

## **UNPRPD MPTF submission to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) new International Development Policy consultation**

November 2022

The UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF)<sup>1</sup> funded by DFAT, is a unique partnership that brings together UN entities, governments, OPDs and broader civil society to advance the rights of persons with disabilities around the world. UNPRPD is the only UN inter-agency funding mechanism dedicated to the implementation of the CRPD. Operational from 2012, the Fund has implemented over 80 joint programmes across all regions.

The below submission sets out UNPRPD MPTF<sup>2</sup> feedback on the opportunities presented by the Australian government's decision to develop a new international development policy. It sets out responses to each of the questions in the Terms of References and emphasises the critical importance of embedding a systematically disability-inclusive approach for achieving Australia's development ambitions.

### ***What key trends or challenges will shape Australia's engagement in our region and globally over the next five to 10 years? What risks and opportunities does this present for Australia's development assistance?***

International development is at a critical juncture. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and conflict are threatening gains made on eradicating poverty, ending hunger, strengthening health systems and access to education across the world. All States have an obligation to ensure that their climate actions respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all, including by integrating the rights of persons with disabilities into climate laws, policies, and programmes.

Development progress is being reversed and urgent action is required in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>3</sup> The most effective entry point for ensuring SDGs are disability inclusive is the multi-stakeholder planning processes at the country level. When disability is mainstreamed into national development plans, disability inclusive SDGs can be realized, and mainstreamed policies and programmes on the ground will increase.

As Australia sets its new long term strategic direction to build accountability, enhance community resilience, strengthen partnership and foster collective action, it is vital for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to address these challenges directly. UNPRPD released a Global Situational Analyses report carried out in 26 countries showing that general gaps in systems, structures and capacities exist, creating obstacles to disability-inclusive development<sup>4</sup>. This report also revealed OPDs do not participate meaningfully in national SDG coordinating bodies or in humanitarian/Covid-19 response committees. Thus, disability has remained a low priority.

By ensuring a clear focus on re-building and strengthening health systems, building climate resilience and ensuring regional and global peace and prosperity Australia will play a leading role in ensuring their partners – and the global community – make genuine development gains.

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<sup>1</sup> [UNPRPD](#)

<sup>2</sup> [UNPRPD](#)

<sup>3</sup> United Nations (2022) [The Sustainable Development Goals Report](#)

<sup>4</sup> UNPRPD (2022) Global Situational Analyses Report

The publication of a new international development policy is an opportunity for Australia to demonstrate regional and global leadership on critical development issues. It is therefore vital that the policy recognises development progress will only be possible by ensuring the systematic engagement, participation and empowerment of persons with disabilities in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. DFAT must ensure a systematically inclusive approach to gender equality and disability inclusion is embedded into the new policy in order to deliver the lasting change that is required. The lessons learned from the Covid-19 experience can be used to build back better if these lessons are used effectively. They represent an opportunity to advance the disability agenda.

### ***What development capabilities will Australia need to respond to these challenges?***

The new international development policy should set out how Australia will ensure the vision of the SDGs<sup>5</sup> is realised in practice. It should also recognise that the SDGs – and Agenda 2030<sup>6</sup> as a whole – can only be achieved by ensuring everyone benefits and that nobody is left behind.<sup>7</sup> It is vital that the new policy makes clear the inherent connection between achieving the SDGs and ensuring effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).<sup>8</sup> A number of cross-cutting approaches should be considered and applied across structures, processes and programmes to ensure full and meaningful participation of all persons with disabilities. Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities and addressing gender inequality and advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

The policy should set out the capabilities DFAT will develop to help support Australia's regional partners to create the pre-conditions that are required to ensure effective implementation of the CRPD and inclusive SDGs. Build stronger working relationships between OPDs, UN entities and governments on legislative and policy change and service delivery reform processes at the national level. This should include facilitating the participation of OPDs in legislative, policy and system-level changes to advance implementation of the CRPD and inclusive SDGs systems and building the capacities of representatives from governments, UN entities, OPDs, and broader CSOs. But also analysis of lessons learned on what worked and what not, technical knowledge and piloting of guidance tools on disability-inclusion, support for strengthening data collection systems and capacity in order to collect and report disability but also to inform evidence based programming-disaggregated data, building the capacity multi stakeholder mechanisms that bring together duty bearers rights holders and HR mandate holders of OPDs – ensuring support for women and girls with disabilities and under-represented groups including persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities – and awareness raising and interventions to end entrenched stigma and discrimination.<sup>9</sup> By developing the capability to deliver the provision of targeted support for regional partners to implement the CRPD, regional partners will be able to transform their commitments under the CRPD into concrete policies, systems and services for the people who need them most.

