

United We Stand Funding and budgeting for disability inclusion in international cooperation

July 2025



Contents

Acronyms	3
Key Recommendations from the IDDC General Assembly workshop on Advancing Disability Inclusive Financing	4
National Governments	4
Donor Governments & Multilateral Agencies	4
Civil Society & OPDs	5
Data & Research Institutions	5
Opening Remarks	6
Keynote Addresses	7
Setting the scene - sharing evidence and findings on disability funding by governments and the role of international cooperation	9
Sharing of best practice for tracking mechanisms for disability inclusion	11
Germany - new to the marker	11
Italy sharing 10 years of experience with the marker	11
EU experience of the OECD DAC Disability Marker - A shift from ad-hoc support for disability to a more systematic, mainstreamed approach	12
Denmark's experience of the OECD DAC Disability Marker	12
Civil Society Organisations and the OECD DAC Disability Marker	13
Panel discussion	13
Political processes and approaches to maintain and increase disability inclusive funding in development cooperation.	14
Civil Society engagement	15
Sharing Kenya's experience	15
Disability inclusive budgeting needs to be scaled up	16
Panel discussion	16
Concluding remarks	17
IDDC member organisations	19

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPOD	Disabled People's Organisations Denmark
EU	European Union
FfD	Financing for Development
FfD4	Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
GDIR	Global Disability Inclusion Report
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDS	Global Disability Summit
IDDC	International Disability and Development Consortium
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OPD(s)	Organisation(s) of Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UDPK	United Disabled Persons of Kenya

Key Recommendations from the IDDC General Assembly workshop on Advancing Disability Inclusive Financing

National Governments

- 1** **Integrate Disability in National Budgets:** Governments must allocate sufficient domestic resources for disability inclusion, aiming to scale up from project-based to systemic investment.
- 2** **Develop Inclusive Financing Strategies:** Disability inclusion should be embedded in national financing strategies, with clear objectives and costed action plans.
- 3** **In compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), engage Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in Budget Processes:** Ensure their meaningful participation in planning, budgeting, and monitoring.
- 4** **Track and Report Disability Spending:** Implement disability markers and improve data systems to track both disability-specific and mainstreamed expenditures.
- 5** **Leverage Public Procurement:** Use inclusive procurement policies to promote accessibility and employment of persons with disabilities.

Donor Governments & Multilateral Agencies

- 6** **Protect and Increase Official Development Assistance for Disability:** Protect aid and ensure disability inclusion is prioritised in Official Development Assistance.
- 7** **Use Disability Markers Consistently:** Apply and improve the OECD DAC disability marker to track disability inclusive funding accurately.
- 8** **Support Capacity Building:** Fund training and technical assistance for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and governments to engage in inclusive budgeting and policy-making.

9 Promote Innovative Financing: Explore mechanisms like debt swaps and blended finance to support disability inclusion.

10 Ensure Accountability: Uphold and be accountable to CRPD obligations as well as commitments made at the Global Disability Summit.

Civil Society & OPDs

11 Advocate for Inclusive Budgets: Push for disability inclusion in national and sectoral budgets, especially in health, education, and social protection.

12 Build Capacity for Budget Advocacy: Strengthen skills in policy analysis, budget tracking, and financial literacy.

13 Coordinate and Collaborate: Work together across organisations and sectors to amplify advocacy and avoid duplication.

14 Monitor and Report: Track government and donor commitments and spending, and hold them accountable.

15 Engage in Global Processes: Participate in forums like FfD4 and the World Summit for Social Development to ensure disability is on the agenda.

Data & Research Institutions

16 Improve Data Quality and Transparency: Develop better tools and methodologies to track disability-inclusive financing.

17 Cost Disability Inclusion: Provide robust costing of inclusive interventions to inform planning and advocacy.

18 Support Evidence-Based Advocacy: Generate and disseminate data and research on the impact and return on investment of disability inclusion.

19 Engage in multi stakeholder and non-traditional partnerships to carry this out.

2025 has been a year of seismic shift by governments and their commitments to international development and humanitarian assistance. The cuts in Official Development Assistance (ODA) across many OECD members, the rise of anti-diversity and exclusionary narratives, and a shrinking civil society space has put significant strain on the partnerships that work together under international development and humanitarian frameworks. The climate crisis, increasing conflicts, increasing debt and macroeconomic challenges place many governments at risk for not meeting their targets under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Now more than ever, there is a need for collective action to ensure the SDGs are put back on track as we get closer to 2030.

Ahead of the Global Disability Summit and other key global events in 2025, (e.g. the International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) and the World Summit for Social Development), the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) held a one day workshop in March in Berlin co-hosted by CBM Christian Blind Mission to discuss financing disability inclusion. Key leaders from the Global Disability Summit, independent experts, United Nations partners, government policy makers and civil society organisations came together in the workshop to discuss the challenges and opportunities ahead for financing disability rights and inclusion, the importance of monitoring and the need for solidarity during these critical moments. This report is split into topics that mirror the agenda and includes key talking points from the different sessions.

