



# The Status of Disability Mainstreaming and Disability Inclusion in Development and Humanitarian Practice

**dóchas**

The Irish Association  
of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations



University College Dublin  
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath  
Ireland's Global University

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The report was developed based on a Master Thesis (Master of Public Administration in Development Practice) prepared by Charlotte Thumser under the supervision of Dr Flavia Santos at University College Dublin in collaboration with Dóchas.

University College Dublin and Dóchas have jointly produced this Report: ***Dóchas Report: The Status of Disability Mainstreaming and Disability Inclusion in Development and Humanitarian Practice*** with inputs from several international non-governmental organisations based in Ireland to provide an overview on disability inclusion and mainstreaming; and to reinforce the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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### **Conflicts of interest**

None of the experts involved in the development of this report declared any conflicts of interest.

All reasonable precautions have been taken by the authors to verify the information contained in this publication. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader. In no event shall the authors be liable for damages arising from its use.

Cover photo: Pictured is Shamilla a 12 year old girl with other pupils in her classroom at Sure Prospects Primary School, an inclusive school. Shamilla has Cerebral Palsy and associates well with her classmates. Sure Prospects is a partner school with CoRSU Hospital, CBM's partner in Entebbe district in Uganda. ©CBM

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Sightsavers Ireland  
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### PHOTO STORY: Hae, Laos

10-year-old Hae was born with various special needs. Her legs are not strong, making it difficult for her to walk very far. She also has a problem with her eyesight and faces difficulties to speak. Despite these obstacles, Hae has not let her disabilities hold her back and with Plan International's support attends her local primary school.

*"I have received scholarship from Plan, I am so happy about that as it will help me to complete my primary education. It is amazing to get that scholarship, otherwise I might end up dropping out,"* Hae says. She also attends a student



Credit: Plan International

learning club organised by Plan International a few times a week at her school where she gets to take part in fun activities with her friends such as reading, playing games and singing songs.

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Acronyms	
CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
INGOs	International non-governmental organisations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

# Foreword



The World Report on Disability calculates that more than a billion people worldwide have some form of impairment, representing around 15% of the global population. Over four out of every five people with disabilities live in the developing world which has a higher prevalence of disability impairment than higher income countries.

As a group, persons with disabilities are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes than persons without disabilities, such as lower outcomes from education, poorer health outcomes, lower levels of employment, and higher poverty rates.

In 2020, Covid-19 has caused major disruption to the development aid and humanitarian response landscape.

International evidence and voices from the international disability movement have highlighted the rise of significant risks of discrimination and the undermining of rights for persons with disabilities caused by the pandemic.

However, 2020 has also provided an opportunity to pause and reimagine how we might build back better and ensure that moving forward no one is left behind. It has shown us the resilience of many communities to respond to those most marginalised in times of crises.

It is timely that earlier this year, the Dóchas Disability in International Development Working Group commissioned research to explore the Status of Disability Mainstreaming and Disability Inclusion in Development and Humanitarian Practice. This report presents the research, its findings and resulting recommendations to pave the way for inclusion.

We greatly appreciate the contributions of Dóchas member organisations and Irish Aid to the research. We are also grateful for the work of the researcher, Charlotte Thumser with support and guidance from her supervisor Dr Flavia Santos, UCD School of Psychology, UCD Centre for Disability Studies.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Keatinge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Suzanne Keatinge**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Dóchas**

# Executive Summary

Ireland is an important actor in development cooperation. Its partnerships with civil society organisations, including international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), to deliver bilateral development aid, and its 2021-2022 membership in the UN Security Council present a real opportunity to become a champion for disability mainstreaming and inclusion. Disability is featured in A Better World, Ireland's 2019 international development policy, and emphasises Ireland's ambition to advance the rights of minorities, including those of persons with disabilities.

This report explores disability inclusion and disability mainstreaming practices of both disability focused and mainstream INGOs based in Ireland. Sixteen key informants in two disability focused and nine mainstream INGOs were interviewed to gather insights on the diverse experiences related to disability inclusion and mainstreaming. The interviews were conducted between May and July 2020 and analysed following an inductive approach. Some of the key findings from the research are highlighted below:

- **Strategic direction** – In disability focused organisations, persons with disabilities are the key target group and partnering with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) is a key component, to ensure that persons with disabilities are agents of change. In mainstream organisations the approaches differ: in some INGOs represented by key informants, persons with disabilities are addressed as part of vulnerable or marginalised population groups. In other INGOs within the sample, operations are specifically focussed on being responsive to persons with disabilities and their needs, as they appear within programming.
- **INGOs taking action** – Key informants shared rich examples involving persons with disabilities in development and humanitarian response.
  - The **Washington Group Questions are used by some INGOs** to identify persons with disabilities during needs assessment and in project monitoring, key informants from other INGOs in the sample reported partnering with OPDs or communities to identify specific households.
  - **In programming**, there are examples of projects with a specific focus on persons with disabilities and of mainstream projects that reached persons with disabilities.
  - **In humanitarian action**, examples highlight responsive approaches in which the needs of persons with disabilities were systematically captured during needs assessments. The findings indicate that data disaggregation by disability status is currently done sporadically and there is little quantitative data available to measure the impact for persons with disabilities.
- **Inclusion in the workplace** – Disability is increasingly discussed within organisations and training focused on disability inclusion and mainstreaming has been rolled out in most of the organisations interviewed.

- The research identified **different drivers for disability mainstreaming and inclusion**, including the needs within the target community, organisational responsibility to mainstream based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goals commitments, organisational commitment towards inclusion, diversity and adherence to programme standards, and a donor requirement for disability inclusion.
- The research revealed **challenges and barriers**, related to the invisibility of disability, diversity of disability, a lack of knowledge and resources, data collection, competing priorities and overall organisational commitment to disability.

## Recommendations Based on Research Findings

### 1. Driving Change

INGOs are increasingly reflecting on disability inclusion in programmes, evaluation, and planning with many developing new policies and internal guidance around inclusion and accessibility.

