



# Study on the inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities in development cooperation in Bridging the Gap II project partners

## Synthesis Report

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**1 Introduction ..... 8**

1.1 Definitions and terminology ..... 8

1.2 Scope and objectives of the study ..... 12

**2 Political framework and commitment ..... 13**

2.1 Policy for disability inclusive development cooperation ..... 13

2.2 Global processes ..... 16

2.3 Meaningful participation of OPDs in policy elaboration and programming 18

2.4 The Agenda 2030 as opportunity and challenge ..... 21

2.5 Sector focus and disabilities ..... 22

**3 Headquarter ..... 23**

3.1 Policy translation into action ..... 23

3.2 Tools for ensuring disability mainstreaming ..... 24

3.3 Indicators – at project and organization level ..... 25

3.4 Factors that encourage and impede mainstreaming ..... 28

**4 Country offices ..... 29**

4.1 Capacities and resources at CO level ..... 30

4.2 OPD participation ..... 31

4.3 Factors that encourage and impede mainstreaming ..... 32

**5 Evaluation and learning ..... 32**

5.1 Systematic Evaluations ..... 32

5.2 The DAC disability marker ..... 35

5.3 Practice exchange and multilateral relations ..... 36

**6 Human resources ..... 38**

6.1 Training and support ..... 38

6.2 Technical support / help desk ..... 40

**7 Findings and recommendations ..... 41**

7.1 Priority areas for action ..... 41

**Bibliography ..... 45**

**Annexes ..... 52**

Annex 1: List of Key informant interviews ..... 52

Annex 2: Detailed research questions for the assignment ..... 53

Annex 3: Synoptic view on SDGs and CRPD ..... 54

Annex 4: Proposed research grid for a rapid document review ..... 55



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## Abbreviations

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ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AECID	the Spanish Agency for Development and Cooperation
Agenda 2030	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AICS	the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
BtG	Bridging the Gap
BtG-II	Bridging the Gap project
CERMI	Comité Español de Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad
CO	Country Office (of Cooperation Agency)
COCEMFE	Confederación Española de Personas con Discapacidad Física y Orgánica (Spain)
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRS	Creditor Reporting System of the OECD DAC
DAC	Development Assistance Committee - OECD
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Australia
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DG Disability	Directorate General for Disability Policies of the State Secretariat for Social Rights in the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda
DGPOLDES	Dirección General de Políticas de Desarrollo Sostenible (DGPOLDES) de la Secretaría de Estado de Cooperación Internacional (SECI) del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación (MAUC)
DID	Disability-inclusive development (cooperation)
DID	Disability-inclusive development (cooperation)
DPO	see OPD
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Disability Forum
EU DEVCO	European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
EU	European Union
EuDF	European Development Fund
FAO	Food and Agricultura Organization
FIIAPP	International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies
FOAL	ONCE Foundation in Support of the Blind in Latin America, founded in 1998
GIZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>
HQ	Headquarter (of Agencies)



IDDC	International Disability and Development Consortium
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation (or: International Labour Office)
IR	Inception Report
MAP	<i>Marcos de Asociación País</i> (country strategy paper) - Spain
MAUC	Spanish Foreign and Development Ministry (Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación MAUC)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015)
MSCBS	Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda
ODA	Official Development Aid
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ONCE	<i>Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles</i> (Spanish Foundation in Support of the Blind)
OPD	Organization of People with Disabilities (replaces the abbreviation of DPO, formerly used widespread)
Plena Inclusion	Federal organization that represents people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in Spain.
RIDS	<i>Rete Italiana Disabilità e Sviluppo</i> (Italian Network for Disability and Development)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SECI	Secretaría de Estado de Cooperación Internacional (SECI) del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación (MAUC)
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOSSD	Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (OECD DAC)
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
USP	Universal Social Protection
WFP	World Food Programme



## Figures and boxes

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### List of Figures

Figure 1: targeted, mainstreaming, twin-tracking .....	9
Figure 2: The project cycle: Entry points for disability mainstreaming .....	10
Figure 3: Impeding and fostering factors for inclusive development .....	11
Figure 4: The shift from a North-South perspective to a Global Agenda.....	22
Figure 5: Types of indicators to measure DID .....	25

### List of Boxes

Box 1 – Agenda 2030 and Human Rights: Synopsis of CRPD and SDGs.....	13
Box 2 – DFAT’s actions on disability .....	14
Box 3 – DFAT approach to reasonable accommodation.....	20
Box 4 – Voices from DPOs.....	20
Box 5 – DFAT performance measurement system .....	27
Box 6 – Australian Humanitarian Partnership Disaster Ready programme .....	31
Box 7 – Independent Evaluation Institutions .....	34
Box 8 – Management responses to policy evaluations .....	34
Box 9 – DFAT multilateral engagement / global engagement.....	38
Box 10 – Partnership agreement between DFAT and CBM Australia.....	40



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## 1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to inquire into the practice of disability mainstreaming in development cooperation. It is based on four case studies on the Austrian, Italian and Spanish cooperation as well as an international comparison. In that sense, it is one further step in the agenda of the Bridging the Gap II project (BtG-II), which in the past three years has undertaken a range of initiatives to ensure disability inclusive development cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Definitions and terminology

**Disability Inclusive Development** refers to national public policies that consider the needs and contributions of people with disabilities, both women and men, as well as their participation in policy formulation and implementation (UN 2018). This is anchored in the obligations derived from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), whose article 4.1.c commits signatory states “to take into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes” (CRPD 2006).

**Disability mainstreaming in international cooperation** refers to making the agencies’ international cooperation’s policies and initiatives more inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities, as stipulated by Article 32 of the CRPD. The BtG-II project refers to several operational definitions of ‘disability mainstreaming’, out of which these are cited frequently:

- “a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of persons with disabilities an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that persons with disability benefit equally” Handicap International 2009 (now Humanity and Inclusion), cited in (BtG II 2019c)
- all development interventions are to be “planned and implemented in such a way that people with disabilities, their needs, rights and potentials are taken into account on equal terms with those of other population groups” (CBM 2007, cited in (BtG II 2019c)).

<sup>1</sup> Supported by the European Commission and hosted by FIIAPP, the Bridging the Gap II Project has developed a number of training exercises (BtG II 2019a), international conferences in the framework of the European Development days (BtG II 2019b), a number of guidelines, for example on disability inclusive procurement (BtG II and Beales 2019), as well as specific studies, such as on the European Commission Cooperation (Axelsson and BtG II 2019a), based on case studies in Sudan (Axelsson and BtG II 2019c), Paraguay (Axelsson and BtG II 2019b), Ecuador (Mayher and BtG II 2019) and Ethiopia (Tadele and BtG II 2019), or a study on the involvement of Organizations of People with Disabilities in project planning and implementation in the five intervention countries (BtG II and Cote 2020a). BtG-II also participated in the consultation on the new European Disability Strategy 2020-2030 (BtG II 2019d) and on the new Gender Action Plan III (BtG II 2019e).

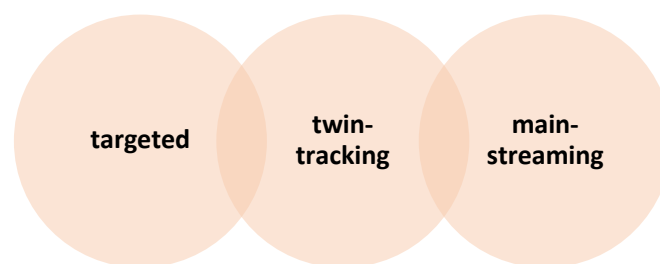


- *Mainstreaming disability into development cooperation is the process of assessing the implications for disabled people of any planned action, including legislation, policies, and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making disabled people’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that disabled people benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve disability equality. (Miller and Albert 2005)*
- *Mainstreaming disability policies intervene to safeguard rights and promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities inside ordinary policies and legislation, utilizing funds allocated to all citizens. (RIDS et al. 2015)*

In the international debate and practice this translates into different action. Specific interventions to target people with disabilities explicitly – with both specialised and universal services as well as measures to empower community and political participation – are most needed. This approach is dubbed “**targeted approach**”. However, this is not enough and focussing exclusively on stand-alone projects risk disability as issue to be side-lined.

Therefore, any public policy – and the respective international cooperation towards it – should consider its impact on the rights of people disabilities as inbuilt awareness and take the respective adjustments. A “**purist**” **interpretation of “mainstreaming”** would consequently disregard “targeted” projects. On the contrary, it focusses exclusively on those measures that are undertaken to make mainstream interventions inclusive to people with disabilities. To that end, general development cooperation interventions, such as promoting universal services, economic opportunities or any other, are scrutinized against the criteria whether people with disabilities are heard, can contribute at all stages and benefit from the measures. This approach could be dubbed as “purely-universalist”.

**Figure 1: targeted, mainstreaming, twin-tracking**



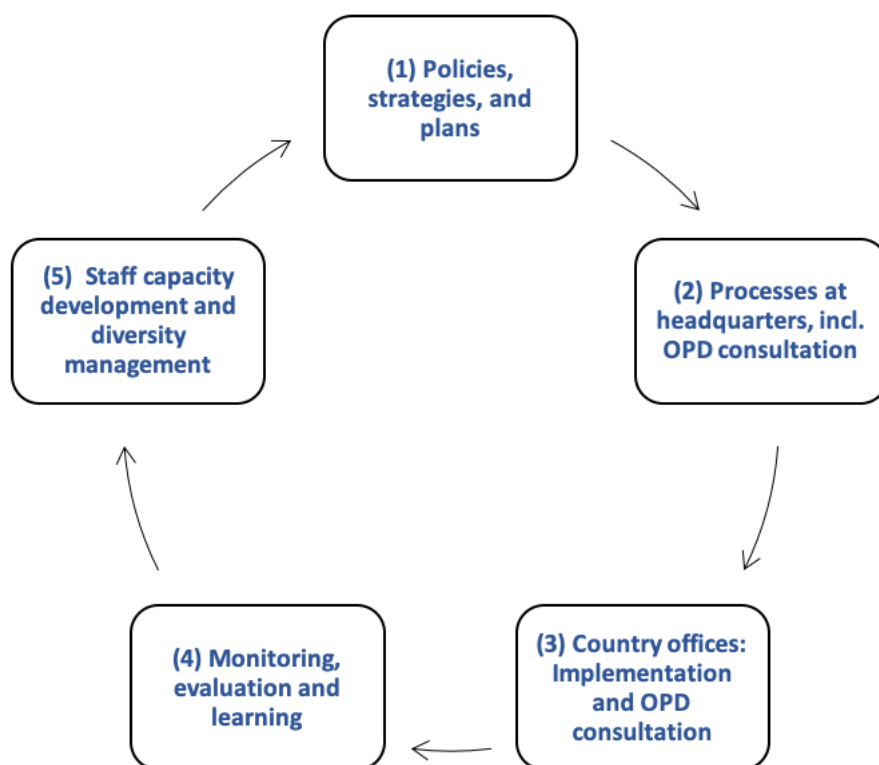
Source: own elaboration.

Against this approach, a **twin-track approach** takes into consideration both targeted interventions and mainstreaming measures and asks how their combination can best ensure the rights of people with disabilities. The Finnish cooperation refers to a *three-track approach* which adds a third element to the specific and universalizing programmes, namely political dialogue with government and the strengthening of advocacy capacities of OPD (Wiman 2012).

Each agency pursues their own specific approach towards ensuring the promotion of disability inclusive development. We therefore restrain from adopting a single restrictive definition of ‘disability mainstreaming’ and consider both purely-universalist as well as twin-track approaches. We follow a pragmatic approach and break down agency operations throughout the project cycle (formulation, implementation, evaluation), as well as considering some institutional dimensions (Human resource development, help-desk functions). We also take into consideration how external multilateral frameworks of measurement and accountability – namely the CRPD, the SDGs and the DAC CRS – could add transparency to the actions of donors and their agencies and organizations commissioned to provide technical assistance. In consequence, the generation of publicly available evidence could reinforce the processes of connecting development and disability.