Opening Remarks

Our moderator Kathrin Kirste from the International Civil Society Centre kicked off the conference with a heartfelt and inspiring reflection on the tough times civil society organisations are navigating. From COVID-19 to internal crises and now major aid cuts, they painted a picture of a sector under pressure. But rather than dwell on the fear and uncertainty, she offered a powerful reminder: **“Never waste a good crisis.”**

Speaking openly about the anxiety many are feeling — especially people with personal connections to disability. “We are scared [...] that we will be further left behind,” they shared, bringing home just how real the stakes are. Still, the message was clear: this is the time to act, not retreat.

Kathrin laid out four key ways we can respond. First, by doubling down on solidarity and collaboration — not just with donors and governments, but also with each other, across local and global networks. Second, by rethinking funding, and finding models that support local leadership and long-term sustainability. Third, through advocacy and accountability, making sure donors stick to their promises and keep disability rights front and center. And finally, by embracing resilience and adaptability — even if it means evolving our roles or stepping aside when the job is done.

Kathrin closed with a challenge that set the tone for the day: “Let’s get started with not wasting this crisis.”

Keynote Addresses

“Disability inclusion isn’t charity—it’s about rights. Every country has an obligation to ensure no one is left behind.” Hans-Peter Baur, Commissioner for the Global Disability Summit from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Mr Hans-Peter Baur, Commissioner for the Global Disability Summit from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development was the first keynote speaker. Mr Baur began by expressing gratitude for the invitation and highlighted how vital it is to connect discussions on global financing with the inclusion of persons with disabilities. **“This is of great importance — for me, and for us in Germany”**, pointing to both current efforts and the need for disability inclusion to remain a central issue in the post-SDG agenda.

Mr Baur emphasised the urgency of action, citing the scale of the issue: “Persons with disabilities make up more than 15% of the world’s population — over 1.3 billion people.” Yet despite this, people with disabilities continue to face disproportionate challenges due to environmental and societal barriers. **“We do not live up to the call to leave no one behind”** the speaker stated frankly, calling on development agencies — especially through mechanisms like the Global Disability Summit (GDS) — to make real changes.

Mr Baur suggested that we need to match development efforts to the scale of the issue: “We would like to see development activities for disability inclusion rise to 15%. So — 15 for the 15.” He framed this not just as a human rights imperative but also an economic one, noting that excluding people with disabilities could cost countries up to 7% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

He also addressed the broader financial context, referencing the “sobering outcome of the SDG Summit” and the nearly \$4 trillion annual gap in funding needed to achieve the SDGs. In light of this, he stressed that the current draft of the new global financing agenda (March 2025 version) falls short — “It did not mention persons with disabilities once.” Mr Baur shared that Germany had worked to add disability-inclusive language to the latest version and would continue pushing for progress.

Highlighting innovation, Mr Baur mentioned Germany’s use of a bilateral debt swap instrument to fund disability inclusion, calling it a way to “create important scope for investment in sustainable development.” He further reiterated **“Disability inclusion isn’t charity — it’s about rights. Every country has an obligation to ensure no one is left behind.”**

In closing, Mr Baur announced that two sessions at the upcoming Global Disability Summit will focus specifically on financing. “It’s a unique global mechanism,” he said, inviting participants to “present your arguments, positions, and results” at the summit.

Partnerships for disability inclusion

“It’s time to move past simply affirming that disability inclusion is the “right” and “smart” thing to do. Now, we must show how to do it - and fund it”. José Viera, Executive Director of the International Disability Alliance.

José Viera, Executive Director of the International Disability Alliance, opened his remarks not with formalities, but with warmth. “I feel that I am among friends,” he said, after greeting many familiar faces in the room — an affirmation of the strong, ongoing partnerships in the disability inclusion movement.

Rather than simply asking for resources, José emphasised the deep, shared values that bring the community together. He acknowledged the unique moment — “we’re in a changing world” — and encouraged everyone to see not just the challenges, but also the opportunities ahead. “If a crisis is an opportunity,” he noted, “then let’s use that opportunity in the best way possible.”

José called for a realistic but hopeful outlook: recognizing the repeated “no’s” the community has faced — whether about inclusive education, access to healthcare, or social protection — but also celebrating how those no’s have often been transformed into yes’s through collective advocacy and persistence. “That’s where we stand today—how we can transform those ‘no’s’ into ‘yes’s’ again.”

Jose placed special emphasis on the Global Disability Summit as a tool to help make that transformation. From its beginnings in 2018 to its evolution during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, he reminded the audience that this summit has grown into a crucial space for global progress. The upcoming third edition, he said, must go beyond inspiration and visibility—it must also host “the difficult conversations we’ve avoided,” especially about funding.

