

AusAID's Disability Inclusive Development Reference Group

Fifth Meeting 4-6 July 2011 Canberra

Communiqué

1. The fifth meeting of the AusAID Disability-Inclusive Development Reference Group (DRG) was held in Canberra from 4-6 July 2011. Current members of the DRG are: Ingar Duering, Head of Sector Initiative Persons with Disabilities, Social Protection Section at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Rosemary Kayess, Director of Human Rights and Disability Projects at the Australian Human Rights Centre, University of New South Wales; Setareki Macanawai, Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Disability Forum; and Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, Coordinator of the Office for Disability and Inclusive Development at USAID. New members of the DRG, Deborah Rhodes on behalf of the Australian Disability and Development Consortium and Senator Monthian Buntan from Thailand were welcomed and made valuable contributions. Also in attendance as an observer was Frederick Miller, Disability Coordinator of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
2. The three days of proceedings were productive and useful. Through their meetings, the members of the DRG worked to raise the profile of disability-inclusive development both amongst Australian Parliamentarians and within AusAID. The group met with the Office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and were hosted for lunch by the Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, the Hon Richard Marles MP. This lunch was also attended by other Australian parliamentarians including the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Senator the Hon Jan McLucas, the Hon Teresa Gambaro MP, the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, and Senator Louise Pratt. The DRG also attended the launch of the Review of Aid Effectiveness and the Government's response at Parliament House, at which the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, acknowledged the group in his speech. The DRG also had productive meetings with AusAID Director General Peter Baxter, Deputy Director General James Batley and AusAID staff, with a particular focus on working together to ensure that disability is included in AusAID programming.
3. A Canberra-based meeting was particularly important and timely given recent changes amongst the DRG, Australian political leaders, AusAID Executive and AusAID's own Disability-Inclusive Development team (DIDT). The DRG congratulated the DIDT on their achievements in a resource-challenged environment and noted that there now exists even greater scope for progress with a larger team. In addition, the DRG noted that the attendance of AusAID's Suva and Phnom Penh-based Regional Disability Specialists was useful and provided valuable insights.

Purpose

4. The DRG was established to provide high level insights and advice on the implementation of AusAID's *Development for All* strategy. Objectives for the fifth meeting were:

- to maintain the visibility of disability-inclusive development amongst AusAID and the Australian Government;
- to gain advice and insights from the DRG on various areas of AusAID programming;
- to update the DRG on how disability-inclusive development has been integrated into AusAID's programs, especially since the regional advisers have commenced in their roles.

Key Findings

Through its three days of meetings and discussion, the DRG:

5. Recognised that Australia is in a leadership role on issues of disability and development, and, in line with its obligations under Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Australia must continue to maximise its leadership and take advantage of the opportunities arising from this.
 - In partnership with recipient countries, donors, disabled people's organisations and other non-government organisations, Australia needs to continue to maximise its leadership role in ensuring disability is seen as a priority in international development architecture and in key international development fora (such as the upcoming fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, as well as the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD).
6. Welcomed the continued strong bipartisan political and AusAID Executive support for disability-inclusive development.
 - A senior champion within AusAID may help promote integration of the issue throughout the Agency's work.
 - A strategy of placing people with disability in senior positions in comparable organisations (eg USAID, US State Department) has raised the understanding of disability-inclusive development within these organisations.
 - An opportunity exists with the current revision of the agency's Disability Action Plan to strengthen AusAID's recruitment, learning and development and general human resource policies to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities as members of staff.
7. Recognised that, with the release of its response to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness, the Australian Government has prioritised disability as a key element of Australia's aid program.
 - Improving the lives of people with disabilities is one of ten development objectives, outlined in the *An Effective Aid Program for Australia* document.
 - In addition, enhancing the lives of people with disabilities is an enabling measure under the second of five strategic goals for the agency, 'Promoting opportunities for all'.
 - The DRG wishes to show its appreciation and support for this development and is eager to provide high-level guidance to AusAID as it works to integrate disability-inclusion throughout its program.
 - With 'opting out' no longer possible, the implementation – and hence monitoring – of disability-inclusive development should become part of all AusAID programs, and staff throughout the agency must be enabled to undertake this work.

8. Recognised that it is now more important than ever that disability is integrated into AusAID processes, policies and programs, with the release of the Government's response to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness, and at this stage of the *Development for All* strategy.
 - Note that the underlying principle for disability-inclusive development in the agency should be that all assistance provided by AusAID is inclusive.
 - This means that disability should not be an “add-on” to existing programming, but instead be inherent in consideration at every stage of program design, implementation and review, as well as in systems and processes, including contracting (ie quality, reporting, procurement and Terms of Reference).
 - There is a need to continue to give strong support to disability-inclusive development and in particular the provision of guidance and advice to staff on how to ensure their work is disability inclusive.
9. Recognised that there is increasing awareness across AusAID in relation to disability-inclusive development, as indicated by the results of a staff survey, undertaken by ORIMA Research in November 2010.
 - A strong foundation has been laid, providing the opportunity for continued achievements across the agency on disability-inclusive development.
 - The DRG is grateful for the contribution made to the meeting by various areas within AusAID (Research, Infrastructure, Education, Scholarships, and the Humanitarian Policy sections) and would appreciate the opportunity to follow up with groups on an as-needed basis, providing the opportunity to discuss issues in depth.
10. Recognised that AusAID has an important role in building country ownership of disability-inclusive development.
 - This includes nurturing and generating demand from partner countries for assistance with disability-inclusive development where needed.
11. Recognised that effective data is an important element in program delivery and that the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health is a useful framework (as recommended by the World Report on Disability).
12. Recognised that the prevention aspects of the *Development for All* strategy (avoidable blindness and road safety) are now appropriately managed as public health and infrastructure issues outside of DIDT.
13. Recognised that the DRG will have an important and active role to play in the up-coming mid-term review of the *Development for All* strategy.
 - The CRPD should provide the conceptual framework for the mid-term review.
 - The mid-term review provides a valuable opportunity for continued learning on the part of AusAID and the wider development community interested in disability-inclusive development.