The above mentioned entry points for realizing disability mainstreaming and twin-tracking are displayed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: The project cycle: Entry points for disability mainstreaming**



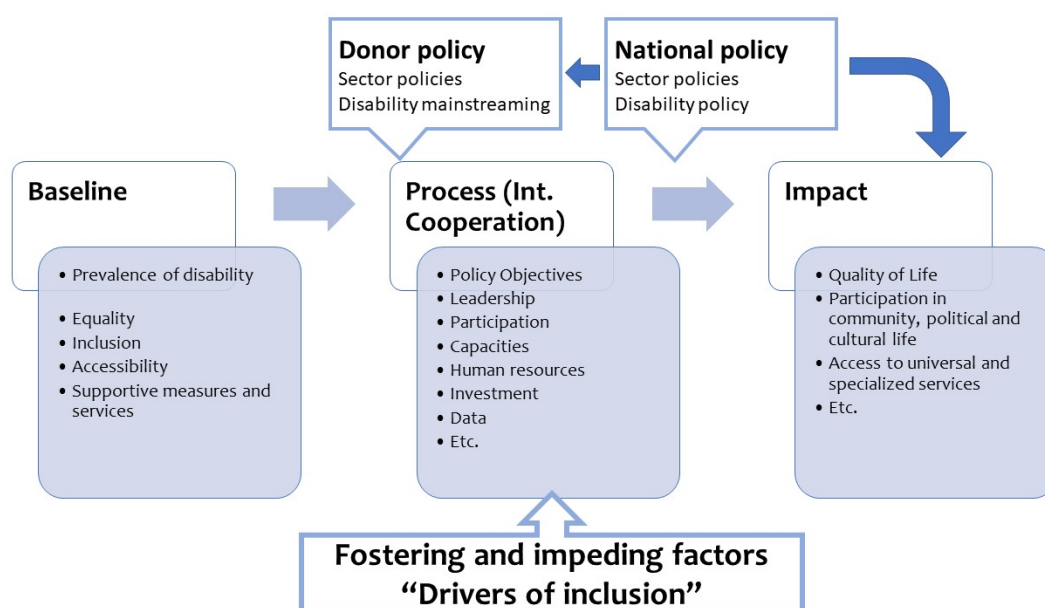
Source: own elaboration, adapted from Axelsson. The study-approach on the European Commission disability mainstreaming uses a schematic list of elements that map specific entry points for making international cooperation more inclusive to people with disabilities (Axelsson and BtG II 2019a).

Programming for disability rights faces some mayor challenges. Measuring impact and attributing results is highly complex. To start with, the very baseline is contested, and – despite recent progress in tools such as the ICF classification (WHO 2011) the Washington Group Questionnaire (Groce and Mont 2017) or the Canadian MHAVIE model (*Mesure des Habitudes de Vie*) (RIPPH 2015) –

rigorous and comparative data on the situation of people with disability on population level, including prevalence data, is scarce. Likewise, the attribution of impact of both national policies and donor interventions to the well-being and enjoyment of rights of people with disability is difficult to establish. The focus of the research is on the capacity of the agencies to include disability in their programmes and projects. We cannot refer to a *genuine theory of change* of what would make agencies fully responsive to the rights of people with disabilities. This had been proposed (Wissenbach 2011), but seem to have encountered little operational follow up.

While we consider this “bigger picture”, as visualized in Figure 3, in the context of this study we propose not to articulate a specific theory of change and to focus on a more exploratory “short-range” perspective which would concentrate on identifying specific “elements” or “factors” in the process of delivering international cooperation. We would then trace how these are useful to trigger change towards disability inclusive aid programming and implementation. Hence, our main question concentrates on the procedural and functional elements of the project cycle and the institutional practices, specified in Figure 3 as “process”.

**Figure 3: Impeding and fostering factors for inclusive development**



Source on elaboration, inspired by (Wissenbach 2011).

Aid agencies are organised in different manners (OECD DAC 2009). Usually aid agencies have a geographical division, a sectoral component, a management branch that develops procedures and protocols and manages human resources, and an evaluation section. However, the strategic choices on second and third level divisions vary across the donor countries.

We are interested to which extent disability mainstreaming is taken up in the following functions of the agencies:



- Formulation of sector policies and thematic programme support.
- Development of programming and monitoring tools.
- Implementation practice in partner countries.
- Evaluation and institutional learning.
- Human resource development.

The Project cycle, according to Axelsson, offers a grid for a systematic assessment of the agencies' action to make their operations more inclusive. None of these is sufficient, each of it can make a difference, the combination of many could generate a cultural and organizational change towards more inclusive development cooperation. No agency can tackle all changes at once and will go the same pathway. To move towards more inclusive cooperation practice, the executive board of the agency will have to decide which initial action to reinforce, where to start new initiatives, and where to invest. In this context of tactical planning, the involvement of organisation of persons with disabilities in planning policies, discuss technical solution for innovation and monitoring, is recommended.

## 1.2 Scope and objectives of the study

The report is based on an analysis of four organizations as well as an international comparison. Via document review and key informant interviews, case studies have been elaborated for four agencies – namely the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Spanish Agency for Development and Cooperation (AECID), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP). Furthermore, a literature review on international good practice in disability mainstreaming and twin-tracking has been undertaken. To that end we focussed namely on the Australian, British, German, and Nordic practices. Additionally, several interviews have been conducted at international level with representatives of OPD umbrella organizations, multilaterals and academic experts in the field of disability and development.

The research had been conceived in a pre-COVID phase. The pandemic imposed significant constraints on the methodological design. The initial research design could not be rolled out entirely, namely the country visits. Likewise, due to the restrictions during the confinement, specifically in Italy and Spain, access to key informants and to programme documents was restricted. All interviews were replaced by online exchanges. Despite the difficult situation the research team was granted access to the disability focal points in the organizations, as well as to a number of managerial staff, support teams (human resources, procurement etc) as well as to sector experts. Likewise, some staff in country offices was available for interviews, albeit to a much more limited extent than originally foreseen. We want to express our gratitude for their efforts in these difficult times.



## 2 Political framework and commitment

This section discusses to what extent the international obligation, as per CRPD article 32, to include persons with disabilities into National Development Cooperation policies is taken on and to what extent the development agencies or implementing organizations receive a delegated mandate to deliver and report on disability inclusive development.

### 2.1 Policy for disability inclusive development cooperation

The launch in 2015 of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) served as a major catalyst to scaling up global efforts for disability inclusion. As the result of joint advocacy of OPDs and some governments, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs now include 11 explicit references to persons with disabilities in addition to an even greater number of references where persons with disabilities are included by implication. The realisation that the ambitious SDGs can never be achieved if 15% of world's population is excluded, has pushed more and more donor governments to revisit their approach to disability in development cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

#### Box 1 – Agenda 2030 and Human Rights: Synopsis of CRPD and SDGs

The Agenda 2030 and the SDGs include seven targets and 11 indicators that make explicit reference to persons with disabilities. This covers access to education and employment, availability of schools that are sensitive to students with disabilities, inclusion, empowerment of persons with disabilities, accessible transport, accessible public and green spaces, and building the capacity of countries to disaggregate data by disability. Guided by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties, the 2030 Agenda is therefore linked to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). For more detail see Annex 3: Synoptic view on SDGs and CRPD.

Source: (UN 2018)

Research shows that disability inclusion is usually proportional to the ability of efforts over a long period of time. Strategic investment, starting small and gradually scaling up, provides fertile ground for learning, building of relationships and establishing inclusive processes and mechanisms (DFAT 2018).

Australia was the first donor country to launch a comprehensive strategy for disability-inclusive development in 2009 (DFAT 2009). Its successor, “Development for All 2015 – 2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia’s aid program”, dubbed “DID Strategy” (DFAT 2015a), underwent mid-term evaluation in 2017 (DFAT and McCoy 2017). A noteworthy

<sup>2</sup> WHO estimates that persons with disabilities make up around 15% of world's population, and 80% live in the developing countries, see WHO Global Report on Disability (WB and WHO 2011).





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increase in disability-inclusive investments has been observed in DFAT partners countries that had been focus of both strategies (DFAT 2018).

## Box 2 – DFAT’s actions on disability

While the DID Strategy is the key reference document that guides DFAT’s actions on disability, it is not the only one. Attention to persons with disabilities is woven into the Australian foreign policy in the Foreign Policy White Paper (Government of Australia 2017), and is present in a number of mainstream development policies, such as DFAT Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework (DFAT 2013) and its aid policy, Australian aid: Promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability (DFAT 2014).

Finally, DFAT’s internal Disability Action Strategy 2017–2020 (DFAT 2016), complements the DID Strategy and builds on the Australia’s National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 (Government of Australia 2010).

Source: DFAT, as referenced

Australia has played a major advocacy role for DID at global level. Its programme implementation is largely through non-governmental organisations. An evaluation noted that the focus on gender and on disability “has a positive effect on the sector as a whole... [and has] elevated the profile of these themes amongst in-country partner organisations, which could potentially have far-reaching effects” (DFAT 2015b).

Similarly, in the UK, the rolling-out of disability-inclusive approaches has been gradual starting with a 2014 evaluation report that found the DFID approach not sufficiently ambitious on disability. This triggered a series of responses, such as a 2015 disability framework, a 2016 public ministerial-level commitment to disability-inclusive development and hosting of the 2018 global disability summit. The summit pushed for the adoption of the DFID’s first ever Strategy for Disability-Inclusive Development 2018-2023 based on SDG commitments (DFID 2018a). In the period between 2014 to 2018, the number of DFID staff working on disability increased from 0.9 to 18, including those working on the global disability summit (DFID 2018c, 2018b).

Finland, Germany, Norway and Sweden are also among the early adopters of the disability-inclusive development approach. There, however, evaluations have not been encouraging. For Norwegian NORAD, an evaluation concluded that the “policy and guidelines on mainstreaming disability in Norwegian development initiatives have not translated into concrete action by development partners” (Ingdal, Nilsson, and NORAD 2012). Germany adopted an action plan in 2013 to systematically mainstream disability in development cooperation. Assessed in 2017, its achievements have been found as low to moderate (DEval et al. 2017). On the multilateral side, UNDP had to acknowledge in an 2016 evaluation of disability-inclusive development its failure to live up to its potential role, owing to limited capacity and resources committed (UNDP 2016).

Swedish SIDA workplan for human rights of persons with disabilities was adopted in 2009 (SIDA 2015). It contains two intermediate objectives: (1) to specify how SIDA will include human rights of persons with disabilities in development



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cooperation, and (2) to increase knowledge an understanding of SIDA staff and partners of the rights of persons with disabilities and its implications on SIDA work. Independent evaluation completed in 2013 (Ribohn 2013) warns against amounting fulfilled workplan’s individual activities to the achievement of the overarching goal of inclusion and suggests that the agency should be able to demonstrate the specific contribution of activities to the strategic goal.

*“For example, even if persons with disabilities are mentioned in a cooperation strategy, it does not necessarily mean that actions are taken to improve the situation of persons with disabilities in that partner country, especially since the mention usually is in the analytical part and not included in aims, goals and objectives.” (Ribohn 2013, 37)*

After an initial investment, now SIDA’s action on including disability seems to have stalled.

In Italy, where mobilisation for the inclusion of persons with disabilities dates back to the 1970s, the ratification of the CRPD served as an additional push to propel the OPDs’ demand for a fairer distribution of resources in solidarity with the global disability community.<sup>3</sup> This resulted in the revision of the official guidance on disability in international cooperation in accordance with the human rights based approach and the eventual adoption of the 2013 Italian Development Cooperation Disability Action Plan by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Government of Italy, 2013). The Action Plan triggered several developments including the adoption of a disability policy marker and a series of guidelines for the Italian aid sector. As consequence, the Italian efforts on disability inclusion in development cooperation were positively evaluated by the OECD DAC peer review (OECD DAC 2019b).

While Austrian legislation includes “the needs of persons with disabilities” as one of underlying principles of Austrian development cooperation, this principle has not been further developed into a consistent policy. The Austrian national Action Plan on Disability 2012-2020 includes three general objectives on development cooperation and humanitarian aid accompanied by a small number of implementing measures (Sozialministerium 2012).