However, it is evident from this research that to ensure real progress and success, increased donor guidance and resourcing is key. Donor requirements and technical guidance can have a lasting impact on the prioritisation of disability in an organisational context, provide additional budgeting capacity, enhance resourcing, and incentivise investments by INGOs.

The research has also shown a significant commitment and motivation within the sector to be a driving force for change. This can be realised through increased internal capacity to leverage and influence donor resourcing priorities and policies.

### 2. Shared Learning

INGOs commonly expressed during this research, that experiences around mainstreaming disability and disability inclusion need to be shared more within and among INGOs and indeed with the public. Both successes and difficulties need to be communicated to allow for common learning and skill sharing. It is particularly important that mainstream INGOs step up and communicate their results and experiences.

### 3. Data is Key

The collection of disaggregated data is increasingly being explored by larger INGOs, an analysis of this new data will make further evidence available on the prevalence of disability, and the needs of persons with disabilities. It will also guide future practices to promote inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. The introduction of the OECD DAC marker on disability should greatly increase disability data collection and reporting.

#### 4. Nothing About Us Without Us

Working in partnership with OPDs and disability focused INGOs is an important and much used approach for mainstream INGOs. Involving persons with disabilities as agents of change results in them being empowered to address their needs directly and will deliver sustainable systemic change in the medium to long term.

#### 5. Resources & Champions

Current capacity and dedicated human resources for mainstreaming disability and inclusion across programmes and humanitarian response was identified as the main challenge and barrier to key informant INGOs. Internal champions for disability are a key driver towards progression of mainstreaming. It is recommended that, if organisations are serious about mainstreaming, a specific resource is assigned to drive it as well as encouraging and empowering internal champions to be the voice of inclusion.

#### 6. Space for All

The research highlighted the perception of many INGOs that others may be better equipped to mainstream disability, asking how they could complement the work of others or enable the work of others without replacing them. Disability focused INGOs can only achieve so much, there is an abundance of space for all INGOs to mainstream disability. It is recommended that INGOs seek out technical support and guidance from not only disability focused INGOs, but others in the sector who are on the journey to mainstreaming.

#### PHOTO STORY: Jahanara, Bangladesh

Jahanara Begum (35) has been blind since birth and her parents weren't aware that she could go to school as a visually impaired person. It wasn't until 2009 that she realised she could do things for herself. After receiving training provided by Sightsavers (funded by European Commission) – including how to walk using a white cane, and how to read Braille - Jahanara was asked to help set up an organisation that people with disabilities could run, to overcome the problems they faced together, and she jumped at the chance.

In her roles as leader of a disability self-help group in Raipura sub-district, and co-ordinator of the other 29 groups across



Credit: Sightsavers/Tommy Trenchard

Narsingdi district, Jahanara negotiates with local government, police commissioners, philanthropists and mayors, *“My role is to make the rights of people with disabilities available in society and to ensure they live with dignity, that’s my responsibility.”*



# A. Introduction

## Why this report?

It is estimated that over 15% of the global population<sup>i</sup> experience some form of disability, 80% of whom are living in developing countries.<sup>ii</sup> Persons with disabilities are among the most marginalised in contexts of crises, are disproportionately affected by humanitarian emergencies, disability is closely associated with poverty, and persons with disability are often denied agency.

Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group. They have diverse lived experiences, and are differentially affected by barriers in their environment, such as attitudinal, communication, institutional, policy or physical barriers, which hinder participation and inclusion in society, humanitarian action and development, in interaction with differences in age, gender, ethnicity, and other factors.<sup>iii</sup> This intersectionality causes persons with disability to experience multiple needs and varying degrees of discrimination, exclusion and risk.

Ireland is strongly committed to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and has recently ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). As emphasised in *A Better World*, Ireland is a strong supporter of the “*rallying call to reach the furthest behind first*”<sup>iv</sup> and is stepping up to take on responsibility in the UN Security Council in 2021-2022. The cooperation and delivery of bilateral aid through international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) is an important component of Ireland’s development aid and is built on strong and historic ties.

### PHOTO STORY: Sudip, Nepal

Sudip, 13, was born with multiple disabilities, both intellectual and physical. His father and 16 year old brother died when their house collapsed on them during an earthquake, however Sudip, his two elder sisters and mother survived the disaster.

Sudip attended school irregularly when Plan International’s Community Facilitator identified him as needing support due to difficulties with his mobility. Plan International provided Sudip with a wheelchair and gave him training in how to use it at a mobility camp. After receiving his wheelchair he is now regular attending



Credit: Plan/Rajesh Rai

school with support from his family, neighbours and friends. He enjoys English lessons and scores excellent marks in this subject compared to other students in the class.

INGOs have an important role to play in long term development and humanitarian response. INGOs work to alleviate poverty, reduce inequalities, reach people in crises and further are important supporters of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.<sup>v</sup>

Against this backdrop this report presents an analysis of current practices and experiences of a sample of disability focused and mainstream INGOs based in Ireland, with regards to responding to the needs of persons with disabilities. It addresses the question of how INGOs, particularly mainstream INGOs, perceive their own role in mainstreaming disability in development and humanitarian practice. The report explores the achievements, and challenges reported by key informants and investigates how INGOs are influenced in their work on disability by national and international development objectives.

## Research Methods

This report has been built on the responses from key-informant interviews that were carried out between May and July 2020. Participants in key-informant interviews are representatives from the Irish INGO sector. Sixteen in depth interviews with informants from nine mainstream INGOs and two disability focused INGOs were carried out. Furthermore, one interview with a key informant in Irish Aid was held. The interviews were subsequently transcribed and analysed following an inductive approach. In addition to key-informant interviews, a documentary review of published Annual Reports of all Dóchas member organisations was carried out. The report further introduces Ireland's role in international development and humanitarian assistance, explores Ireland's approach and practices towards disability inclusion, and describes the role of cooperation between Irish Aid and Irish INGOs.