### ***How can Australia best utilise its national strengths to enhance the impact of our development program and address multidimensional vulnerabilities?***

Many member states lack understanding of the General Principles of the CRPD and the essential building blocks and pre-conditions required to ensure disability inclusive development.<sup>10</sup> Australia, as a regional

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<sup>5</sup> [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

<sup>6</sup> UN (2015) [Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

<sup>7</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs [Leaving no one behind](#)

<sup>8</sup> UN (2006) [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

<sup>9</sup> UNPRPD (2022) [Strategic Operational Framework](#)

<sup>10</sup> UNPRPD (2022) [Strategic Operational Framework](#)

and global leader, can help its regional partners to enhance their understanding – and delivery – of the CRPD. The policy should set out how Australia will allocate financial resources and generate the political will that is required in partner governments. Only by targeting investment for effective CRPD implementation - and applying regional and global influence - will it be possible to address underinvestment and lack of attention to disability-inclusion.

The policy should also include how Australia will equip their partners with the knowledge and tools that are required for developing genuinely and systematically inclusive policies and services at national level – within development, humanitarian and climate change programmes – help to create the pre-conditions that are required for effective CRPD implementation and ensure disability is effectively mainstreamed into national development planning. This can be achieved by focusing support for regional partners on reforming policies, plans, budgets, programmes and services to comply with the CRPD and the SDGs

***How should the new policy reflect the Government's commitments to build stronger and more meaningful partnerships in our region, founded on mutual trust and respect and shared values of fairness and equality?***

Without sustaining changes at the national level, neither CRPD nor inclusive SDGs will be a reality in 2030. Based on UNPRPD experience the most critical change to promote sustainable changes on the rights of persons with disabilities is working towards inclusive policies at the national level.

A multi-stakeholder approach, including UN entities, UNCTs, governments, OPDs, civil society, and donors leverages the partners' comparative advantages, facilitates policy and system change and emphasizes the meaningful participation of OPDs. A collaborative partnership will also facilitate the exchange of ideas and good practices on CRPD implementation. The new policy should explicitly recognise the urgent priority to build the capacity of OPDs and of ensuring the most under-represented groups are included in all stages of the development process.

It is critical that regional leaders – such as Australia – focus resources on increasing a collaborative approach. The policy should also reflect the growing recognition of the need to address structural barriers and rising inequalities, and apply an intersectional approach – that connects human rights to the multiple forms of discrimination people experience – in order to reach the most marginalised and under-represented groups.<sup>11</sup>

***What lessons from Australia's past development efforts should inform the policy? What is Australia seen to be doing comparatively well?***

Australia is rightly recognised as a global leader on disability inclusion.<sup>12</sup> DFAT have ensured a clear focus on ensuring persons with disabilities engage in, and benefit from, Australia's development assistance, and how their regional partners can maximise sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty by harnessing the potential of all of their citizens.<sup>13</sup> Australia made 10 wide-ranging commitments at the first-ever Global Disability Summit in 2018<sup>14</sup>, including funding representation and empowerment of

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<sup>11</sup> UNPRPD and UN Women [Intersectionality and Resource Guide and Toolkit](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Australia's development program](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Australian Official Development Assistance Budget Summary October 2022-23](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Global Disability Summit London 2018](#)

persons with disabilities in UN and Global forums, funding disability inclusive humanitarian action and the ASEAN General Election Network for Disability Access, and providing specific support for the Pacific Disability Forum and to support Pacific Island countries to meet their commitments under the Pacific Framework for the Rights of People with disabilities<sup>15</sup> – amongst other commitments.<sup>16</sup> At the second Global Disability Summit held in 2022<sup>17</sup> the Australian Government again demonstrated genuine leadership with 10 commitments. These included support for regional partners on implementing their national actions plans on disability, identifying barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services, ensuring a focus on disability at the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction and developing a successor to the Development for All Strategy,<sup>18</sup> which set out priorities for disability-inclusive development. The wide-ranging and diverse commitments Australia has made to delivering disability-inclusive development on the global stage demonstrate genuine leadership.

