities and fighting against stigma is a global concern. Poverty certainly adds to the challenges and to the complexity of the response.

“Irish Aid's work to date on disability reflects the understanding that issues associated with disability, including the need for prevention, require action and partnership at global, regional, national and community levels”.

[ENDS]

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NOTE FOR EDITORS

- The **Disability and International Development Week** runs from 9 until 13 June.. It features a series of events ranging from Seminars, photo exhibition and documentary screening in Dublin (9-13 June), Enniskillen (11 June) and Belfast (12 June). For a full programme of events, log on to www.dochas.ie

- The **DID Week** is organised by the Dóchas Disability and Development working group. The Dóchas Disability and Development Working Group members include: Aspire, CBM Ireland, Comber Romanian Orphanage Appeal, Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), DTalk at The Kimmage Development Studies Centre, International Service Ireland (ISI), Livability Ireland, Misean Cara, Sightsavers International, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, and The Centre for Global Health (CGH-TCD).

- **Dóchas** is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and co-operation between its 44 members and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues.

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