### PHOTO STORY: Lesline, Cameroon

Being in school has transformed life for Lesline (9), her friends help her with her wheelchair so that she can play with them at break time and she enjoys her lessons. Lesline was 7 years old when she started going to school and before that she would help at home. The best part of school of Lesline is playing with her best friend.

Lesline's mother spoke to us about the impact school has had on Lesline, *"She is happier, and she is very intelligent. Since she got enrolled in this school, I think she has equal opportunities as other children."*



Credit: Sightsavers/Rodrick Mbock

*Even in church she attempts to lead activities in church. Her confidence has grown now she is full of hopes now".*

### PHOTO STORY: Ernest and Miguel

The brothers Ernest (14) and Miguel (11) attend school at a Disability Rehabilitation Centre in Gabu, Guinea-Bissau. Both brothers were born with the same hearing difficulty. When they arrived at the centre two years ago, they were able to learn sign language and can now communicate with each other and the world around them.

Children with disabilities are often faced with stigma and shame, Ernest and Miguel did not receive the care they needed and had limited access to education. Plan International's inclusive education EQulP programme, funded by Irish Aid, works on



Credit: Katie Hennessy

increasing the quality of learning by working with children with disabilities and their families. Through the programme, teachers at Ernest and Miguel's local secondary school have been trained in sign language.

### PHOTO STORY: Mark & Asumpta, Uganda

Mark and Asumpta attending the Special Needs Centre in Kauga, Uganda, run by the missionary organisation the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary.

Mark, who has Cerebral Palsy is pictured with his mother. Asumpta is pictured with her father.

The Centre which is supported by Irish Aid through Mísean Cara, provides support to children, and their parents, who have experience of various disabilities.



Credit: Sam Whelan-Curtin

## B. Ireland's Role in Development & Humanitarian Action

Ireland is an important player in international cooperation, focusing on reducing hunger and improving resilience; inclusive and sustainable economic growth; better governance, human rights, and accountability. Irish Aid, the Government of Ireland's official international development aid programme administered through the Department of Foreign Affairs, is an integral part of Ireland's broader foreign policy. In 2019 the country provided 832 million Euros (USD 935 million) in official development assistance (ODA), amounting to 0.31% of Gross National Income.<sup>vi</sup> Ireland is a valued partner for multilateral organisations and civil society organisations and ranked first in the Principled Aid Index 2020, assessing aid allocations based on their focus on critical development vulnerabilities, global cooperation, and focus on development gains over national interests.<sup>vii</sup>

In 2021-2022 Ireland is further stepping up as a member of the UN Security Council, where Ireland will champion areas such as sustainable development, climate action, and gender equality. At this level, Ireland can also act as a champion for disability inclusion and mainstreaming.

### Working in partnership with civil society organisations

#### **Significance of the CRPD for Non-State Actors**

Non-state actors, such as INGOs, have moral or ethical obligations to safeguard and promote human rights of persons with disabilities.

INGOs envision improving the living conditions of those most in need, promote development objectives, and are committed to principles such as 'do no harm'. Excluding persons with disabilities from development and humanitarian practice further marginalise persons with disabilities. When INGOs transform and improve the lives of members of the general population without addressing persons with disabilities, the living conditions of persons with disabilities remain stagnant and inequalities between persons with disabilities with persons in their environment increase.

Additionally, INGOs often implement bilateral aid. Obligations of State parties to the CRPD therefore may also translate into bilateral cooperation implemented by and through INGOs.

Irish Aid partners intensively with civil society organisations for implementing bilateral aid. In 2019, Ireland supported 44 civil society organisations with more than €85 million in grants for work in education, social protection, health, agriculture, governance and human rights in more than 70 developing countries.<sup>viii</sup>

When working with INGOs, Irish Aid only sporadically reviews the grantees' approaches to disability inclusion and mainstreaming. Some but not all grantees report data disaggregated by disability. However, this may become a formal requirement in future funding rounds for civil society funding, including through the recent adoption of the OECD DAC marker for disability, a new tool introduced to flag where ODA is allocated aimed at promoting inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities.<sup>ix</sup>

It is therefore an opportune time to review how INGOs currently address disability within their development and humanitarian programming, and what can be done to build on their achievements and tackle the barriers that exist.

## Ireland's approach to disability inclusion

### Who Are Persons With Disabilities?

Persons with disabilities include persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, sensory, or other impairments which in interaction with various barriers in their environment may prevent them from participating fully and effectively in, or having access to services, protection, development or humanitarian programmes, information and society as a whole.

Persons with disabilities are a diverse group, there are different types of impairments and variations in severity of impairments. Some persons are born with disabilities whereas others acquire disabilities later in life. There are persons with multiple impairments and impairments may have varying disabling effects on individuals based on differences in their environment and persons age and socioeconomic status.

Other ascribed characteristics or identities influence the lived experiences of persons with disabilities, they are women, indigenous people, children, LGBTQI+, etc. The intersectionality of these characteristics may result in persons with disabilities facing multiple forms of discrimination. An understanding of these differences is crucial to fully understand oppressions, discrimination, or violations persons with disabilities face.

A Better World, the Government of Ireland's 2019 International Development Policy, provides a framework for an expanding development cooperation programme. The policy underlines Ireland's commitment to the SDGs and focuses on reaching the **"furthest behind first"**.