The Spanish development cooperation uses a similar approach. While the general disability policy framework (Government of Spain 2012, 2013, 2014) has some mentions of disability mainstreaming in external action, the latest available evaluation of the plan, which covers the period of 2014-2016, does not report any progress on the mainstreaming objective (OED 2017, 45). Similarly, while the

<sup>3</sup> Italy has a long history of mobilisation for the inclusion of persons with disability, starting from the educational sector when in 1977 the law for the inclusion of children with disability in the educational system was adopted and differential classrooms abolished, going to the law which in 1978 abolished the psychiatric hospitals (legge Basaglia). Almost 100.000 persons were hospitalized at that time and the change was key to the adoption of community-based services. These were epocal changes which saw a large mobilisation of leading institutions and civil society. By then, Italy (Trieste) became a reference at international level both for mental health and inclusion in the educational system. These practices and experiences were fully reflected in the Italian Development Cooperation Initiatives.



Spanish development cooperation law acknowledges the promotion of rights of persons with disabilities as an objective, the realisation of this objective is piecemeal, with some implicit references to disability in specific sector strategies (Government of Spain 2018) and 2019 Annual Plan (AECID 2019).

## 2.2 Global processes

### 2.2.1 Periodic reviews by the CRPD Committee

All countries included in this study (Austria, Italy, Spain) have undergone at least one periodic review by the CRPD Committee and received recommendations for future. In 2019, Spain completed its second cycle of review and Austria started one. Italy's next review is scheduled to start in 2023.

The issue of disability inclusion on international cooperation did not get much attention during the initial cycle of reviews. This could be explained by the relative novelty of the CRPD review processes for the national organisations of persons with disabilities, limited authoritative guidance implementation of CRPD Article 32<sup>4</sup>, or domination of the internal country issues on the review agenda. Additional practical limitations may have played a role: respecting the word limit of NGO submissions to the CRPD Committee, the organisations may have chosen to focus on more familiar and close-to-home issues, and financial issues may have prevented NGOs focusing on international cooperation from personally briefing the Committee in Geneva. As the result, the CRPD Committee, also bound by a word limit in its Concluding Observations, dealt with the CRPD Article 32 issues in a subordinate manner.

It has been observed that the issue of international cooperation is receiving increasing attention from the CRPD Committee during the second review: Spain's Concluding Observations received in 2019 are quite specific and provide a good base of follow-up action; a similar response can be expected to Austria in light of a substantial and well-research submission on Article 32 submitted to the Committee by the Austrian civil society. With the increasing attention to development cooperation from the disability community and the active role of the National Observatory on the Status of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>5</sup> it is hoped that the Italy's second CRPD review will also generate a more substance discussion on Article 32.

### 2.2.2 Disability as part of national sustainable development strategies

The Agenda 2030 core principle "Leave No One Behind" is as a rule well-articulated in the national development strategies of countries subject to this

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<sup>4</sup> The latest available guidance on Article 32 is the 2010 Thematic study by the OHCHR on the role of international cooperation in support of national efforts for the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities (A/HRC/16/38). In the words of an OHCHR staff, the document is rapidly becoming outdated, and the ongoing preparation of a study on Article 21 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should close the gap.

<sup>5</sup> [www.osservatoriodisabilita.gov.it](http://www.osservatoriodisabilita.gov.it)





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study. Reports submitted under the Voluntary National Review mechanism usually include a reflection of how national efforts to meet SDGs take into account persons with disabilities.

*“Humanitarian aid actions will be set in coherence and complementarity with the general strategic guidelines of the Italian Development Cooperation. [...] Attention will be paid to cross-cutting issues such as promoting the status of women, and protecting children, elderly people and people with disabilities.” (Italy National Development Strategy 2017)*

*“Austrian development policy measures promote gender equality while considering the needs of children, persons with disabilities and older persons. [...] Development policy organisations in civil society are longstanding and reliable partners in the implementation of the corresponding programmes and projects. Their active involvement and cooperation is vital to further improving the efforts of Austrian Development Cooperation in fostering inclusion and ‘leaving no one behind’.” (Austria Voluntary National Report 2020)*

*“With the human rights-based approach, the EC will promote the empowerment of all people for the full exercise of their rights, political participation, accountability, ensuring non-discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as for other reasons such as disability.” (Spanish Master Plan for Development Cooperation 2018-22)*

Currently, the CRPD and SDG reviews are mostly seen as separate processes at the national level. The SDGs are coordinated at the highest level (usually by the office of prime minister with support from the ministry of foreign affairs), disability is dealt with as a sectoral issue under the responsibility of the social ministry. As submitted in section 2.1, the achievement of SDGs is dependent on the implementation of the CRPD for the 15% of global population that have disabilities.

Bridging the Gap I project is developing helpful guidance to the CRPD States Parties on measuring the progress towards full implementation of each CRPD Article and its contribution to the national sustainable development goals (BtG I (OHCHR) 2019). **Human Rights Indicators for the CRPD in Support of a Disability-Inclusive 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals** is a quantitative and qualitative tool developed on the basis of a verified UN methodology to and accompanied by supporting literature to facilitate its use.<sup>6</sup> The set of indicators measuring the implementation of CRPD Article 32 is of particular relevance to the development agencies subject of this study.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/Pages/EUAndOHCHRProjectBridgingGapI.aspx>. The final indicators along their policy guidance and a document on data sources are expected to be published by the OHCHR at the end of 2020.



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## 2.3 Meaningful participation of OPDs in policy elaboration and programming

Putting the “Nothing about us without us” principle at the heart of all operations is crucial to a genuinely inclusive development. The research is firm in insisting that the OPDs in the home country are instrumental to identifying opportunities for inclusion, advising on accessibility and reasonable accommodation, while partner country OPDs have unique understanding of barriers to inclusion in the local context and are best positioned to reach out to persons with disabilities on the ground.

### 2.3.1 OPDs as policy advocates v service providers

To understand the full scope of OPD participation in all aspects of international development work, a distinction needs to be made between their role as advocates and service providers. Whilst in the former case (policy advocacy) OPDs represent right-holders, in the latter case (service provision) they act as project implementing parties or experts in the delivery of specialized technical assistance and training.

As Cote notes, the situation of the disability movement in the five countries involved in BtG-II is very diverse, with all countries experiencing significant issues related to inclusiveness and representativity of the movement with regards to women and girls with disabilities, marginalised groups and people living in rural or remote areas (BtG II and Cote 2020a). In some countries, OPDs’ capacity remains limited owing to both external considerations (restrictive legal or political situation, post-conflict, sociodemographic makeup of the country) and internal challenges (skills gap, prejudice, internal splitting of the movement). In these circumstances, maintaining a fine act of balancing roles as advocates and services providers may prove challenging. First, whilst tasks of service provision and rights advocacy often cross-fertilize each other by accessing rights holders and handling a specific stock of know-how and evidence, the mandate of service provider and that of civil society watch-dog might create occasions in which they conflict.

Second, for effectiveness reasons aid agencies often tend to partner up with the main actors of the civil society and third sector disability movement both domestically and in the partner countries, going for well-established and well-known umbrella organisations. This large size approach must be used with extreme caution as it might side-line smaller, possibly more innovative, organizations, those representing marginalised groups (such as deafblind people or those with intellectual disabilities) or groups that are not legally established or do not have organisational capacity to participate as formal partners (for example, representatives of LGBTQI persons with disabilities or persons with psychosocial disabilities). In that respect, International OPD networks are called to respect the aid effectiveness principle of ownership in their relation with national actors (UNDP 2018). Additionally, international aid programmes may skim off the best educated staff towards international cooperation projects, therefore drying out a



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genuine local landscape of peer support and community-based organization. Therefore, diversifying towards other actors, with a perspective to cover all type of impairments and the range of organizational set-ups in the associative movement, would ensure greater flexibility and innovation.

### 2.3.2 OPDs' contribution to agencies' work priorities

All researched agencies have put in place some channels, either formal or informal, for participation of OPDs and other civil society organisations in their work.<sup>7</sup> It is unclear to what extent national ratifications of the CRPD and the accompanying obligation to actively involve representative organisations of persons with disabilities in implementation and monitoring of the Convention (CRPD Arts 4(3), 33(3)) played a decisive role in establishing OPD participation mechanisms, although in all likelihood this momentum was used to either strengthen the partnership or to make it more visible. As shown above, the OPD alertness to the international dynamics around the CRPD reporting keeps evolving, as the OPDs are becoming more and more involved in this area traditionally the realm of international development organisations. Consequently, disability-inclusive international cooperation receives more recognition today than a few years ago from OPDs, governments and the CRPD Committee members alike.

Not all agencies have opted for a formally established working group on disability-inclusive development. The collaboration between AICS and RIDS, the Italian Network for Disability and Development, although mutually beneficial and productive according to both counterparts, has never been formalised. ADA, on the other hand, has a Working Group Disability mandated to support its policy work on disability mainstreaming. Due to staff rotation and capacity challenges, the Working Group contribution has not lived up to its potential, according to some stakeholders, and is now being reviewed.

In cases of all agencies, some degree of above-mentioned blurring of OPDs' roles as policy advocates and project implementers has been observed. In some instances, the OPDs' income-generating activities, such as project implementation or participation in tenders has possibly created an effect of distracting them from more purist political advocacy that is usually not remunerated.

The Guidance Note on Role of European organisations of persons with disabilities in international cooperation published by the European Disability Forum in 2019 (EDF 2019) distils a number of key factors to successful participation of OPDs in development cooperation.

**Meaningful participation of OPDs.** As could be expected the duty to involve persons with disabilities is at the heart of the recommendations. Conversations

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<sup>7</sup> These participation channels are without prejudice to the official consultation mechanisms, e.g national disability councils, often established by the social affairs ministries or similar pursuant to national obligations under the CRPD.



with OPDs not leading to a sustainable cooperation at all stages of the policy cycle (policy – programme – implementation – evaluation) should be avoided, giving way to an approach where OPDs are valued as equal partners in the design and implementation of policies and programmes.

**Participation budget.** Availability of earmarked funding for participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations is often the decisive factor in the extent to which OPDs are involved. The need to earmark participation budget has been frequently reiterated by experts, including stakeholders in the present study. It can be used to improve the accessibility of infrastructures/transport/information delivery, provision of reasonable accommodation and sign-language interpreters, etc.

### Box 3 – DFAT approach to reasonable accommodation

The need for reasonable accommodation is recognised in the Australian Development for All Strategy 2015–2020. In DFAT experience, programmes that manage to secure specific funding for disability inclusion, however small, found it to be a game-changer. Such funding has been used to reinforce the disability component of mainstream programmes and provide reasonable accommodation for participation of persons with disabilities (DFAT 2018).

DFAT recommends setting aside 3-5% of the budget for design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation to cover potential costs associated with participation of persons with disabilities in the project (DFAT 2015).

Source: (DFAT 2015a; DFAT and McCoy 2017; DFAT and Ovington 2018)

**Long-term strategic engagement.** The literature warns against reducing OPD involvement to implementation of projects. While important, it is far from the only participation channel that should be employed by development agencies. The OPDs should also be invited to take part in long-term cooperation initiatives, as is the case of partnership between AICS and RIDS in Italy, and a mechanism ensuring accessibility, transparency, fairness, and sustainability of such cooperation should be established.

**Capacity support.** In the same vein, national development agencies are called to respect the delicate balance between OPD participation prerogative and their capacity limitations. Some, particularly small organisations, may not immediately have programmatic capacity and resources to invest in development cooperation activities. OPD participation should come hand-in-hand with the assessment of their capacity to participate meaningfully and actions to address identified gaps in capacity

### Box 4 – Voices from DPOs

*“Many donors only support DPOs on a project basis, leaving DPOs with little time and resourcing to support core functions such as organisational capacity and advocacy. DFAT’s willingness to provide longer term core funding to DPOs, including regional*



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*DPOs, and to support advocacy related initiatives, particularly through the Disability Rights Fund (DRF) has made a significant contribution to DPO capacity and advocacy globally.”*

Source: DFAT advocacy evaluation 2017 (DFAT et al. 2017, 25)

In addition to involving OPDs in policy formulation and programming, the agencies could explore additional ways to involve persons with disabilities, for example by hiring more persons with disabilities in various agency functions (not just disability-specific programmes), creating a pool consultants with lived experience of disability, and outsourcing staff training on disability awareness to OPDs.

