



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental  
Development Organisations

**Submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence**

**October 2017**

**Review of Irish Aid programme - Dóchas Disability Working Group**

“Disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. It can magnify existing vulnerabilities among individuals, communities and nations, and people with disabilities are extremely vulnerable to discrimination, physical and sexual abuse and social exclusion.

Ireland is committed to addressing the needs of children and other people living with disabilities by continuing and increasing our support to specific initiatives and to ensuring that we mainstream a focus on disability in our relevant programming work,”

**Minister for Diaspora and International Development, Ciaran Cannon T.D.,**

**September 20<sup>th</sup> 2017**

The [Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group](#)<sup>1</sup> welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence (JCFTD) as part of its review of Irish Aid’s programme. **This submission specifically focuses on Ireland meeting its commitment to people with disabilities in the future of the Irish Aid Programme.**

One billion people, or 15% of the world’s population, experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher for middle and low-income countries, fragile states and humanitarian settings. One-fifth of the estimated global total, or between 110 million and 190 million people, experience significant disabilities. Persons with disabilities, on average as a

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<sup>1</sup> The Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group was established in 2006 and is convened by Dóchas members working in the area of disability and international development. The Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group (DIDWG) promotes the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities in middle and low income countries and fragile states/humanitarian settings countries by raising awareness, sharing expertise and promoting action on Disability Inclusive Development (DID) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR), including lobbying for change. Members include: Centre for Global Development, Trinity College Dublin (guest member), CBM Ireland, Disability Federation of Ireland, Misean Cara, Oxfam Ireland, Plan Ireland, Sightsavers Ireland, Trócaire and UNESCO IT Tralee (guest members).

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

We very much welcome and support Minister Cannon's recent statement highlighting the important role of Irish Aid in promoting the rights of people with disabilities, and his ambition to continue to work to mainstream disability. Ireland's overseas development aid programme has been internationally recognised for its quality and efforts to target the poorest and most marginalised. The Government's 2013 Policy for International Development, *One World, One Future*, and 2015 Foreign Policy paper, *The Global Island*, both affirm Ireland's commitment to addressing the rights and needs of vulnerable people, including those with disabilities. In addition, Irish Aid is in the process of completing a Disability Guidance Note, which is a welcome step towards greater mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in Irish Aid's policy framework. The development of the Guidance Note, Ireland's forthcoming ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the strong capacity of civil society programme partners in this field, provide an important opportunity for Irish Aid to actualise their commitment to disability inclusive development mainstreaming in all aspects of development assistance.

In order to ensure Irish Aid's programme actualises disability inclusion, we ask the committee to adopt the following recommendations:

1. Irish Aid's commitment to the most marginalised must be sustained, protected and include a twin-track approach to disability inclusive development;
2. Irish Aid must play a significant role in meeting obligations of international cooperation arising from Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
3. Irish Aid programming should collect data specifically disaggregating disability inclusion across development and humanitarian assistance;
4. Partnership with Irish development NGOs in the field of disability inclusion is key to reaching people with disabilities and providing research, data and learnings in this field; and
5. Irish Aid's capacity for disability inclusion requires additional resourcing in terms of capacity and technical expertise.

## **Irish Aid's commitment to the most marginalised must be sustained, protected and include a twin-track approach to disability inclusive development**

The United Nations claims that one of the most pressing issues faced by people with disability is not their disability, but their vulnerability to poverty<sup>2</sup>. Ireland co-chaired the negotiations for the SDGs in 2015, delivering an ambitious and visionary framework which 193 states committed to, including Ireland. This huge achievement demonstrates Ireland's commitment to eradicating poverty and addressing growing inequality. Equally, Ireland's commitment to the 'leave no one behind' agenda is to be encouraged. However, mainstreaming disability inclusion in all aspects of the Irish Aid programme is critical to delivering on this vital commitment.

Despite decades of mainstream policies that promote growth and development, policies have often failed to incorporate equal access, and people with disabilities continue to have inequitable access to education, employment, health care, social protection and legal systems, and therefore find themselves more vulnerable to shock and stresses, which can come from a range of events. Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes than persons without disabilities, such as less education, poorer health outcomes, lower levels of employment, and higher poverty rates.

Irish Aid recognises the inter-relationship between poverty and disability, and in particular the susceptibility of persons with disabilities to poverty. Poor people are more at risk of becoming disabled through, for example; unsafe living environments; under-nutrition; lack of access to immunisation; exposure to landmines; poor road safety; contracting communicable diseases and inadequate treatment when infected and through birthing services which are unsafe for both mothers and new-borns.

Over recent years, the majority of major donors and bilateral agencies have come to recognise the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development cooperation, an important step in ensuring that no-one is left behind in economic and social progress.<sup>3</sup> This recognition has largely been influenced by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the obligations it places on states to ensure that persons with disabilities are given a fair chance to live a dignified and full life.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Disability and Millennium Development Goals: A Review of MDG Process Strategies for Inclusion of Disability issues in Millennium Development Goal Efforts' (2011)

<sup>3</sup> World Bank (2010), Disability and International Cooperation and Development

In order to truly actualise Ireland's commitment to "to reach the furthest behind first"<sup>4</sup> the Irish Aid programme should take a twin track approach to disability inclusion and mainstreaming; by focusing on disability-specific activities that are targeted directly for people with a disability, and also supporting efforts to mainstream disability across the breadth of development and humanitarian work. We believe the Irish Aid programme can holistically include people with disabilities, however genuine inclusion and empowerment can only occur when both tracks are employed together.