It identifies that persons with disabilities often experience systemic levels of discrimination and marginalisation, alongside other vulnerable groups, and addresses disability directly under three separate sections (B.2 Development Challenges, C.5 Strengthening Governance, D.3 People). People are a particular focus of the policy, with an emphasis on universal access to health, education, and social protection, particularly focusing on the *“delivery of social services to the most vulnerable, with particular focus on improved outcomes for women and girls, minorities and the inclusion of people living with disabilities”*.<sup>x</sup> Ireland is a strong promoter of gender equality and for Irish Aid this concept encompasses advancing the rights of other minorities, including persons with disabilities - a concept which is reflected in the findings of this report and through the responses of the key informant in Irish Aid:

***“When we talk about gender we talk about women and girls and we are not forgetting women and girls with disabilities, because we know they are often amongst the furthest behind, so we are trying to reach our commitment to not only not to leave them behind but to reach those who are furthest behind first.”***

(Key informant in Irish Aid)

Ireland does not yet have a strategy on disability in international development and humanitarian action and Ireland's National Strategy on Disability does not cover international cooperation. While Ireland is a member of the Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD)<sup>xi</sup>, a network working to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in international development and humanitarian action, it has not yet endorsed the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.<sup>xii</sup>

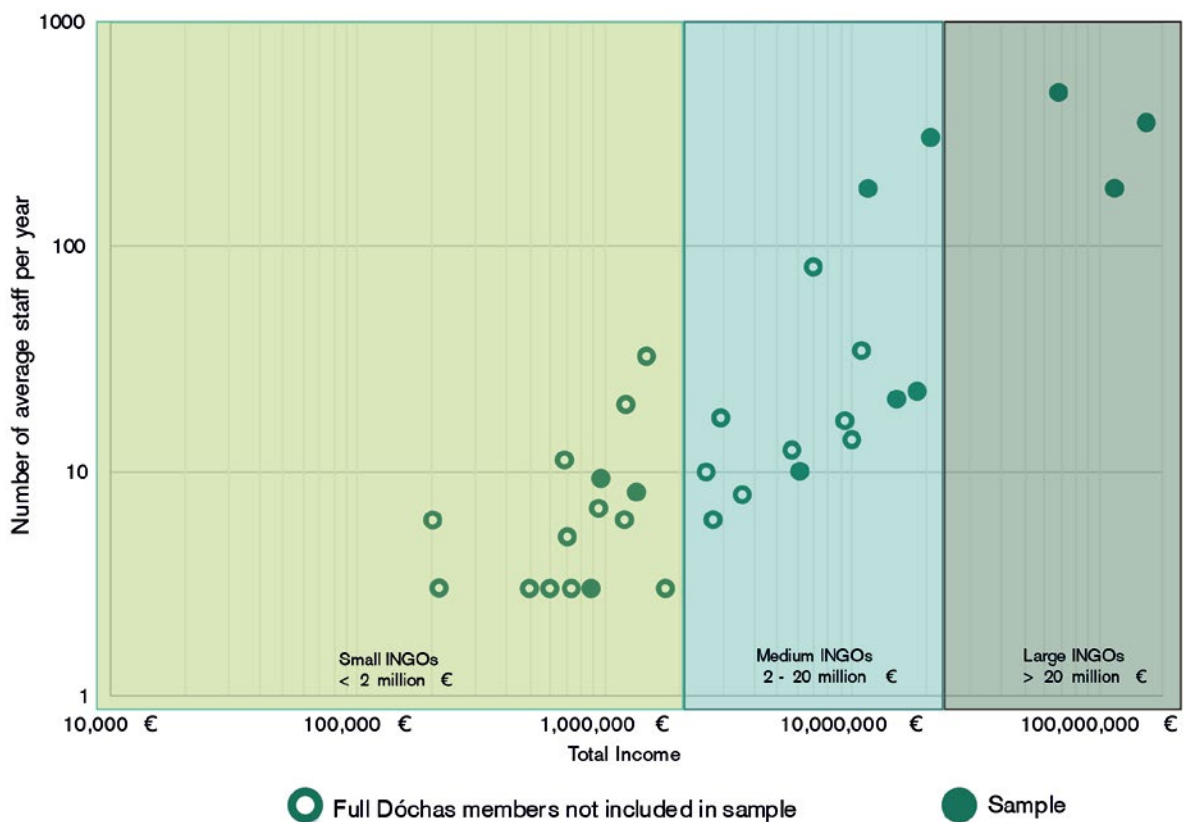
At time of writing, within Irish Aid there is one advisor dedicating a share of their time to disability. A guidance note providing practical advice on making programmes inclusive and accessible and introducing the OECD DAC marker on disability has been developed and is set to be released internally in 2021.

## C. The Research Findings In More Detail

Overall, the research points to the fact that Dóchas members have gained diverse experiences related to disability inclusion and mainstreaming. This section summarises those experiences based on the inputs of sixteen key informants in nine mainstream and two disability focused INGOs and on a desk review of information made publicly available by organisations.