## 2.4 The Agenda 2030 as opportunity and challenge

In the consultations with the development cooperation organizations and the OPDs in the three countries, the research encountered two different policy communities, namely the “development” community and the “disability” community. Institutionally, these are anchored in a specific structure of government. “Development Cooperation” is usually a part of the Foreign Ministry and endowed (or not) with a semi-autonomous implementation structure – an agency. Increasingly it not only cooperates more with the other foreign policy branches (diplomacy, trade, defence), but also with “domestic” ministries on issues that are progressively more globalized, such as migration, health security, climate change and many others. As for “Disability”, the competences are usually centralized in a Directorate General, typically at a Ministry of Labour and Social Policy or similar. Being the chief organizational unit for responding to the CRPD obligations and the main focus for consultation with OPDs, the “DG Disabilities” is in frequent dialogue with other departments, namely education, employment, infrastructure, social policy and health.

We observed that “disability-inclusive development” has good chances to be relegated from the policy agenda if the two policy communities are separated. Whilst “disability” might receive acceptance and recognition in development circles, the lack of knowledge and practical guidance on how to programme action, is likely to decrease the attention when it comes to priority setting and budget allocation. Likewise, “development cooperation” is a welcome issue in the disability community. But when agreeing on main concerns it is probable to be downgraded and overseen, due to its often exotic or collateral character. In some countries, we have observed this divide to be replicated in the civil society, with clearly distinct roles for international development NGOs and representative organisations of persons with disabilities.

To elevate the commitment for disability-inclusive development it seems of paramount importance to create spaces that intersect the two constituencies, not only at institutional level – such as clearly defined cross-ministerial working groups – but also on the wider societal level, such as strategically providing for

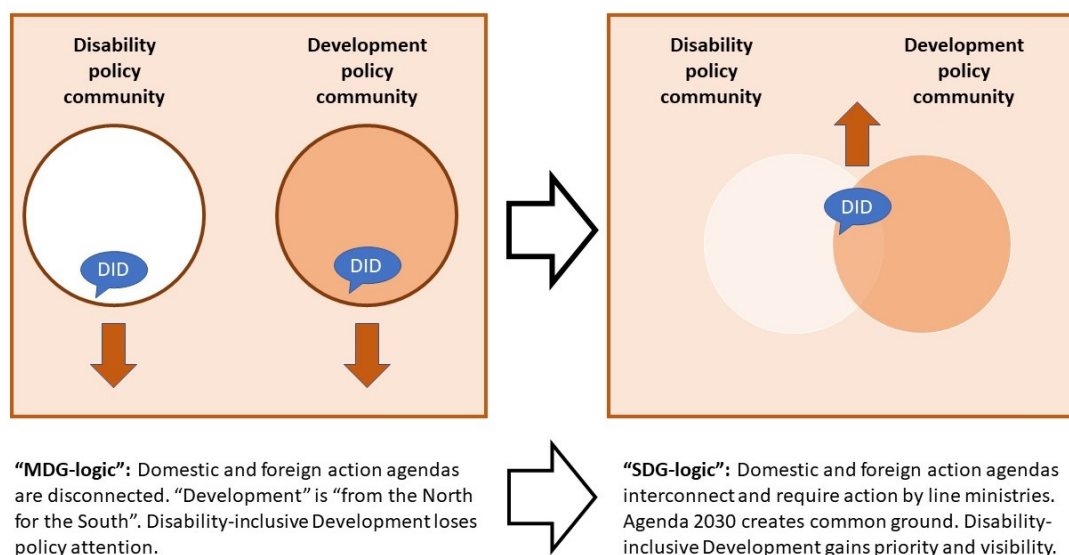




spaces where epistemic audiences and communities of practice can mingle. An annual report on Disability in Development Policy and Practice, together with the respective communication events, could be one vehicle to generate such space.

A main shift has happened in the conception of the SDGs since they inherited the combined legacy of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Rio Agenda. Whilst the MDGs were essentially an agenda ‘from the North for the South’, the SDGs define a common agenda for all to leave no one behind with shared but differentiated responsibility. This allows for new alliances between North and South, also at the level of civil society, where often paternalistic relations are getting successively replaced by experience exchange and a mutual view on defined objectives and a set of indicators, that are common to all.

**Figure 4: The shift from a North-South perspective to a Global Agenda**



Source: Own elaboration

In that respect, the Agenda 2030 is both a challenge and an opportunity. For the development and the disability communities it means to leave the zone of comfort and start innovating on new intersections. For the institutional structures it means a multiplication of interactions on new intergovernmental processes of policy coordination and strive for whole-of-government action. For the agenda of disability-inclusive development, however, the creation of a common agenda with shared but differentiated responsibilities is an opportunity, if the actors are versatile and proactive to connect the two sets of expertise and practice in order to make them go hand in hand and work.

## 2.5 Sector focus and disabilities

There is a long and ongoing debate on the added value and division of labour of bilateral donors (Schulz 2007). To increase aid effectiveness, bilaterals should



be doing more in less sectors and less countries. The division of labour in aid provision is contested and is not likely ever to fully materialize, due to national foreign policy interests and domestic pressure to be present in each and anyone of the sectors. However, there is a certain specialization in each of the agencies covered by this study. Namely, the Spanish cooperation has long focused on issues of food security around SDG2. It has also been recognized for its approach in cultural cooperation. ADA, particularly in Africa, is developing an expertise on resilience and governance. AICS is strong on humanitarian action and post-emergency/fragile states. When considering action on disability-inclusive development the key sectors that frequently come up are inclusive education, social protection and emergency relief.<sup>8</sup> When considering policy priorities and how to further engage in integrating disabilities in mainstream action, it seems reasonable that bilaterals chose those sectors where they have a competitive advantage. In that respect, the choice on where to start rolling out disability mainstreaming could lead to a number of actions on “disability in [sector]”.<sup>9</sup>

A similar discussion needs to be held about regional priorities. It is no secret that each national cooperation policy has specific focus of attention, such as the Spanish in Latin-America, the Italians in Horn of Africa Region and the Austrians in the Balkans. It is still to be determined how this then will translate into a (duty of) leading the inclusion of the disability agenda into the overall cooperation including the donor coordination and the relation to regional integration and coordination structures as well as multilaterals. In any case, the Agenda 2030 is creating new opportunities. The independent evaluation of DFAT found to have the clear geographic focus of DFAT aid efforts one of key contributing factors to a disability-inclusive development cooperation (DFAT and Ovington 2018).

### 3 Headquarter

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This chapter focusses on the internal processes of aid planning and programming, and the extent to which disability is included in all actions. A specific focus is on the tools and instruments that allow to plan, implement and follow up.

#### 3.1 Policy translation into action

Most of the countries and agencies under scrutiny have a programming guidelines, such as the AECID’s planning guidelines (AECID 2018), ADA’s guideline on including disability (ADA 2013), and AICS Guidelines for mainstreaming disability and social inclusion in aid projects (AICS 2018). Some

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<sup>8</sup> For example, these are the thematic working groups in the GLAD network - see below.

<sup>9</sup> After a process of internal reflection and stock-taking, the German Cooperation has elaborated specific sector guidelines to include disability in mainstream sector programmes, namely in gender (GIZ and Ziegler 2014), employment (GIZ et al. 2018), forced displacement (GIZ 2019b), governance (GIZ 2019a), and health (GIZ 2019c).



of the agencies have undertaken previous stock-taking exercises of existing practices such as in Spain (Martínez Ríos, CERMI, and AECID 2012) or Italy (AICS et al. 2015) or have commissioned specialized NGOs to develop specific sector guidance, such as the Austrian best practice guidelines for inclusive education (APPAER 2016).

Two of the three case study countries, Spain and Austria, do not have a specific *policy* on disability mainstreaming and twin-tracking or a respective *strategy*, as have other countries have such as Australia (DFAT 2015a), the UK (DFID 2018a) or Germany (BMZ 2018, 2019). Italy – before separating the roles of policy development and implementation – had formulated an action plan (Government of Italy 2013), which in a way serves this purpose. Whilst having a policy or governmental strategy is not the task of the implementing organization, it certainly helps both to plan the action as well as to evaluate against the defined objectives.

The following ideas inspired from the best international practices could be useful to translate policy into action:

- Use opportunities presented by scheduled revisions of policy documents to make them disability-inclusive.
- Strategically involve existing consultation structures, such as OPD consultation platforms and working groups in this process.
- Learn from the approach of gender mainstreaming and bundle up to a series of mainstreaming activities (gender, disability, non-discrimination, cultural diversity, agism etc) both in processes, such as social impact assessments, as well as structures, such as specific horizontal units .
- Successive alignment of sectoral strategies with the disability strategy (this had been recommended to DFAT during the 2017 evaluation and consecutively accepted).

### 3.2 Tools for ensuring disability mainstreaming

At an operational level, technical staff who are not disability experts need support and reminders in the planning and implementation processes, to make sure disability is conceived in the project formulation and – more importantly – further down the road when project materialize on the ground.

We identify the following reflection from country reports and other international aid actors that might be considered as good practice:

- In some agencies, planning templates for project formulation include a revision cycle to ensure disability is considered. The Austrian Environmental, Gender and Social Impact Management (EGSIM) has aimed for that but has been more successful in gender mainstreaming than in setting disability on the agenda.
- Emerging integrated logframes, as well as reporting systems, such as European OPSYS, provide the opportunity to include a dimension of disability, in project activities and indicators. However, such formal tools



risk being converted into mechanical box-ticking if not supported by assistance to materialize the commitment further down the road.

- Guidelines are important. However, it is often hard to establish whether they are known and used in practice. Adoption of guidelines must be accompanied by supportive measures (training, leadership’s communication tools, adequate staff capacity). Finally, guidelines should also call for or prescribe to establish quantitative and qualitative indicators to ensure that the guidelines are translated to be a measurable strategy, possibly with accountability mechanisms, either internal (to management) or external (to OPDs). This again links to the common set of indicators mentioned above.
- Suggest the establishment of an office for cross-cutting issues to ensure visibility for the most marginalised groups (e.g women with disabilities living in rural areas etc). To have impact, such an office should be based high enough in the hierarchy.

### 3.3 Indicators – at project and organization level

Indicators are needed at a range of levels and can help to drive the organizational practice forward. Figure 5 below attempts to give a basic structure of what type of indicator could be used by the organizations.<sup>10</sup> Principally, the indicator can work at the level of specific projects, or it can be meant to measure the performance of the overall organization (vertical dimension). Likewise (horizontal dimension), indicators can either measure whether in conception and implementation of development cooperation safeguards have been built in to ensure that people with disabilities are heard and considered (“process”). On the other hand, impact indicators measure whether a difference have been made in the quality of life, the health or education status, etc. or whatever is the objective of the intervention.

**Figure 5: Types of indicators to measure DID**

	Process	Impact
Projects	1	2
Organization	3	4

Source: own elaboration, inspired by (Wissenbach 2011)

<sup>10</sup> The OHCHR BtG-I project proposes a more sophisticated structure (S-P-O), distinguishing between structure, process, and outcome (OHCHR 2019). Derived from an analytical matrix of the European Fundamental Rights Agency, this grid is meant to measure the compliance at the level of the duty bearer of the CRPD, that is the Nation State.