UNPRPD was established in 2011, funded by DFAT and thanks to its continued support the Fund has supported 80 joint UN programmes in 57 countries, facilitated the participation of 1,057 OPDs in legislative, policy and system-level changes to advance implementation of the CRPD and inclusive SDGs systems and has built the capacities of 95,664 representatives from governments, UN entities, OPDs, and broader CSOs. This has resulted in 205 system-level changes and the adoption of 71 laws, policies, strategies, or regulations to advance the rights of persons with disabilities.

The new policy must ensure continuity with previous commitments and how Australia will continue to lead the way on disability inclusion by championing the rights of persons with disabilities and effective CRPD and SDG implementation regionally and globally. Australia will continue to play a leading role in forming stronger and more meaningful partnerships conducive to participatory approaches involving UN Government and OPDs. For example, by supporting the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, championing disability at the Conference of States Parties – and other global forums – and by continuing to call for the effective implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy<sup>19</sup>.

***How should the performance and delivery systems be designed to promote transparency and accountability, as well as effectiveness and learning in Australia's development assistance?***

Australia's performance assessment system and monitoring and evaluation standards should be reviewed and updated to ensure they align with the new Strategy – particularly in relation to systematically monitoring and reporting disability inclusion within DFAT funded programmes.

The current performance system that supports the COVID-19 Development Strategy sets out a three-tier framework for reporting, this includes a Tier 3 indicator relating to the 'Percentage of investments effectively addressing gender issues and percentage of investments effectively addressing disability inclusive development'.<sup>20</sup> This is an important indicator to retain, and platform to build from. Any new performance assessment system would be strengthened by including indicators in Tiers 1 and 2. A Tier 1 indicator could focus on the proportion of countries with disability inclusive national development

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<sup>15</sup> [Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Global Disability Summit - London 2018 - Commitments](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Global Disability Summit - Norway 2022](#)

<sup>18</sup> Development for All 2015-2020: [Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program](#)

<sup>19</sup> [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#)

<sup>20</sup> Australia's Development Program - [Performance Assessment](#)

plans and monitoring systems. A Tier 2 indicator could consider the number of countries where Australia has contributed to effective system and policy changes translating to CRPD implementation.

DFAT's Monitoring and Evaluation Standards<sup>21</sup> also refer to disability inclusion, in relation to cross-cutting issues to consider in design (1.3), end of program outcomes (1.8 & 3.4) and adequate time for appraisal (4.10). Encouragingly, the good practice evaluation examples shared on DFAT's Development evaluation pages<sup>22</sup> make significant reference to learning around disability issues, for example in relation to Tropical Cyclone Pam<sup>23</sup> or the review of Australia's humanitarian assistance to Myanmar<sup>24</sup>. The new Strategy is an important opportunity to further embed disability inclusion into systematic monitoring. The Monitoring and Evaluation Standards could be further strengthened with more explicit references to disability inclusion and intersectionality - and to ensuring systematic processes for consulting with the contextually most marginalised people in all stages of programme implementation.<sup>25</sup>

### ***How should the new policy address the role of ODA and non-ODA in supporting the development of our regional partners?***

The new policy should ensure Australia continues to target resources to disability-inclusion through a clear allocation of Official Development Assistance (ODA). In order to support partners implement the CRPD and build the capacity of OPDs, Australia restored funding to the central disability budget of \$12.9 million in 2022-23. This allocation 'is part of Australia's larger contribution to disability-inclusive development across bilateral, regional and multilateral programs that, in 2020–21, totalled \$97.7 million.<sup>26</sup> To support gender equality has been allocated \$1.5 billion across the development program, and \$2 billion over 2020-25 to developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region for climate finance, disability-inclusion budgets are still far from those figures. It is vital that Australia not only maintains its financial commitment to disability-inclusion but increases it. This should be targeted at ensuring the effective implementation of the CRPD and inclusive development progress in line with the SDGs. Specific support should be allocated to partners with the capability to address the preconditions that are required - including the development of non-discrimination frameworks that prohibit discrimination and guarantee access to reasonable accommodation, accessibility, participation of persons with disabilities, access to disability-specific support services and inclusive budgeting.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> DFAT (2017) [Monitoring and Evaluation Standards](#)

<sup>22</sup> DFAT [Development evaluation](#)

<sup>23</sup> DFAT (2018) [Independent Evaluation Tropical Cyclone Pam Recovery Program](#)

<sup>24</sup> DFAT (2017) [Review of Australia's Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar](#)

<sup>25</sup> UNPRPD and UN Women [Intersectionality and Resource Guide and Toolkit](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Australian Official Development Assistance Budget Summary October 2022-23](#)

<sup>27</sup> UN PRPD (2022) [Strategic Operational Framework](#)