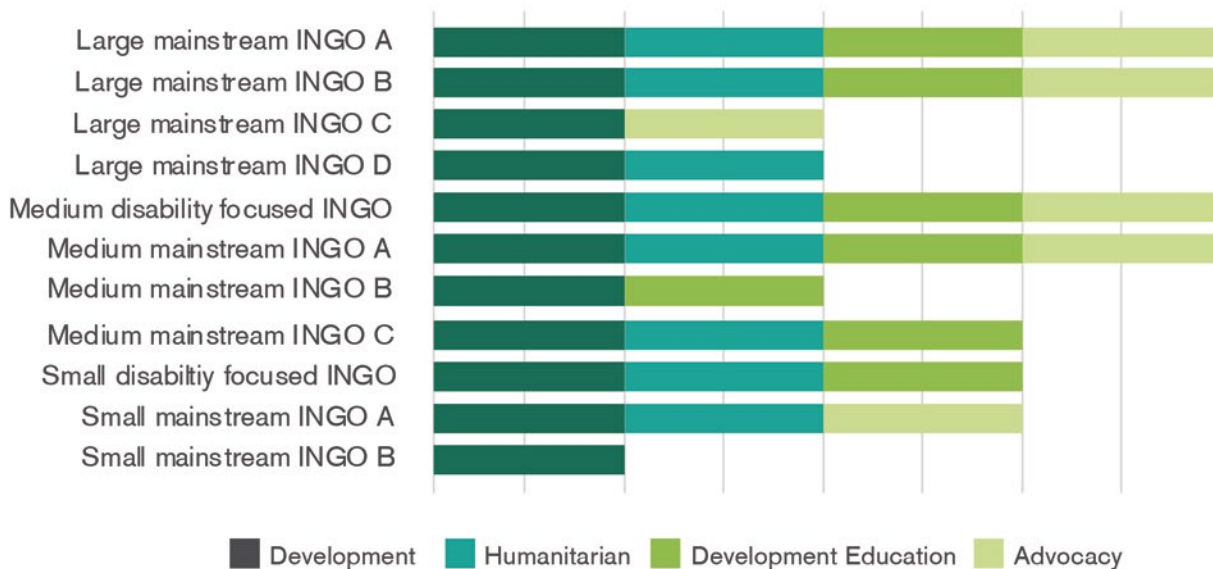
### The profile of INGOs interviewed

The organisations included in the sample have different key objectives, are of different size and scope, and as such represent the diversity of organisations which form part of the Dóchas network. The differences in income and staffing of Dóchas members is depicted in Figure 1 which further organises INGOs into three size categories based on their income. The sample included six key informants in large INGOs, six key informants from medium INGOS and four key informants from small INGOs.



Source: Thumser (2020) . Figures were retrieved from published documents, staff figures exclude staff based in field operations.

Organisations represented in the findings work across the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, development education and advocacy. All organisations represented in the sample work on development, whereas not all are equally involved in the other three activities (Figure 2).



## Key themes which emerged from the interviews

### a) Disability Inclusion in the INGO Workplace

Most INGOS interviewed do not collect data on the disability status of their staff, nor do they require staff to declare their disability status. Among the sample, there were two INGOS that reported persons with disabilities among their staff, including one disability focused INGO. It was also found that the accessibility of headquarters and field offices is mixed, and the size of the organisation matters, as smaller INGOS encounter more difficulties to secure accessible office space.

Disability is a topic increasingly discussed within organisations. In nine out of the eleven organisations interviewed, staff had received at least some training on disability inclusion. However, training may have been limited to specific staff, and in some instances was not recent or updated. Five INGOS, including the two disability focused organisations indicated that they have focal points for disability on an organisational, and in some cases, international level.



## b) Strategic direction towards mainstreaming disability

The INGOs interviewed identified different approaches towards disability inclusion and mainstreaming. In disability focused INGOs disability inclusion and mainstreaming is approached strategically, while in mainstream INGOs the findings suggest that approaches are based on a general application of human rights based interventions, responsiveness to needs, or in a non-coordinated manner.

For disability focused INGOs, persons with disabilities are the main target group. Mainstream INGOs have different entry points, for the majority of organisations interviewed, persons with disabilities are addressed as part of their wider target population, often perceived as among the most marginalised or vulnerable parts of the population and included through frameworks aiming to reach the 'furthest behind'. For those INGOs addressing promotion of education, key informants reported that the focus is specifically on increasing access for children with disabilities and girls.

For disability-focussed INGOs interviewed, not surprisingly, it was found that disability mainstreaming and inclusion is part of their organisational mandate. For mainstream organisations it is widely considered a mandate, however, to varying extents and with difficulties in the realisation:

***“[Mainstreaming] is in our mandate, it is definitely there but it is seen as something that is specialised for somebody else (...) We don't want to occupy space that is already occupied by others. How do we complement the work of others or enable the work of others without replacing it?”***

(Key informant in a mainstream medium sized INGO)

Disability mainstreaming and inclusion was reported as something mainstream organisations should be working on; it may be part of their mandate but often was not seen as a focus. For some organisations it appeared to be part of their mandate, though only in so far as their target population included persons with disabilities.

Large mainstream INGOs interviewed feature disability in their policy frameworks: one has a dedicated policy for incorporating disability, three INGOs feature disability within their strategy, policies on gender equality, or guidance on programme cycle management. Key informants expressed that while policies are important, champions for disability inclusion within the organisation and working in partnership with local OPDs or disability focused INGOs had a stronger effect in practice.

***“There are a number of people within the organisation across the globe who act as champions and try (...) and make sure it doesn't get left behind. It does feel sometimes that we have to work quite hard (...) to keep it to the fore, to keep it visible. It's something that's evolving overtime and (...) while we signed the charter that doesn't necessarily translate into practise all that readily and I think we still have a way to go.”***

(Key informant in large mainstream INGO)

## INGOs taking action on inclusive programming

### Disability Mainstreaming & Inclusion

Disability inclusion requires a combination of targeted approaches and mainstreaming to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are met. This dual pathway approach of mainstream and targeted interventions is known as the twin-track approach to disability inclusion.

Mainstreaming is a strategic approach, a means to achieving equality for persons with disabilities. It is the adoption of disability inclusive practices across all operations of an INGO. Mainstreaming requires coherent design, planning, evaluation, research, advocacy, resource allocation, and, most importantly, involves ensuring that the perspectives of persons with disabilities are central to all activities. Mainstreaming is a shared responsibility among different actors in development and humanitarian practice.

Rich examples emerged from the interviews on how INGOs take action to include persons with disabilities in their projects and programmes (for detailed examples see the case studies integrated into this report). This section describes key themes that emerged from the interviews on inclusive programming.

#### a) Identifying person with disabilities

The identification of persons with disabilities can be challenging as *“they are not the ones that know about community meetings”* (Key informant in large mainstream INGO), or families may be *“ashamed to have a disabled child in public”* (Key informant in medium mainstream INGO).

Five of the nine mainstream organisations interviewed, reported having implemented the Washington Group Questions.<sup>xiv</sup> Other strategies identified include working with OPDs and communities to identify specific households. One organisation reported using a ‘broad brush’ approach, targeting a community and all those within it.

#### b) Disability inclusion in development programming

In development programming, key informants reported both examples of projects with a specific focus on persons with disabilities and of projects which reached persons with disabilities without intentionally targeting them.