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**Ad 1: Process indicators at project level.** Several indicators are available to answer whether disability is included in the project conception and implementation plan. The above-mentioned revision cycles, such as the Austrian EGSIM, ensure that a formal process reminds sector experts to consider the group. Possibly the most prominent indicator is the DAC disability marker (see below) that tags mainstreaming projects on a simple yes/no basis. Some agencies (ADA, SIDA, DFID) use internal data base markers. In some cases this has been found unreliable.<sup>11</sup> In others, they seem to help to better understand the practice of twin-tracking, identify both areas of good practice and gaps, and to reinforce the commitment.<sup>12</sup> The Italian cooperation has elaborated a more sophisticated set of indicators, that asks for a more diverse set of process dimensions such as percentage of disability-inclusive investment in each project from scale 0 for 100% disability-inclusive investment to 4 for 0% disability-inclusive investment. In general, disability markers face the challenge to put more weight on specific, targeted programmes, not to unfold the fine-grained reality of disability mainstreaming, and be blind to twin-tracking.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, the quality of participation of DPOs in the process of aid delivery is measured rarely (BtG II and Cote 2020a, 2020b). Furthermore, much of the assessment is focussed on the question whether disability is considered in the project *formulation*, such as in specifically defined lines of action or indicators, describing goals, objectives, and targets with the cooperation. It is much less measured to what extent defined project objectives are *implemented*. By design or default the indicators frequently monitor only the inclusion of *concepts* in documents, not necessarily influencing actual interventions (Ribohn 2013).

**Ad 2: Impact indicators at project level.** Besides the usual question of attribution (of project outcome to change at population level), the challenge here is principally if the mainstream project indicators are disaggregated by person with and without disability (WG 2016). The commitment to disaggregate data against people with or without disability, acquired in the Declaration of the Agenda 2030 and specifically in SDG target 17.18, offers the opportunity to connect

<sup>11</sup> “Since 2010, Sida has removed its statistical coding for disability as it was considered unreliable. Instead, Sida uses two DAC codes, one being human rights and the other social /welfare services, both of which include persons with disabilities. In addition to these two DAC codes, Sida also applies a policy marker for democracy and human rights (which is one of three thematic priorities decided by the government) in which persons with disabilities are included. Consequently, the codes include many more initiatives than those targeting persons with disabilities. At the same time, the codes exclude any initiative mainstreaming or including disability issues in other sectors such as agriculture, education or infrastructure.” (Ribohn 2013)

<sup>12</sup> This was found for DFID: “As of February 2018, 68% of programmes across DFID did not target disability, 22% of programmes were marked “principal” or “significant”, while the remaining 10% had not been marked one way or another. Only six of a total of 1,161 programmes were marked “principal” (ICAI 2018)

<sup>13</sup> The DFID evaluation compares the British and the Australian approach and notes that: “By asking whether the programme identifies barriers to inclusion, and whether disabled people’s organisations are involved, it [the Australian tool of ‘aid quality check’] is more clearly addressing mainstreaming than DFID’s disability marker with its focus simply on whether a programme includes activities (of whatever size) to support inclusion.” (ICAI 2018)



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project impact with national statistics efforts to establish the baseline and progresses of the welfare of people with disabilities, in the respective sector of intervention. In that respect, FIIAPP is working on an integrated results framework that makes the linkages to the SDGs explicit. At this stage, this framework is in a conception phase.

**Ad 3: Process indicators at organizational level.** On the one hand, this indicator would be the aggregation of all action on project level. In that respect, evidence could be generated on the percentage of project that undertake a significant mainstreaming effort, such as an annual reporting on the DAC marker at organizational level. On the other hand, there are planning structures above the project level, such as country strategies, sector strategies, three or four-year plans, or annual operational plans. All of these can entail an element of whether disability is considered. Structural indicators, such as the existence of working groups or the staff dedicated to disability mainstreaming, as well as the hierarchical position of disability mainstreaming in the organizational chart, enter into this category. Furthermore, the issue of diversity management – the extent to which people with disabilities are recruited and integrated into the human resources – could be assessed. Likewise, the quality of participation, both at domestic and at partner country level, could be subject to scrutiny. In that respect, indicators of accountability towards the disability community, such as in annual reports and annual consultation events, could become measurable performance indicators.

Related to process on organizational level is the question of mere input in terms of funds. The OECD DAC is currently working on a complex tool, which would allow to reconcile the half-century old creditor reporting system (CRS) with the new generation indicator set as proposed by the SDGs. The Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) statistical framework aims to provide a comprehensive picture of global, official and officially-supported resource flows provided to promote sustainable development in developing countries.

**Ad 4: Impact indicators at organizational level.** This is obviously a complex matter and is likely to be established only in a strategic evaluation and not via routine data collection. On important dimension in terms of impact, at organizational level for aid agencies, is whether disability forms part of the political dialogue at country level in which agencies participate as technical agents. In that sense, the Finnish concept of “three-tracking” is useful as it adds the component of political dialogue to the project activities, whether specific or mainstreamed (Wiman 2012). In that respect, it needs to be recognized that disability has really been turned into a strategic priority for the Finnish cooperation, particularly when on the ground capacity building is linked to high-level multilateral influencing.

**Box 5 – DFAT performance measurement system**

The Development for All 2015–2020 strategy identifies the two components of DFAT’s performance management system that will be used to assess disability inclusion: Annual Program Performance Reports (APPRs) and Aid Quality Checks (AQC).



APPRs are used to measure disability inclusion of country and regional programmes, whereas AQC's assess individual aid programmes. Whereas APPR reporting is not standardised (and as such, its impact has been found to be limited and difficult to measure), AQC's are based on a six-point scale from 1 (underperforming) to 6 (performing well) according to standardised criteria that include two disability criteria: active involvement of OPDs in all stages of the project (D1) and identification and elimination of barriers to inclusion, enabling full enjoyment of aid investments by persons with disabilities (D2).

AQC reporting is mandatory for all investments valued at 3 mln AUD or above.

AQC ratings are based on self-assessment by programme areas. Self-assessment is scrutinised by the DFAT headquarters' during the moderation procedure. The independent DFAT evaluation suggests that while moderation is a useful tool, it should focus on implementation and recognised constraints. In addition, outcomes for persons with disabilities should be quantified using measures other than the AQC's.

It has been observed that the increase in disability awareness of DFAT staff is proportional to the increase in stringency of disability ratings. This explains the steady declines in the percentage of disability-inclusive investment in the recent years: in 2017-2018, approximately 40% of investments across DFAT programmes were found to be disability inclusive (compared to 60% in 2015-2016).

Source: (DFAT and Ovington 2018)

### 3.4 Factors that encourage and impede mainstreaming

Organizations that have successfully transitioned to have disability present in all their operations have undergone different pathways, but some demonstrate some common features.

**Leadership (human factor).** There is a high-level policy support that reaches beyond the development cooperation policy and connects the domestic disability agenda with the global goals. Sometimes symbolic high-level action reinforces this commitment.<sup>14</sup> On a more managerial level, the anchorage of disability mainstreaming in the organizational chart seems paramount. A high-level directorate position ensures weight vis-à-vis other, sectoral or territorial, units.<sup>15</sup> Bundling up mainstreaming options, such as gender, non-discrimination, disability and age-discrimination can ensure mutual support, learning on tools and a better reception in the target units of the organization.

**Evidence base and learning.** Making inputs, outputs and impact visible is important to both convince sectoral line managers and partners in partner countries. Setting up systems of disaggregated indicators and reporting on actual project implementation, rather than screening project formulation documents, is

<sup>14</sup> Such as the Spanish Queen Letizia Prize for Accessibility, which is directed to both a domestic and Latin-American audience, and raises awareness on a yearly basis supported by solid technical assessments of the candidates.

<sup>15</sup> For example, in DFID, a director-general has chaired monthly meetings on disability. The disability team has presented at senior civil service conferences. (ICAI 2018)



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a tedious process, which needs investment for being able to harvest results. The SDG agenda has brought a new impetus to a common set of goals. In the triangle of policy declarations, measurable progress and budget allocation, disability needs to be situated as a convincing cause for investment. To that end, both data and persuasive narratives from field experiences need to be conveyed both internally as well as to the

**Solid implementation structures.** Some agencies tend to outsource exclusively via small-scale projects to NGOs. Serious twin-tracking needs a combination of small-scale pilot programmes, a rigorous technical integration in large scale bilateral programmes as well as its inclusion in the political dialogue at highest level, in law making and national budget formulation. Relegating implementation to just grass-roots service-delivery interventions and local capacity building is neither sufficient for impact nor for consistently building up expertise in the agency. In that respect, it seems important to also shift from a perspective of OPDs as mere, often underpaid, service providers, to competent agents in political advocacy, that also need core-funding for their work as human rights advocates.<sup>16</sup>

**Participation.** 'Nothing about us without us' has been the claim of the disability rights movement and has not lost reason since then. However, participation needs to be structured to generate meaningful spaces of policy scrutiny. From there on delegated tasks of project implementation and consulting can be sublet to OPDs, without confounding the mandates in either of these. The dissolution of the North-South contraposition in the Global Agenda 2030 allows for new partnerships and global reference networks which entail both new relations between northern and Southern disability associations, as well as opportunities for multilateral engagement. Participation needs to overcome the cleavages between the development and the disability constituency to form an authentic DiD community that can talk to either sides. Finally, a genuine commitment to participation would mean to work towards including people with disabilities amongst the implementation structure of agencies ("*diversity management*") by supporting and encouraging accessible training for persons with disability in international cooperation through the involvement of their OPDs and OSC active in the field of disability.

## 4 Country offices

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A combination of circumstances made it difficult to conduct in-depth interviews with a critical mass of country office stakeholders and local civil society representatives. The limited information in this section is presented as invitation for further research and discussion between agency headquarters and their respective offices in partner countries.

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<sup>16</sup> A positive approach is the subgrant mechanisms allowed under EU rules. Under BtG-II, OPDs from all five participating countries have been benefitting of approx. 500K € in small grants.





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## 4.1 Capacities and resources at CO level

High workload and limited resource concerns voiced at the Headquarters' level have been echoed in the country office interviews.

Unlike the HQ interviews that focused on guidelines, checklists and training, the distinct emphasis of country office informants has been the human factor of disability-inclusive programming. The interviewees stressed building trusting relationships, informal exchanges between staff and with local civil society representatives, innovation and experimentation and the 'learning by doing' attitude as factors facilitating disability mainstreaming of country operations.

The situations of "accidental" disability mainstreaming have been observed (own research and (Lindqvist 2014, 25; 33)). This happens when disability component is included in country initiatives as the result of personal interest, knowledge, or experience of staff of the implementing organisation or their partners. Although not unwelcome, the sustainability of inclusive initiatives that are not rooted in the agency's overarching policy may be challenged by lack of dedicated budget (for accessibility and reasonable accommodation for participation of persons with disabilities), conflicting priorities, impossibility to monitor progress (in the absence of agreed indicators and reporting guidelines) and, possibly, limited buy-in from the management. Patchy implementation and limited documentation of experiences make the transfer and multiplication of the practice less likely. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that such practices are closely monitored and documented for learning and possible replication purposes.

Presence of the BtG-II project teams in the agencies' country offices has had a clear positive impact on disability inclusion of mainstream programmes administered by the offices in question. For example, the reinforcement of a large AICS health programme in Sudan with a significant innovative disability component has become possible thanks to collaboration with the BtG-II that has also facilitated the creation of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities (GFPD) at the Embassy of Italy - a common space for the diplomatic corps, civil society and private sector committed to supporting the rights of persons with disabilities. Similar good practices have been implemented by AICS in Burkina Faso. Improved monitoring of the disability component of projects in ADA Ethiopia has become possible thanks to continuous support and advice of the BtG colleagues and ADA staff continuous exposure to disability issues via BtG-II activities.

While it is accepted that these good practices cannot be fully replicated in other country offices that do not enjoy the presence of a large-scale project on the rights of persons with disabilities, the agencies are encouraged to initiate an internal discussion to apply BtG learning practices to other contexts. In this sense, collaborative partnerships between agencies' in their Headquarters and between various agencies' country offices has a powerful capacity to reinforce learning.



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## 4.2 OPD participation

A substantial Norwegian study concluded that the most relevant and effective NORAD interventions were those supporting advocacy and capacity building of disabled people’s organisations (Ingdal, Nilsson, and NORAD 2012, xviii).

