

World Vision Australia

Submission to DFAT's Disability, Equity and Rights Strategy, 2023

World Vision is committed to work with girls, boys, women and men with disabilities, and empower them to take part in their communities, including leadership and decision-making.¹

DFAT has held a position of global leadership through its *Development for All* strategy, reflecting Australia's investment and commitment to the rights of people with disabilities. We welcome this enabling environment in which Australian NGOs have been encouraged to be leaders in improving disability inclusion programming and practice.

The development of the new *Disability, Equity and Rights Strategy* gives DFAT a further opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to international development effectiveness and human rights; to move to a 'nothing without us' approach with the active leadership of children and adults with diverse disability and intersecting identities across all sectors.

In this new Strategy, World Vision asks DFAT to prioritise:

- **Investing in Children with Disabilities**
- **Resourcing meaningful partnerships with Organisations of People with Disability**
- **Creating an enabling environment for equity and inclusion**
- **Improving evidence and accountability**

The discrimination against and denial of rights of people with disability is heightened when it intersects with gender inequality - particularly for women and girls with disability. This strategy should address gender inequality, and also be clear that people with diverse impairments face unique attitudinal, environmental, communication and information barriers. This is why World Vision recommends DFAT matches its current commitments to gender equality by establishing a requirement for all new investments over \$3 million to have a disability equity objective.

Investment in Children with Disabilities

Australia's International Development Policy highlighted: "*We have no tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, or for harm to children. We will maintain safeguards that protect these communities and the environment.*"

World Vision urges the Australian Government to go beyond inclusive safeguarding and to recognise its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and UNCRPD by prioritising the prevention of child abuse, and the protection and empowerment of children with diverse disabilities. This needs targeted funding for transformative impacts for children with disability, and an expectation that the rights of girls and boys with disability (not just 'people with disability') are mainstreamed into all programming. Through this Strategy, DFAT can target the most vulnerable children, advocate for their rights, and ensure equal opportunities to live life in all its fullness.

¹ These have been formalised through our Global Disability Summit [Commitments to Children with Disabilities, 2022](#).

DFAT should direct funding to early intervention supports for children with disability. Australia can benefit the lives of children in our Pacific family and other near neighbours, reducing the need for future supports, and strengthening the sustainability of their informal supports such as family and community caregivers.

Resourcing meaningful partnerships with Organisations of People with Disability (OPDs)

Grassroots OPDs struggle with capacity development, and sustainable funding. This is despite DFAT's demonstrated commitment to advance voices of people with disability in the region, through investments in global and regional peak bodies and advocating for good practice at high-level forums.

It is important that local-level OPDs are empowered and funded to advocate for the rights of people with disability in their communities. But too often, they are not funded, or are inadequately funded for their work, as funding to national and regional OPDs, managing contractors and other bodies do not always filter to local level. DFAT should hold itself and all investments to a higher level of account.

DFAT and DFAT-funded investments need to move beyond limited or non-funded partnerships which merely seek consultation with OPDs, to funded partnerships which empower OPDs to deliver transformative change.

Since 2021, World Vision's DFAT-funded **Real Inclusion in Disability Engagement (RIDE)** project in PNG is a strong testament to the incredible spirit of transformation, dedication, and shared purpose when local leaders with diverse disabilities are empowered and work together. World Vision worked closely with PNG Assembly for Disabled People and its OPD members to strengthen them - in such things as good governance and quality advocacy on UNCRPD - as an organised network.

Create an enabling environment for equity and inclusion

To actively abide by its commitment to the UNCRPD, DFAT must ensure it invests in **preconditions** necessary for equitable access and inclusion. This means the strategy should highlight a focus on accessible infrastructure (including transport, communication, information, and technology), access to assistive technologies², access to rights-based support services, community based inclusive development and social protection.

Access to affordable and appropriate assistive technology (AT) is an important but often neglected issue. There are large gaps in access to assistive technologies, particularly in the Pacific. Targeted investment needs to be provided to ensure sustainable services that include trained personnel, quality products and integrated referral systems.

Budgeting for reasonable accommodations should be an expectation of all DFAT and DFAT-funded events, workshops, and programmatic activities – not just disability-specific activities.

² [Assistive Technology Procurement Study](#), Nossal Institute, Motivation Australia, Pacific Disability Forum, 2020.

Improving evidence and accountability

There is a significant under-collection of data on people with disability, and even less analysis, evaluation and learning from that data.

Advancing an evidence-based approach requires an increased availability of credible disaggregated reach and impact data on people with diverse disabilities and intersecting identities.

Evaluation of good practices to reduce the barriers is critical. Placing an expectation on disability data collection in ANCP programming is a positive start. However, we encourage DFAT further include this expectation with all investment partners and advocate to government and multi-laterals across the region to have similar requirements. DFAT should also ensure it is accountable for data, and to demand that it is harnessed, effectively utilised and shared.

Recommendations by thematic areas:

1. Violence and exploitation

There is limited integration of disability within gender-based violence (GBV) programming.

DFAT should:

- Set requirements to adopt a twin-track approach to strengthening disability inclusion in all GBV programming, recognising the many additional barriers women and girls with disabilities face and the additional resources it will take to adequately address them.
- Invest in research to identify the situation of, and additional risks, barriers faced by girls, boys, women, men and non-binary people with disability.
- Resource targeted initiatives to address violence against children with disabilities, acknowledging that girls, boys and non-binary children with diverse disabilities experience violence and exploitation at increased rates and additional ways to children without disabilities.

2. Climate change

People with disabilities have been largely absent from climate debates and decision-making.

DFAT should ensure:

- Investments take a CRPD-compliant approach that includes integration of the knowledge, experience and concerns of people with diverse disabilities and intersecting identities - particularly women, children, youth and First Nations people - in climate action at all stages and levels.
- Requirements for quality disability and/or GEDSI³ analysis in all new climate change adaptation, mitigation, and carbon programming to inform design and implementation.
- Requirements for disability-responsive budgeting for all climate change programming.

3. Humanitarian Emergencies

People with disabilities are more likely to experience increased discrimination during times of conflict and disaster, including facing abandonment and inaccessible humanitarian services.

DFAT should:

- Ensure requirements for accessibility assessments to be conducted during relief efforts, including consideration of diverse disabilities, gender, and age. This expectation should include use of this information in any action planning.
- Require collection of disability-disaggregated data during all DFAT-funded humanitarian programming.
- Set expectations that OPDs and/or informal groups of persons with diverse disabilities will be identified early and consistently consulted.
- Preposition assistive technology to be made available to everyone who needs it.

4. Livelihoods and Education

People with disability generally experience lower average levels of educational attainment and participation in the labour market compared to those without disability. DFAT should:

- Set requirements to include youth and adults with diverse disabilities in all economic empowerment initiatives.
- Prioritise funding of programming that targets increasing the financial resilience of people with disabilities.
- Increase investment in inclusive education initiatives and ensure accountability of their impact on children and young people with diverse disabilities.

³ Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)