Disability focused INGOs interviewed highlighted a multitude of examples for mainstreaming disability through all stages of a project – throughout design, implementation, and evaluation. A project in East Africa actively involved persons with disabilities:

*“The (OPDs) are in essence also implementing partners, they’re having their capacity built in terms of advocacy training resources. And the*

*idea is that at the end of the programme the (OPDs) are the ones who actually continue the activities of the project and for long term.”*

(Key informant disability -focused INGO)

Mainstream organisations interviewed also highlighted how they implemented projects focusing on persons with disabilities. One example brought forward was a five-year multi-country programme in West Africa with an emphasis on increasing access to childcare, primary, and secondary education for girls and children with disabilities, with different components aimed to reduce both physical and attitudinal barriers.

*“We are working to try and embed a de-segregated approach for children with disabilities so that they’re not learning separately but included and embedded into the classroom, as well, which means that teachers need training and special needs assistants as well.”*

(Key informant from mainstream INGO)

Another example included a project, not specifically focused on persons with disabilities, involving young people in leadership development, economic empowerment activities, and delivering training in East Africa, reaching a group of young people with physical disabilities:

*“Some of them have now stepped up into leadership roles and they have even been requested by other organisations to almost be like ambassadors, raising awareness around disability”*

(Key informant mainstream INGO)

#### **PHOTO STORY: Gulnaz, Pakistan**

Gulnaz Bibi (30) survived the 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan that killed more than 87,000 people. She was only 15 when the earthquake struck her village, causing the roof above her to collapse, killing her whole family. Gulnaz was seriously injured and her backbone badly damaged. She was moved to a nearby hospital, then to a rehab centre in Islamabad where she was diagnosed with lower limb paralysis. With no family left to take care of her, she had no choice but to settle in the rehab facility permanently.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck Pakistan and the country went into lockdown, Gulnaz and the other residents of the rehab facility were asked to leave, to avoid the risk of the virus spreading. Gulnaz had no family to turn to and nowhere



Credit: Sightsavers/Saiyna Bashir

to go. She called Sightsavers to seek help, and the team in Pakistan arranged accommodation for her in a government-owned hostel within a special education centre.

Gulnaz is missing all her friends and the lockdown has been hard. Gulnaz is waiting to return to the rehab centre where she can live with all her friends once again.

### c) Disability inclusion in humanitarian response

In humanitarian response, INGOs provided further examples of including persons with disabilities. In forced displacement, an INGO described that following “*consultations with the communities and profiling need, (...) adjustments to ramps were made within the camp, disability inclusive washroom facilities were made available and additional lighting was installed*” (Key informant in a large mainstream INGO). The INGO has a systematic approach to ensuring that persons with disabilities are captured in the needs assessments, and the implementation is responsive to the needs of beneficiaries. OPDs are frequently among the partners implementing the project.

A similar example was shared by a medium mainstream INGO: In response to the needs of a refugee population the organisation identified “*specific households within the target population who will need special access to latrines*” in partnership with a disability focused INGO, the organisation would then “*meet with the individuals concerned and based on their specific needs, design latrine facility specific to their needs*” (Key informant in a medium mainstream INGO).

#### PHOTO STORY: Ashis

Ashis (15) has multiple impairments since his birth – he cannot walk by his own nor can he talk and hear. Ashis takes a medicine prescribed by the doctor. However, since the Cyclone Amphan and due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the family had no money to buy the medicine. Through CBM funded response by its partner SSDC, the family of Ashis has received necessary relief and health support, hygiene kit as well as a wheelchair for Ashis.



Credit: SSDC

## CASE STUDY: Concern Worldwide - Graduation Programme

**Concern Worldwide** addresses factors that are linked to the lived experiences of extremely poor people, such as disability, exclusion, inequality, and discrimination in their programming. The Graduation model which is part of the livelihoods programme is an integrated and sequenced form of support designed to ensure a pathway out of extreme and chronic poverty. By improving returns on new and existing assets, addressing inequality, and reducing risk and vulnerability, programmes aim to address not only the root causes of poverty but also the factors that contribute to people remaining poor.

The programme consists of a number of core components: comprehensive targeting; income support; technical and business skills training; regular coaching and mentoring; facilitating access to basic services (health, education) and financial services; and finally, a capital/asset transfer.



Credit: Concern/Anatole Bazike

In Manono, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, César Banza Wa Numbi was selected to participate in the Concern Graduation programme.

César is married and a father of five children, he also cares for seven children left by his brother who died a few years ago. César lives with a physical disability and relies on a mobility aid. Before participating in the Graduation programme, César covered the families most basic needs by sewing small products he sold within his neighbourhood.

César benefitted from the programme and its various trainings, in addition, César received cash transfers for 14 months (US\$ 14) and an asset transfer (US\$ 100):

***“When I started being supported by Concern, I opened a business of buying and selling goods like soaps and soft drinks. I started with two cartons of goods and soft drinks procured from downtown to resell in the area by retailing. Now I can buy up to more than 10 boxes. (...) With the money I put aside each month and what I received as support for the asset transfer, I bought a second sewing machine for 150,000Fc and an overcasting machine at 120,000Fc. Now I make several models and this attracts a lot more customers. Thanks to my nephew who sells in a store in town, I found a place to sew in downtown Manono. Here I have more customers and I make clothes at a high price compared to the neighbourhood.”***

César explained benefits of the training components of the programme: ***“I learned a lot from these different trainings, especially on the management of the fund, the calculation of profits and how to make savings. When I started applying what I have learnt, I improved the way I manage money, how to make spending rationally. It helped me a lot.”***

César is now able to send seven children to school, whereas previously only three children were enrolled in schools. César was able to buy some furniture and kitchen utensils and is now planning to rebuild the family home.

By consciously targeting, recognising capacities, and providing appropriate support the returns to persons living with disabilities can be hugely significant, not just in terms of economic wellbeing but also in terms of the wellbeing, self-confidence, and inclusion of persons with disabilities themselves as well as their wider family.