Available research warns against a tokenistic approach to involving representative organisations of persons with disabilities in partner countries. The tendency to involve OPDs at the project design stage and decrease their presence during implementation and evaluation stages has been observed and should be reversed (ICAI 2018, 23). The challenges of continuous involvement of OPDs throughout the project management cycle have also been shared in stakeholder interviews.

Research has shown that in some cases, the long-term impact of disability-inclusive projects remains restricted to the populations directly targeted by the projects in question. Only 25% of projects assessed by AICS claimed to have contribute to the change of policies in the field. Possible explanations include the lack of a policy component in the NGO-led projects in favour of service delivery and the short time span of their projects making it difficult to observe and measure a policy change (AICS 2018). As submitted above in section 2.3, having to choose between political advocacy and income-generating project activities may become a significant impediment to ensuring structural changes on the ground.

Finally, available literature cautions against channelling the funding to local civil society exclusively via its national NGOs at the expense of direct funding to local level. (OECD 2020, 75). Establishing direct partnerships with NGOs and OPDs in partner countries can be an important tool to address the frequent criticism of disconnect between the international donor community and the local civil society and serve as an important learning platform for both parties.

### Box 6 – Australian Humanitarian Partnership Disaster Ready programme

Mainstreaming disability in humanitarian assistance has been reported challenging by DFAT implementing partners, the weakest aspect of it being involvement of persons with disabilities in humanitarian response. Rapid and short-term funding and the need to act quickly have limited the DFAT partners’ ability to reach out to representative OPDs on the ground (many of whom would have very limited capacity to participate in humanitarian response). Long-term engagement with OPDs has been found to be an effective tool to respond to this challenge.

The Australian Humanitarian Partnership Disaster Ready programme, running from 2018 till 2022 and worth 50 million AUD, implements this finding. The programme aims to strengthen coordination among humanitarian actors and ensure that the emergency response is disability-inclusive. It provides funding for OPDs in the region helping them build a sustainable relationship with humanitarian response agencies and provide input to disaster preparedness, management, and risk reduction activities.

Source: [australianhumanitarianpartnership.org/preparedness](http://australianhumanitarianpartnership.org/preparedness)



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### 4.3 Factors that encourage and impede mainstreaming

Once again, drawing the parallel between disability and gender mainstreaming seems inevitable. In-country respondents were unanimous in naming a strong persistent obligation to mainstream an issue accompanied by guidance, support and measurement indicators the most important factor in achieving successful mainstreaming. In the same vein, disability inclusion in development must be presented as indispensable prerequisite for achieving national SDG targets instead of 'one more issue to mainstream'.

A strategy for mutually beneficial partnership and with local civil society organisations, including OPDs, could be a good starting point for discussing the optimal use of limited CO human and financial resources. A fruitful cooperation can be fostered by regular exchanges and annual events to facilitate network and present the agency's work to the civil society. A special effort to reach out to the most marginalised and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities must be made. The agencies are encouraged to experiment with innovative ways of involving local OPDs and tap into their unique position as the bridge between the donor and the local community. Physical, communicational and attitudinal barriers often impede disability inclusion more than policy considerations or financial limitations. Therefore, the agencies are invited to come up with a plan to gradually improve the accessibility of their offices, meeting venues, transport and communication tools, and consider setting aside a small budget to provide reasonable accommodation measures to disabled participants. Finally, staff disability awareness training given by BtG-II project staff of local OPD representatives should not be overlooked. Disability awareness can also be improved by hosting a trainee from the local disability movement.

## 5 Evaluation and learning

This sections centres on additional functions of the project cycle, such as evaluation, systematic learning, networking, and practice exchange.

### 5.1 Systematic Evaluations

Evaluations on disability-inclusive development can be undertaken at various levels.

- **Stocktaking and mapping:** Not a solid evaluation, but rather a stocktaking are periodic reviews of what action is undertaken in country projects and country portfolios.<sup>17</sup> Having these kinds of pictures is important. However, in more advanced development cooperation agencies, these one-off exercises are successively being replaced by

<sup>17</sup> The Spanish aid has commissioned such stocktaking twice in 2012 (Martínez Ríos, CERMI, and AECID 2012) and 2018 (AECID 2018).





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routine reporting, often supported by disability markers, these allow for an annual reporting which can mobilize civil society, parliamentary and expert scrutiny.

- **Inclusion of disability in standard terms of references.** Many projects mention people with disabilities in the project formulation but lack to define clear activities or indicators. Others do, but when rolling out to the field reality focus on their perceived priorities and drop the disability focus. Therefore, individual project monitoring and evaluation frameworks should systematically include the dimension of evaluating disability in their terms of reference. From there on, evaluation units can generate a transversal reading to generate a topic-focussed meta-evaluation.
- **Evaluation internal processes and corporate responsibility:** Monitoring of corporate commitment, namely on staff diversity or socially responsive procurement, can generate benchmarks and annual reports.<sup>18</sup>
- **Revision of planning tools and cross-cutting procedures.** The planning templates and guidelines of aid agencies are the core asset of the development cooperation as they dictate the daily operational running, incentives for staff, and the lines of reporting. In the trade-off between comprehensiveness and effectiveness, these instruments are frequently evaluated to measure policy compliance and the overburdening of staff with policy objectives. This provides for a good opportunity to advocate for including disability.<sup>19</sup> They need to be assessed against their potential to promote disability-inclusive development.<sup>20</sup>
- **Sector specific evaluation.** A good entry point for disability mainstreaming is running joint participatory formative evaluation with sector staff. The German Cooperation has undergone a process in which a dedicated disability unit has generated several sectoral guidelines with sector staff.<sup>21</sup>
- **Policy evaluation.** Literally all development actors that could be considered as advanced in disability mainstreaming and twin-tracking have followed a process of policy development after the CRPD ratification, muddling through with action plans, and a reboot through a mayor policy evaluation. This has happened in the Norwegian (Ingdal, Nilsson, and NORAD 2012), Australian (DFAT et al. 2017; DFAT and Ovington 2018),

<sup>18</sup> FIIAPP is working currently on a monitoring system to follow up on the social and environmental conditionalities with contracting partners.

<sup>19</sup> At the time of writing (June 2020), the scheduled strategic evaluation of ADC human rights-based approach (HRBA) was in its early inception stage. The evaluation is expected to be finalised at the end of 2020 or early 2021. The evaluation is an opportunity to revisit and strengthen ADA approach to human rights of persons with disabilities.

<sup>20</sup> The DFAT 2017 evaluation found that “Development for All 2015–2020 identifies two components of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT’s) performance management system to be used to assess disability inclusion: Annual Program Performance Reports (APPRs) for country, regional and other programs; and Aid Quality Checks (AQC) for individual investments. This evaluation found AQC, but not APPR, to be useful in assessing disability inclusion.” (DFAT and Ovington 2018).

<sup>21</sup> See footnote 9.



British (ICAI 2018) and German Cooperation (DEval et al. 2017). Likewise the UNDP has undergone a highly critical evaluation process (UNDP 2016). Most of these evaluations have triggered a significant turnaround which as reoriented the earlier action. Some of these strategic policy evaluations, as well as the institutional safe-guard for independence, are presented in Box 7.

### Box 7 – Independent Evaluation Institutions

**Australia - Office of Development Effectiveness ([dfat.gov.au/ode](https://dfat.gov.au/ode)).** The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) is an office within the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) that is independent of aid program management. ODE monitors the Australian aid program's performance and evaluates its impact. ODE's work is overseen by the Independent Evaluation Committee, an advisory expert body that provides advice on ODE's evaluation strategy and activities and helps ensure its independence. ODE has undertaken a review of the first disability strategy before formulating the successor strategy (DFAT and McCoy 2017), as well as a progress evaluation (DFAT and Ovington 2018). It also has undertaken a specific evaluation of the advocacy component of DFAT's work on DID (DFAT et al. 2017).

**United Kingdom - Independent Commission for Aid Impact (<https://icai.independent.gov.uk/>)** The ICAI works to improve the quality of UK development assistance through robust, independent scrutiny. We provide assurance to the UK taxpayer by conducting independent reviews of the effectiveness and value for money of UK aid. We operate independently of government, reporting to Parliament, and our mandate covers all UK official development assistance. ICAI has published rapid review of DFID's approach towards disability in development (ICAI 2018).

**German Institute for Development Evaluation ([deval.org](https://deval.org))** DEval's core task is to conduct independent and strategically relevant evaluations and impact analyses of German development cooperation to promote learning processes and objective decision-making and enhance accountability with regard to the use of public funds. Deval has undertaken an evaluation of the German development Ministry's action plan on disability (DEval et al. 2017). It has been responded by the Ministry (BMZ 2017).

**UNDP's Independent Evaluation Office ([undp.org/evaluation](https://undp.org/evaluation))** is charged with conducting independent thematic and programmatic evaluations. The rather devastating 2016 report on Disability-Inclusive Development at UNDP (UNDP 2016), was answered by a management response and a Implementation Tracking of the therein formulated commitments.

Source: websites. Reports on evaluation national disability strategies as referenced.

Evaluation reports should be accompanied by the management's response commenting on the recommendations (Agree/disagree) and announcing the course of action. Box 8 provides for some examples of such responses. Advanced development cooperation actors have monitoring mechanisms with which they pursue action committed to in the management response. This allows for further engagement and follow-up, both by agency staff and civil society, including OPDs and parliamentary scrutiny.

### Box 8 – Management responses to policy evaluations



**DFAT (response to a recommendation in 2018 evaluation):** “DFAT will map and promote the entry points for disability inclusion in existing design, implementation and monitoring documents and processes to better highlight where disability inclusion should be considered in the investment life cycle. DFAT will undertake sample-based periodic spot checks of investments to verify that disability inclusion is being appropriately addressed in investment development, implementation and assessment”. (DFAT and Ovington 2018)

**UNDP response on the IEO 2016 evaluation** “Contingent on the inclusion of disabilities as part of the new strategic plan for 2018-2021, clear goals, targets and indicators of the IRRF will be disability-inclusive. This includes ways to consider both disability-specific indicators at the corporate level and country-specific disaggregation of data on disability. Consideration will be given to the feasibility of including disability-disaggregated indicators, taking into account national statistical capacities and cost effectiveness of disaggregated data collection in key areas over the new strategic plan period.” (UNDP 2016)

**BMZ (German Development Ministry) response to 2017 Deval disability evaluation:** “(3) The BMZ and its implementing organisations will examine the feasibility of human-rights-based target group analyses for projects being carried out under Technical and Financial Cooperation. The pertinent efficient instruments should be capable of being attached to existing structures and processes (for analysing target groups and stakeholders). ... (11) The recommendation made by DEval that an internal managerial structure be created which will give some of the responsibility for inclusion to divisions other than the lead division will be discussed as part of the drafting of a follow-on strategy for mainstreaming the rights of people with disabilities.” (BMZ 2017)

Source: as referenced

## 5.2 The DAC disability marker

In 2018, the OECD DAC created a “policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities” – shortly referred to as DAC disability marker (OECD DAC 2019a).<sup>22</sup> Modelled similarly as the gender marker, the disability marker provides that any reported project is tagged in three possible ways – (2) “Principal“ objective: the programme is aimed specifically at promoting the rights of people with disability, (1) it is a “significant” objective, and (0) it’s not targeted at all. Disability mainstreaming would therefore be captured in category “1 significant”. The DAC marker is used on a voluntary basis (OECD DAC 2018). The DAC team, in collaboration with the bilateral partners, is currently working on reporting guidelines which will provide for clear-cut definitions and concepts on how to locate the projects in the 0-1-2 rating.