### **Irish Aid must play a significant role in meeting obligations of international cooperation arising from Ireland's ratification of the CRPD**

2007 marked a huge step forward in international cooperation disability, as the CRPD opened for signature. 173 countries have ratified the CRPD to date with a further 14 countries (including Ireland) having only signed the Convention. Ireland is the only country in the European Union that has not yet ratified the convention.

The CRPD is the main instrument guiding global disability inclusion in the 21st century. Governments that have ratified the CRPD commit to promoting and protecting the rights and dignity of people with disabilities in every sphere of life, including in the field of international development. The CRPD pays particular attention to the link between poverty and disability; it is the first international human rights treaty to have a stand-alone article - article 32 - addressing International Cooperation. Article 32 of the CRPD provides a comprehensive normative framework for mainstreaming disability in the development agenda, while Article 11 relates to the safety and protection of people with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies of various kinds. Once ratified, the CRPD will require the State to place a greater emphasis on ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are promoted through development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. All eight of Irish Aid's key programme countries have ratified the CRPD<sup>5</sup>.

The roadmap to Ireland's ratification of the convention was published in 2015, while the May 2016 Programme for Government committed to putting it before the Oireachtas before the end of 2016. This deadline was missed, but on the night of his election, the new Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, TD, reiterated the Government's commitment to ratify the Convention before the end of 2017. With ratification imminent, the role of the Irish Aid programme in meeting obligations arising under Article 32 and Article 11 must be clearly outlined. Irish Aid have a

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<sup>4</sup> See Political Declaration of Agenda2030 – point 4

<sup>5</sup> Signatories to the CRPD [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtmsg\\_no=IV-15&chapter=4&lang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtmsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&lang=en)

key role to play in ensuring Ireland meets obligations of international cooperation and in managing Ireland's reputation<sup>6</sup> with respect to disability, and delivering on these obligations will require resourcing through increased capacity and technical expertise.

### **Article 32 and One World, One Future**

Taking Article 32 as a framework for implementing disability inclusive development requires that disability issues are integrated into all development interventions. With respect to *One World, One Future*, applying the four areas of focus of Article 32 (outlined below) across all six development priorities as identified in "One World, One Future" provides a good starting point for Ireland to take a leadership role on disability inclusive development. The four measures detailed in Article 32 are:

- **Inclusivity and accessibility:** Obligates donor governments to ensure that their international development and humanitarian relief work are inclusive of and accessible to people with disabilities;
- **Capacity building:** A two-way exchange and sharing of information, experience, training and best practice between donor governments, partners and collaborators, including disabled people and their organizations;
- **Research and knowledge:** Cooperation in research and access to technical knowledge; and
- **Accessible and assistive technologies:** Donor governments technical and economic assistance must, where appropriate, include access to and sharing of accessible and assistive technologies.

Considering the four measures outlined in Article 32 in relation to the six priority areas of 'One World, One Future', can help ensure that interventions specifically targeted at people with disabilities are balanced by mainstreaming disability issues in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all development programmes and projects, and also humanitarian interventions.

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<sup>6</sup>More than 40 states raised Ireland's failure to ratify the CRPD during Ireland's Universal Periodic Review in May 2016. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/IEIndex.aspx>

## **Irish Aid funded programming should collect data specifically disaggregating disability inclusion across development and humanitarian assistance**

The lack of comparable data on disability remains a critical development issue. Without better, more accurate and comparable data on disability it will not be possible to accurately measure development progress and truly ensure no one is left behind.

This lack of data often means decisions are made that reinforce existing inequalities, as governments and decision-makers allocate resources in a way that excludes people with disabilities. This is further compounded within international development programmes; as many organisations do not collect data on disability it is impossible to know how and if people with disabilities are participating.

The 2030 Agenda, references disability specifically in five goals and seven targets, and commits countries to disaggregating data by disability across a number of indicators.<sup>7</sup> Better, more accurate data on people with disabilities – and on other people who experience exclusion – is required if Agenda 2030 is to deliver lasting change. Greater collaboration between governments, multilateral and donor agencies, and civil society is required to promote, collect, analyse and report better data on disability. The Irish Aid Programme has a key role to play in ensuring data relating to people with disabilities is collected, and utilized to inform mainstreaming of disability inclusion across all programming and funding streams.

## **Partnership with Irish development NGOs in the field of disability inclusion is key to reaching people with disabilities and providing research, data and learnings in this field**

In order to ensure an Irish Aid programme is disability inclusive, we believe that partnership with, and support to, Irish development NGOs must remain a critical pillar. Irish NGOs work in partnership with communities on the ground, both locally and globally, to ensure long-term outcomes and immediate relief. Civil society will also continue to bring evidence from the field to shape more effective and equitable policy-making, public engagement and development education, inclusive of persons with disabilities.

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations (2016) Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11803Official-List-of-Proposed-SDG-Indicators.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11803Official-List-of-Proposed-SDG-Indicators.pdf)

## **Irish Aid's capacity for disability inclusion requires additional resourcing in terms of capacity and technical expertise**

As Ireland moves towards ratifying the CRPD, Irish Aid is in the process of completing a Disability Guidance Note. This is a very welcome step towards greater mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in Irish Aid policy. While the Guidance Note will provide for greater integration of persons with disabilities in Irish Aid's policy framework, increased technical expertise, capacity and budget will be required to ensure Irish Aid can actualise commitment to leaving no one behind, meet obligations arising under Article 32 and Article 11 of the CRPD, establish data disaggregation on disability and ensure persons with disabilities are integrated and supported by the Irish Aid Programme.