## CASE STUDY: Oxfam - Standing up for the rights of persons with disabilities

Everyone deserves to have a voice. In Uganda, Mercy Ocotoco and Chris Osooti are a voice for persons with disabilities, many of whom face discrimination every day.

The community leaders, who are visually impaired, participated in the Youth Ignite Programme. The project is run by Oxfam's partner UYONET and builds the capacities and confidence of young people to lead in the areas of governance, lobbying and advocacy.

*"People do not believe that a sight-impaired person can work or perform well in a job,"* said Chris, who not only works, but sits on a committee which oversees how government grants for persons with disabilities are spent. He wants other young persons with disabilities to do the same to help end discrimination.



Credit: Oxfam/Kieron Crawley

Mercy is also changing attitudes towards persons with disabilities in Uganda by regularly appearing on local radio stations to raise public awareness about disabilities. She concluded:

*"We used to fear speaking out, but not anymore."*

## CASE STUDY: Plan International - Disability is not an Inability

In humanitarian response, **Plan International** promotes and protects the rights of people living with disabilities, giving them access to quality education, and healthcare.

Michael, 14, fled violence in Central African Republic and found shelter in a refugee camp in Cameroon with his parents. *“I was born in good health. I was a joyous child full of energy. At the age of three, I complained about a pain in my leg. This worsened as the days passed and a year later, I couldn’t walk”*, explains Michael, who arrived in Cameroon 3 years ago.

At the camp in the East region of Cameroon, Michael loves to read and does not see his disability as a setback. He enrolled at school in the camp despite the logistical challenges of getting there every day. *“I spent 45 to 60 minutes crawling to school every day, located 400 meters from my home. At the end of the school year, my performance proved that my disability is not an inability. I was second in my class”*, says Michael proudly.

With support from Irish Aid funding to Plan International, Michael was provided with a wheelchair to help him get to and from school. He also received a Disabled Persons’ Card that gives him free access to public schools, reduced cost for access to healthcare and public transportation services. *“As I had to crawl for about one hour to get to school, I always arrived late. When it rained, I had to crawl in dirty water and mud. Since I got my wheelchair, I get to school on time. Some of my schoolmates who use to laugh at me now play with me and offer to push me around in my wheelchair.”*

Children living with a disability often experience discrimination and are denied access to quality education, healthcare, and clean water. Plan International and its partners ensure children living with disabilities receive physiotherapy and are provided with orthopaedic equipment such as special shoes, sandals, and crutches. They are also working to ensure children living with disabilities have access to clean water and recreational facilities such as sliding boards, swings, balls, puzzle games and drawing materials.

Plan International Cameroon is currently putting resources in place to scale up the project to help other refugee children like Michael access their full rights.



Credit: Plan International



#### d) Measuring impact for persons with disabilities

All INGOs included in the sample reached persons with disabilities through their programmes and projects, though there is little data on quantity and quality of reach. The use of the Washington Group Questions currently in practice in five mainstream INGOs needs further improvement:

*“I think I haven’t seen the actual data being analysed. I haven’t seen a report, (...) because it’s quite new.”*

(Key informant in a large mainstream INGO)

In mainstream INGOs data disaggregation by disability status was reportedly done sporadically in individual projects. In disability focused organisations data is widely disaggregated, often also by impairment.

### Drivers, challenges, and barriers to disability inclusion and mainstreaming

The research identified **four main drivers** providing motive to mainstream disability:

- **Needs within the target community:** The community is a frequent entry point for INGOs to consider the needs of persons with disabilities where they appear.
- **Responsibility based on CRPD and SDGs:** All key informants are familiar with the CRPD and the SDGs and while for some these documents provide a clear responsibility to mainstream, others stated that they provide a mandate for disability inclusion but there are competing agendas.
- **Donor requirement:** Donors play a prominent role in pushing disability mainstreaming and inclusion onto the agenda. Key informants emphasised that donors such as DFID, SIDA or the EU have an important role in strengthening disability inclusion:

*“It is not a requirement from Irish Aid and in the absence of being a requirement from the largest multi-country donor, it is not considered a priority. (...) money talks, sadly, and unless the donor is requiring it, it doesn’t become part of business as usual.”*

(Key informant in a large mainstream INGO)

- **Organisational responsibility:** In many organisations there is a sense of responsibility to address disability inclusion and mainstreaming. For others where this is missing, disability inclusion and mainstreaming can be seen to inhibit work.

*“We have a responsibility, whether we have the funds or not, to mainstream it. So yes, I do think a lot of it lies at the doors of NGOs.”*

(Key informant, mainstream INGO)

Key informants highlighted a range of different **challenges and barriers** related to disability inclusion and mainstreaming. The main areas that emerged from the interview are introduced in the following.

*“Development like anything else is not built to be accessible, it’s far easier not to include people with disabilities or to include people with the easy disabilities. You can build a ramp, but will people always remember to have a sign language interpreter, will they get things translated into Braille and then you get into things like easy reads and even sometimes just translating things into local languages, it doesn’t happen naturally everything is done in English or French, and so it’s overcoming what people see as barriers that actually are possible to overcome.”*

(Key informant in a small disability focused INGO)

**a) Invisibility of disability**

Disability can be *“a hidden problem”* (Key informant in a large mainstream INGO), organisations acknowledged that they are oblivious to it at times, and where attitudinal barriers and stigma persist in local communities, persons with disabilities may be hidden and excluded.

**b) Diversity of disability**

Persons with disabilities encompasses a diverse group of people. In policy and practice INGOs mainly reach persons with physical impairments, since *“physical disability (...) is more visible and easier to engage with”* (Key informant in a medium mainstream INGO). The two disability focused INGOs and two mainstream INGOs further reported experiences in reaching persons with different kinds of disabilities, aiming to address disability in its diversity.

There was recognition that disability needs to be addressed in its complexity, reaching persons with diverse lived experiences, with different disabilities and different intersecting characteristics.