The DAC CRS system is a system that has been invented 50 years ago and has as its main advantage that the data series are constant. However, with the

<sup>22</sup> The other indicators of the DAC CRS system are Gender equality, the Rio indicators (Climate Change, Biological Diversity and Desertification), Participatory Development and Good Governance, Trade development, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Nutrition, and Sexual and Reproductive Health, see [www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/](http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/)



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Agenda 2030 the very concept of “ODA” is getting more and more criticized. Furthermore, the sector definitions are becoming more and more myopic and outdated. The DAC is currently working on transitioning the historic CRS system into a system which could be overlaid by the SDGs. This attempt is dubbed the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD). In the general move towards results-based management of ODA, this reporting guidelines would then allow to extract detailed programme information against specific SDG targets or even articles of the CRPD. Whilst this is still in the making, the velocity of the digitalization and the handling of data calls for a swift move towards visualizing ODA data against policy objectives, that are useful for both users in the administration, as well as for civil society oversight.<sup>23</sup>

However, this reporting is likely to be useful only if a specific uptake is defined, such as a feedback to programme staff or an accountability to domestic or third country stakeholders. In that sense, donors are advised to consider integrating the DAC marker whilst thinking forward to an impact-oriented outlet for this information. However, the current stream of debate points rather towards intersecting SDGs with CRPD articles, as proposed by OHCHR (BtG I (OHCHR) 2019).

Donors will have to provide a tagging of their projects against the 2-1-0 scale of the DAC disability marker.<sup>24</sup> Probably more interesting – and technically more challenging - would be a genuine report at project and organizational level that discloses to what extent the programmes are inclusive to disability. For European bilateral agencies, it seems useful to apply as soon as possible the new OECD DAC marker on disability for the projects co-financed by the EC to have solid statistical evidence on this field with the aim to plan future actions based on the experiences acquired.

### 5.3 Practice exchange and multilateral relations

In June 2020, the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) network (GLAD network - gladnetwork.net) had 38 members. The process of joining is usually preceded by an assessment of the current action on disability inclusive development cooperation, including mainstreaming. The network organises annual encounters of the member, which are conceived as space for experience exchange and policy alignment. The network is composed of three types of organizations, i.e. bilateral, multilateral, and civil society organizations, most of these either umbrella organizations or foundations. The encounters have a balanced choreography of meetings and side-events that foster coordination, matchmaking and provide for protected spaced for donor coordination and harmonization of

<sup>23</sup> FIIAPP is currently aspiring to develop a systematic approach towards management systems and monitoring processes which could prepare the organization to integrate the DAC disability marker into its general reporting system.

<sup>24</sup> The DAC disability marker is voluntary in nature, so actually there are four categories: (2) “Principal” objective, (1) “significant” objective, (0) not targeted, and (x) not reported against. It is likely that in most projects the markers will not be marked at all.



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advocacy strategies. Currently there are three working groups: on social protection, inclusive education, and humanitarian action. It is being discussed whether new working groups are created, possibly about disability and climate change.

Participating in the GLAD network gives access to good practice and offers the opportunity to influence the international agenda. It can be highlighted that returns for the own practice are proportional to the effort invested in the network. Extracting and showcasing own practice, tools or initiatives could force the agency to make own experiences explicit, whilst it would strengthen the image of the respective cooperation amongst peers.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, a participation in the annual event by higher levels of leadership within the member organization would not only signal commitment to donor partners, but also strengthen message inwards that disability mainstreaming is pursued as priority. Whether such as strategic engagement would be possible depends heavily on the investment that the agency would be willing to accept, both in terms of political priorities as well as resources, namely staffing. In virtually all our case study organizations, it seems unlikely that this kind of engagement can be pursued with the current staffing situation. A strategic engagement might be sought in the working groups: In line with the division of labour mentioned in section “2.5 Sector focus and disabilities” above and considering the respective sector specialization that each agency, guided by national policy, pursues, a priority setting to principally engage in one of the working groups might focus the efforts towards one single entry point from which lessons can be drawn to other areas in a second stage.

Beyond the GLAD network a global community on disability and development is forming. In that respect, two annual summits were organized, namely the Global Disability Summit 2018 in London (DFID 2018b, 2018a)<sup>26</sup>, or the Global Disability Summit 2019 in Argentina.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs has a line of action and a single communication window on disabilities.<sup>28</sup> In the same context, the UN family coordinates programming and communication around one single portal – UN enable.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, Catalina Devandas, is investing into the global governance of disability rights and related action on article 32 of the CRPD Convention on international cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Out of 4 BtG project partners 2 have joined GLAD in 2019, AECID and FIIAPP. Others consider to participate, but fear not to be able to respond to the thereby generated tasks and commitments, given the generalized overload and lack of staffing.

<sup>26</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/global-disability-summit-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/global-disability-summit-2018)

<sup>27</sup> [www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/disability-summit-argentina-2019](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/disability-summit-argentina-2019)

<sup>28</sup> [www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/)

<sup>29</sup> See the newsletter [www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/united-nations-enable-newsletter.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/united-nations-enable-newsletter.html)

<sup>30</sup> Her activities are highlighted in specific webpage [www.embracingdiversity.net](http://www.embracingdiversity.net).





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## Box 9 – DFAT multilateral engagement / global engagement

In addition to direct programming support that is the core business of DFAT, it also has a sound global advocacy strand. Through the years, strategic investment in global initiatives such as core funding for the International Disability Alliance and the Pacific Disability Forum, support to the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and leading roles in establishing the UN Partnership for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) and GLAD network has had a strong multiplying effect, increasing DFAT’s legitimacy and visibility, and facilitating its access to global agencies.

It must be stressed that funding for global advocacy only makes up 0.2% of Official Development Assistance (= 6.9 mln AUD in 2016-2017), breaking the myths about heavy investments always being necessary to have a strategic impact. In case of DFAT, smart strategic spending into a select number of key global partnership has had a double effect of promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and creating a favourable environment for implementation of its direct programmes.

Source: DFAT and Dunn (2017)

## 6 Human resources

The significance of investing in human resources to achieving the overall objective of disability-inclusive development should not be underestimated. Available literature (Ribohn 2013) demonstrates the interdependence between disability inclusion and the sufficient knowledge and competence of the agency’s staff regarding disability issues. During this research, informants from the agencies and the NGO community have consistently invoked the decisive importance of trained, committed, and available staff supported and empowered by management that understands and promotes disability-inclusive development.

### 6.1 Training and support

A concrete example of the relationship between achieving strategic objectives and human resources can be extracted from SIDA’s 2009 workplan for human rights of persons with disabilities, containing two Objectives: (1) to include human rights of persons with disabilities in development cooperation, and (2) to increase SIDA staff awareness about disability through training. However, due to downsizing and restructuring, most activities to implement Objective 2 could not take place. The independent evaluation found the impact of the 2009 workplan to be fairly limited, and suggested that Objective 1 would have been better achieved if SIDA had progressed on Objective 2 (Ribohn 2013).

The observations made during the research include:



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- Absence of regular staff training in disability-inclusive programming may put an excessive burden on the agency's disability focal point who would be expected to mitigate the lack of staff expertise on disability (AICS);
- Voluntary participation in training may impede the staff ability to attend it out of considerations for more immediate work priorities, while mandatory training is easier to accommodate and/or justify with the line manager (ADA);
- Staff rotation may impede the efforts to mainstream disability throughout all operations unless the training is offered in a regular, consistent and flexible manner (ADA, SIDA);
- Any staff training on disability matters should include a variety of approaches, such as a mix of online and in-person modules, training on principles and frameworks followed by training on technical aspects of disability-inclusive programming, monitoring and evaluation, and practical aspects of accessibility and reasonable accommodation;
- Presence of BtG-II teams in country offices has shown to be very beneficial to improved disability inclusion of mainstream programmes as it has enabled informal training and experience exchange between BtG-II staff and other agency colleagues (ADA Ethiopia, AICS Sudan);<sup>31</sup>
- Involvement of OPD representatives may make training less abstract and more hands-on for the agency staff, especially those who have little experience of working with persons with disabilities;
- Some technical issues of disability inclusion can be presented in the form of 'tip sheets' that include considerations of accessibility of project documentation and information, checklist for running accessible meetings and consultations, examples of reasonable accommodation measures, etc. (as per recommendation to ADA in the course of EGSIM evaluation).
- In general, it is a feature of quality development aid when all staff of International Cooperation (public and private actors) are trained in the field of CRPD and disability, considering the ratification of the CRPD constitute an obligation according to international law in 181 countries.

The above reflections apply equally to staff training in the Headquarters and country offices.

It is essential to use the training to tackle the frequent perception of staff that "disability is just one more issue to mainstream" and emphasise the indivisibility of disability inclusion from the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. As the 2013 SIDA evaluation observes, "[persons with disabilities should be included in all of agency's initiatives] because they are important to reach several millennium goals and fighting poverty. One of the objectives of training should be that the focus on human rights for persons with disabilities need not be perceived as yet another issue to include, but instead as constituting a discernible part of human rights based approach and perspective of poor people." (Ribohn 2013)

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<sup>31</sup> Whilst this had been confirmed by field staff for Ethiopia and Sudan, this is true also for all the other BtG country offices as well as for FIIAPP where initiatives aimed at enhancing inclusion were initiated, according to HQ staff and BtG-II coordination.



## 6.2 Technical support / help desk

In some agencies, disability mainstreaming is supported by setting up teams or in-contracted services that are at the disposition of sector or country teams to support in general as well as specific issues on demand (DFAT and McCoy 2017; White et al. 2018). They act as help desk that supports and guides agency staff, both in project formulation and implementation.

The research found some of such corporations in all of the agencies with a significant variation of the terms of cooperation, but always a very successful cooperation, recognized by both sides, OPDs as well as agencies. In that regard, AICS has a long-term strategic relation to the *Rete Italiana Disabilità e Sviluppo* – RIDS, AECID cooperates with ONCE, COCEMFE y CERMI, and ADA collaborates with Sight-Savers and several other networks. FIIAPP is currently finalizing a strategic agreement with ONCE.

### Box 10 – Partnership agreement between DFAT and CBM Australia

Recognising its expertise and capacity limitations in disability-inclusive development, DFAT concluded partnership agreement with CBM Australia, an accredited Australian NGO specialising in disability inclusion, to provide technical advice and support to DFAT to be a global and regional leader in disability-inclusive development. The partnership, first concluded in 2011, has been regularly extended and expanded. The services provided by CBM Australia in the framework of the partnership include improving awareness of disability-inclusive development within DFAT, provision of technical expertise, sector knowledge and networks, evaluation of progress towards disability-inclusive development, training, building partnerships, support to regional and national OPDs, sharing of good practices, etc. The nature of support is flexible and adapted to the actual demands of DFAT advocacy and programming needs.

Close partnership with CBM is partially a response to the limited human resources available for disability work at DFAT. Following recommendations of independent evaluation to expand DFAT capacity, the agency has committed to expanding the partnership. CBM Australia also manages DID4All – a public resource on disability-inclusive development funded by DFAT: [did4all.com.au](http://did4all.com.au).

Source: (DFAT et al. 2015)

While technical partnerships with external experts are beneficial, they should not be used as a go-to measure and replace the availability of in-house experts (ICAI 2018, 18). Good understanding of disability issues by the agency staff is crucial, as is presence among staff persons with lived experience of disability: a 2017 DFID survey established that while 41% of its staff said that DFID was doing enough on disability, only 13% of staff who had disabilities themselves agreed with them (ICAI 2018, 13). The research shows that the representation of staff with disabilities at all levels in an agency positively contributes to the development of inclusive culture of the organisation and adds credibility to its programming work (ICAI 2018, 19).





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## 7 Findings and recommendations

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### 7.1 Priority areas for action

This final section aims to summarize some of the action-oriented findings that could inform future planning for better inclusion of disability into the daily practice of aid delivery. It is divided in measures that could be taken immediately with a time horizon of one to two years, and others that would require a long-term perspective of three to five years.

#### 7.1.1 Short-term

**Demonstrate support for disability inclusion by the agency's senior management.** Continuous communication from leadership, participation of senior managers in meetings on disability issues, allocation of staff time to work on disabilities issues, efforts to improve the accessibility of the agency offices and communication channels send a clear message that disability inclusion is a priority for the agency. This approach should be mirrored in country offices and embassies.

**Gradually improve disability mainstreaming in key policy and guidance instruments.** Use the opportunity offered by scheduled revisions of policies, guidelines, and other agency documents to revisit their disability component. A schedule of planned revisions should be prepared in advance and circulated to the appropriate civil society consultation mechanism to prepare its coordinated contribution. This exercise should be accompanied by diverse implementation measures, including training, development of indicators and monitoring tools, and appropriate messaging.