**c) Lack of knowledge and resources**

A gap of knowledge and capacity linked to scarce resources allocated to disability mainstreaming and inclusion was quoted as the most important challenge for INGOs. Often there are few, or no staff dedicated to mainstreaming disability, and where there is capacity, the role often focuses on equality and diversity more broadly. Limited funding to support mainstreaming disability in projects and programmes was a key challenge for the large, medium, and small mainstream INGOs interviewed. *“In the Irish context there is a very limited capacity to support non disability organisations”* in building knowledge around disability inclusion and mainstreaming (Key informant in large mainstream INGO). The gap in knowledge and resources relates to several other challenges, including data collection, organisational commitment and competing priorities.

***“I think disability is an area that is under resourced, it’s not by any stretch of the imagination mainstreamed as much as other areas.”***

(Key informant in medium mainstream INGO)

**d) Data collection**

The INGOs interviewed indicated that the lack of quality data on persons with disabilities inhibits both awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities as well as recognising disability as an issue that is prevalent within target populations. ***“There is a big challenge around the data collection in relation to any issue like disability”*** relating to generating data, identifying persons with disabilities in needs assessments, and including persons with disabilities in monitoring and evaluation (Key informant in medium mainstream INGO).

**e) Competing priorities**

In mainstream organisations different topics – disability inclusion, gender equality, including children and youth, and others – were seen as competing for space or recognition. At a country level there may be a large ***“volume of standards, policies, procedures, interest groups”*** and country offices ***“can’t push all things at all times”*** (Key informant in a large mainstream INGO).

**f) Organisational commitment**

In INGOs where senior management buy-in and drive for disability inclusion and mainstreaming is not there, and resources are not made available, it is not possible to address disability in a coherent strategic way. Mainstream INGOs reported further difficulties in finding their space when working on disability mainstreaming and inclusion, unsure whether their activities would result in disability focused INGOs receiving less resources.

**PHOTO STORY: Shushma, Nepal**

Shushma, 14, has a developmental disability. Together with her sister, who has the same condition, she lives in a school equipped for children with disabilities. There she learns to read and write and has the opportunity to get an education. It’s rare for Shushma and the sister to visit their home because their parents also suffer from the same illness that their daughters have.

Plan International is working with children with disabilities in Nepal to fulfil their rights. Our projects are improving accessibility and quality of education, child protection systems and disaster prevention measures for children with disabilities. We are also



Credit: Plan International

strengthening local groups and networks working to promote the interests of marginalised and vulnerable groups.

# D. Recommendations: The Way Forward For Disability Mainstreaming & Inclusion

## 1. Driving Change

INGOs are increasingly reflecting on disability inclusion in programmes, evaluation, and planning with many developing new policies and internal guidance around inclusion and accessibility.

However, it is evident from this research that to ensure real progress and success, increased donor guidance and resourcing is key. Donor requirements and technical guidance can have a lasting impact on the prioritisation of disability in an organisational context, provide additional budgeting capacity, enhance resourcing, and incentivise investments by INGOs.

The research has also shown a significant commitment and motivation within the sector to be a driving force for change. This can be realised through increased internal capacity to leverage and influence donor resourcing priorities and policies.

## 2. Shared Learning

INGOs commonly expressed during this research, that experiences around mainstreaming disability and disability inclusion need to be shared more within and among INGOs and indeed with the public. Both successes and difficulties need to be communicated to allow for common learning and skill sharing. It is particularly important that mainstream INGOs step up and communicate their results and experiences.

## 3. Data is Key

The collection of disaggregated data is increasingly being explored by larger INGOs, an analysis of this new data will make further evidence available on the prevalence of disability, and the needs of persons with disabilities. It will also guide future practices to promote inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. The introduction of the OECD DAC marker on disability should greatly increase disability data collection and reporting.

## 4. Nothing About Us Without Us

Working in partnership with OPDs and disability focused INGOs is an important and much used approach for mainstream INGOs. Involving persons with disabilities as agents of change results in them being empowered to address their needs directly and will deliver sustainable systemic change in the medium to long term.

## 5. Resources & Champions

Current capacity and dedicated human resources for mainstreaming disability and inclusion across programmes and humanitarian response was identified at the main challenge and barrier to key informant INGOs. Internal champions for disability are a key driver towards progression of mainstreaming. It is recommended that, if organisations are serious about mainstreaming, a specific resource is assigned to drive it as well as encouraging and empowering internal champions to be the voice of inclusion.

## 6. Space for All

The research highlighted the perception of many INGOs that others may be better equipped to mainstream disability, asking how they could complement the work of others or enable the work of others without replacing them. Disability focused INGOs can only achieve so much, there is an abundance of space for all INGOs to mainstream disability. It is recommended that INGOs seek out technical support and guidance from not only disability focused INGOs, but others in the sector who are on the journey to mainstreaming.

### PHOTO STORY: Zambo, Cameroon

Zambo (9) attends an inclusive education school in Cameroon. He loves maths, spiderman, singing and dancing and wants to be a teacher when he grows up. Zambo was born with Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair in school and crutches while at home. The school provided Zambo with both his crutches for when he is at home and with a wheelchair for use in school. Before attending school Zambo's guardians made him crutches to help him get around. Zambo's guardians spoke to us about the change in his confidence since he started going to school.



Credit: Sightsavers/Rodrick Mbock

Marital Zambo's Guardian says, *"He is a happy child, he doesn't have any problems, he is very confident about his future that's the only concern, the Spina Bifida everything is okay apart from that."*

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Wheelchair technician Alemayhu “Alex” Teka in a newly built tricycle at the CBM-partnered Cheshire Foundation Action on Inclusion workshop in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. The workshop is part of the CBM Ireland Bridge The Gap programme funded by Irish Aid. Alex had polio as a child and has been building tricycles and other assistive devices for people with disabilities for over 16 years. Credit: CBM/Hayduk

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