**Integrate disability into standard planning tools and follow-up through implementation.** Include disability in checklists, planning templates and social impact revision cycles. Offer planning guidelines to staff for formulating disability relevant project activities and disability-sensitive indicators. Avoid tokenistic mentioning without passing foreseen action on disability into the core sections of the logframe, namely activities, indicators, and budget allocation.

**Establish a minimal annual routine reporting on action taken in disability mainstreaming and twin-tracking.** Use existing stock-tacking exercises and the emerging disability marker to generate annual reports that are available for civil society, parliamentary and expert scrutiny. This could foster a space in which the two policy communities of disability rights activist and planner and development practitioners can meet and interact.

**Reflect on a staggered approach to roll out disability mainstreaming in the organization.** Start with certain sectors and certain geographical regions (or country offices) from which good practice can be transferred to others. In international fora of exchange, such as the GLAD network, try to focus on one or



two main areas of added value and lead in these as opposed to aim for full coverage.

**Search for competitive advantage within the division of labour of donors.** Mainstreaming disability in all sectors at once might be challenging. Therefore, aid agencies are advised to prioritize mainstreaming and twin-tracking in those sectors and regions that are identified as specific area of expertise. In that way, several “disability in X sector” strategies could be identified, if the respective investment is undertaken in scientific accompaniment, on-the-ground generation of good practice, and multilateral engagement.

**Set up staff support and training systems.** Approach disability-inclusive programming as a necessary precondition for realising national SDG targets and message it accordingly in all staff training. Consider a mandatory training module on disability mainstreaming (possibly, taken online) and emphasise the practical aspects of disability-inclusive project management cycle in staff training, making such training available for HQ and country-office staff, including locally engaged staff. Staff training must be available at regular intervals to take account of staff rotation and complemented with other support measures, such as checklists/tip sheets, technical assistance from the disability focal point, regular communication to maintain visibility of the issue etc.

**Model inclusion in agency’s own structures and procedures (diversity management).** Conduct independent accessibility and inclusion audit of the agency’s infrastructures, communication and procedures. Invest in diversity management to increase rates of employment of persons with disabilities in the agency structures, both in HQ and country offices. Improve disability visibility in agency’s communication. Push for collecting periodically at EU level innovative practices to include persons with disabilities in international cooperation. (Shared EU specific guidelines could be prepared with tools and instruments utilised in projects financed by bilateral agencies and EU).

### 7.1.2 Long-term

**Envisage an overall evaluation of the national efforts towards disability inclusive development cooperation.** Evidence showed that most aid actors that lead in disability-inclusive development cooperation went through a process of disconnected action after CRPD ratification, formulation of a Joint strategy, and a consolidation of action after an independent, comprehensive evaluation. National governments, particularly with federal set-ups, face the challenge to include all actors in such evaluation. Response by management and a follow up plan should be foreseen, according to national practice of aid evaluations.

**Based on the evaluation results, adopt a long-term strategic vision for disability-inclusive development.** Manifestation of political commitment at the highest possible level translated into an ambitious strategy involving all key



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players is crucial to sustaining focus on disability inclusion. Adoption of such a strategy is an important prerequisite for the success of more operational recommendations relating to programming, implementation, training, or staff capacity development.

**Put in place arrangements for sustainable and strategic involvement of OPDs in the home country.** Treat OPDs as equal partners and leading experts, possibly formalising partnership through a memorandum of understanding. This means actively include them in priority setting, be open to adjusting the agency's disability inclusion priorities to reflect theirs (and not vice versa) and introduce a fair and transparent scheme for remuneration of expertise. Be considerate to the OPDs' limited financial and human resources and do not ask them to work for free. Prioritise long-term engagement over short-term investments. Earmark a participation budget to secure reasonable accommodation measures, accessible infrastructures and transport modes, provision of sign language and alternative means of communication, personal assistance, etc.

**Establish a systematic approach to involvement of persons with disabilities at field level.** Create a safe and favourable donor environment (particularly relevant in countries with restricted civic space), including accessible transparent procedures, regular exchanges between the donor and OPDs and access to information that otherwise may not be easily available to OPDs. Diversify support to OPDs to reflect their unique role as policy advocates and monitors, service providers and community organisers, and commit to reaching out to women with disabilities and the most marginalised groups of persons with disabilities. Systematically include OPD representatives in all relevant consultations and consider organising an annual stocktaking and scrutiny event – possibly in coordination with other European bilaterals – to be used as a marketplace for the encounter of national disability planners, domestic OPD scene and foreign aid actors.

**Streamline agency's mainstreaming processes.** If appropriate for the agency's structure, consider establishing a central mainstreaming office to strategically support thematic and regional teams' inclusion of key mainstreaming aspects, such as disability, gender, environment, etc. While in certain cases it may be possible to rely on support of horizontal pan-issue experts, it is important to ensure that the specific disability perspective is visible and maintained throughout. The mainstreaming office should be placed appropriately high in the agency hierarchy to ensure its visibility and maximum outreach.

**Partner with external technical experts.** Consider introducing a modality similar to DFAT's technical partnership with CBM Australia with respect to the agency's organisational, financial and social circumstances. The cost-effectiveness of this arrangements should take account of availability and breadth of in-house expertise, urgency of requests for expertise, ownership and transfer of expertise.



**Work for a joint up European approach.** Promoting an exit strategy for the successful experiences of the BtG-II project, needs to consider a joint up approach at country level with a coordination structure for disability-inclusive development from bilateral and Commission actors. After developing good practice in five intervention countries, bilaterals and the Commission cooperation should design a strategy for scaling up and establishing default disability coordination structures at country level. Coordination will find good reception as well when reaching out to the UN Country Teams, leveraging on UN Disability Strategy.

**Engage private actors.** In line with the agenda 2030, private actors, including companies and private foundations could be engaged in common activities or standard setting practices, possibly facilitated by GLAD.



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## Annexes

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### Annex 1: List of Key informant interviews

	<b>total</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>
<b>ADA</b>	8	5	3
<b>AICS</b>	5	3	2
<b>AECID</b>	3	3	-
<b>FIIAPP</b>	8	5	3
<b>OHCHR</b>	1	-	1
<b>EDF</b>	1	1	-
<b>GLAD</b>	1	1	-
<b>academia</b>	1	1	-

Key: number of interviews conducted with key informants, disaggregated by gender. F – female, M - male





## Annex 2: Detailed research questions for the assignment

<b>Policy and planning:</b>	<p>Q 1. Is the agency policy and guidelines aligned with the CRPD? Does the actor have specific guidelines/plans of action dedicated to disability inclusion?</p> <p>Q 2. Has the process of drawing up the policy been consultative, including OPDs?</p> <p>Q 3. Are guidelines coherent and realistic?</p>
<b>Headquarter level processes</b>	<p>Q 4. Are guidelines used in policy formulation and programme conception?</p> <p>Q 5. Is disability systematically considered in sector policies?</p> <p>Q 6. Is there a leadership and structure that could take disability mainstreaming forward, both politically and technically?</p>
<b>Implementation at country level</b>	<p>Q 7. Are local OPDs consulted and involved in programme implementation?</p> <p>Q 8. Are disability-relevant project components, foreseen in project proposals, further developed? Or are they getting lost?</p> <p>Q 9. What is the approach towards disability inclusive development cooperation? Specialized programmes? Disability mainstreaming? Twin-tracking?</p> <p>Q 10. Are national policy makers and statistics offices supported in developing inclusive policies and disaggregating data on people with/without disability?</p>
<b>Staff capacity development and human resource management</b>	<p>Q 11. Is staff trained on issues of disability rights</p> <p>Q 12. Is support available on a case-to-case basis? Or are technical advice services entrusted to external experts, desk support, or else?</p>
<b>Monitoring, evaluation and learning</b>	<p>Q 13. Is the impact on people with disabilities considered in programme evaluations?</p> <p>Q 14. Are learning results on disability mainstreaming systematically analysed and fed back to programme formulation? Are the application of policies and guidelines independently scrutinized? Does the actor count on a knowledge and learning management strategy embedding a disability component?</p> <p>Q 15. Does the agency systematically engage in international experience exchange?</p>



## Annex 3: Synoptic view on SDGs and CRPD





SDG	Target	Sector	CRPD
1	1.1	Poverty	28
<b>1</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>Social protection</b>	28
1	1.4	Access to basic services	9
1	1.5	Climate and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters	11
2	2.1	End hunger	28
3	3.2	Neo-natal and under-five mortality	7, 10
3	3.7	Sexual and Reproductive Health services	25
3	3.8	Universal health coverage	25
4	4.1	Primary and secondary education	24
4	4.2	Early childhood development and care	24, 7
4	4.3	Vocational and tertiary education	24
<b>4</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>Equal access to education and vocational training</b>	24
4	4.6	Literacy and numeracy	24
<b>4</b>	<b>4.a</b>	<b>Safe and accessible education facilities</b>	24
5	5.2	Violence against all women and girls	16, 6
5	5.6	Universal sexual and reproductive health and rights	23, 25
6	6.1	Safe and affordable drinking water	28
6	6.2	Sanitation and hygiene	25
7	7.1	Affordable, reliable and modern energy services	28
<b>8</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>Full and productive employment and decent work</b>	27
9	9c	Information and communications technology and internet access	9, 21
<b>10</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>Social, economic and political inclusion of all</b>	5, 28
10	10.3	Equal opportunity and non-discrimination	5, 12
11	11.1	Housing and basic services (public housing programmes)	28
<b>11</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>Transport services (Accessibility)</b>	9, 20
11	11.5	Disasters: deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons	11
<b>11</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>Green and public spaces</b>	
16	16.6	Institutions	4, 32
16	16.7	Decision-making	12, 29
16	16.9	Legal identity for all, including birth registration	18, 12
16	16.b	Non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development	5, 12
<b>17</b>	<b>17.18</b>	<b>Capacity-building support to developing countries on data collection</b>	31
Art. 74*	g	Follow up and review guiding principle: build on existing platforms and processes, avoid duplication, and respond to national circumstances, capacities, needs and priorities.	3, 4

Source: Own elaboration; based on (AECID 2018; UN 2018), Article 74 refers to the 2015 declaration A/RES/70/1 itself which details a number of procedural provisions.

## Annex 4: Proposed research grid for a rapid document review

The TORs of this assignment foresaw “to review the disability inclusion in call for proposals and tenders since 2014”. Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic, no access could be granted to a revision of the project documentation of the agencies and organizations.

Currently, the DAC disability marker provides for some information. However, to generate an accurate picture of the performance of the organization, the marker could be both not very fine-grained as well as lacking in coverage. Also, DAC CRS reports at state level, not necessarily at agency level. We still think a rapid screening exercise with a “traffic light approach” could inform the agencies better about their performance and generate further debate. We propose this to be undertaken in with five categories.

	“red light”	(1) no attention is given to persons with disabilities
	“amber light”	(2) persons with disabilities are mentioned but no specific action or indicator is defined
	“green light”	(3) inclusion of persons with disabilities is reflected systematically and reflected in description of action and indicators, provisions for participation of OPDs are considered
	“white light”	(4) project is specifically targeted at persons with disabilities
<b>X</b>	“not screened”	(5) the project had not been screened

This method is vulnerable to a number of selection biases. To get an accurate picture the following questions need to be answered:

- Are all ALL project documents available?
- What are the stages of implementation: formulation and mid-term / final report;
- Are all aid instruments included that managed by the agency, such as Bilateral / technical assistance, Financial cooperation, incl. budget support, Civil society support / Project-based cooperation, Multi-lateral programmes, Humanitarian, Other (to be adapted to the respective classification as used by the agency);
- What is the timeframe for a screening?
- Should the screening pragmatically be reduced to a selection of only two or three sectors that will be investigated?
- Should the screening pragmatically be reduced to several partner countries?
- Will multilateral project be considered?

The results could be tabulated. From this analysis, the agency could attempt to see (1) if there is a significant attention; and (2) if there is a change over the years.