“If we want to advance disability inclusion, we need to think about the means,” he said plainly. That includes new ways of partnering, listening more to local organisations, and ensuring funding strategies are shaped by those most affected. It’s time, he added, to move past simply affirming that disability inclusion is the “right” and “smart” thing to do. Now, we must show how to do it—and fund it.

In closing, José reinforced the essential role of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs): “We should be reliable partners. We want to be fundable partners.” He expressed confidence in the support of allies like the IDDC and called on political leaders and funders alike to step up. **“The world is changing,” he said, “but we’re used to that. We have the resilience—and we know how to do this. Together, we will make it happen.”**

Setting the scene - sharing evidence and findings on disability funding by governments and the role of international cooperation

“Countries must build inclusive financing strategies that combine domestic resources, ODA, and private sector input”. Alexandre Cote, Social Policy Specialist, Social Protection and Disability Inclusion, UNICEF.

Alexandre Cote presented findings from the Global Disability Inclusion Report (GDIR), a collective effort that explores how financing practices are supporting—or failing to support — disability inclusion worldwide. From a CRPD perspective, he emphasised that government budgets should not only fund inclusion but avoid reinforcing barriers, such as inaccessible infrastructure or segregated services. Crucially, funding should flow across all ministries, supporting both mainstream services and disability-specific programs, while also leveraging civil society and private sector contributions.

Drawing on data from 14 countries, with a deep dive into six countries, the research found that most low and middle-income countries spend less than 0.1% of GDP on disability-specific efforts. A small number reached around 0.5%, largely due to expanding social protection. However, mainstream disability spending remains difficult to track, and actual expenditures are often unclear — even when budget lines exist. Importantly, Alexandre noted that economic constraints matter, but political and fiscal choices have even greater influence on disability spending levels.

The analysis from the Global Disability Inclusion Report also revealed that social protection, health, and education dominate disability-specific budgets, with social protection driving the most growth. Yet there’s wide variation in how funds are managed — some countries centralise spending, while others, like India, operate at the state level. Encouragingly, most countries studied saw increases in spending over time, with Zambia showing a 365% rise. However, countries like Argentina experienced real-value declines due to broader economic crises, even if disability funding stayed proportionally consistent.

Alexandre stressed the urgent need for better data and costing tools. Despite interest in understanding the financial gap for disability inclusion, consistent figures across sectors are scarce. When modeling the scale-up of non-contributory disability benefits, estimates showed most countries would need to spend 0.3% of GDP or more — a major leap from current levels. In fact, many would require three to five times current spending to meet even modest benchmarks.

Alexandre also presented a first-ever mapping of dedicated disability funds, noting that while these funds exist in many countries — often backed by levies or taxes — they represent a tiny share of GDP and frequently lack clear objectives. Nonetheless, they hold potential as catalytic tools, especially if strategically designed and implemented.

In closing, Alexandre called for a shift in mindset: from small, project-based thinking to large-scale investment. To get there, countries must build inclusive financing strategies

that combine ODA, domestic budgets, and private sector input. He stressed the critical role of OPDs in shaping budget processes, and the need for the whole-of-society engagement to sustainably finance inclusion. “Government money alone won’t be enough—it must enable and leverage broader contributions,” he concluded.

“Report on it better.” Polly Meeks, Independent researcher, International Cooperation.

Polly Meeks delivered a sobering yet essential overview of the current state of international cooperation funding for disability inclusion. Reflecting on how dramatically the conversation has shifted, she opened by saying: “There was a time when talking about statistics on international cooperation felt dry. Now, I’d go for a word like terrifying.” She set the stage by highlighting the global wave of aid cuts — not just from the United States of America and the United Kingdom, but also from countries like Belgium, Canada, Germany, and Sweden. Referring to recent reports from the Disability Debrief¹, she said the impact is already visible: “Stories of refugees with disabilities losing support. Inclusive education programs are being stopped.”

Polly focused specifically on ODA, calling it a “smaller, but still important” part of the broader financing landscape. While domestic budgets and wider economic justice issues like tax and debt are key, she emphasised that ODA still plays a complementary role in advancing disability rights. She urged the room — full of advocates and experts — to keep the pressure on donors and ODA providers, especially in two areas: the amount of funding that supports disability inclusion, and the transparency of how it’s reported.

On the first front, Polly shared new 2023 data from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which showed that just 10% of reported bilateral ODA activities were marked as disability inclusive². Shockingly, “only 1.1% of activities” were actually focused on disability-specific interventions. What is more, there was no information for around 40% of activities. As she put it: “For 9 out of 10 ODA activities, there isn’t any evidence of significant efforts to make them disability inclusive.” Still, she pointed to small signs of progress. Since 2019, the share of disability-inclusive activities has been “steadily increasing,” and some ODA providers are reporting much higher rates — “up to 40%” — while this is still far from full CRPD compliance, it shows promising examples others can learn from.

Polly also highlighted three major concerns about data transparency. First, not all governments or multilateral organisations use the new disability marker, leaving large gaps in available information. Second, she warned that the quality of reporting is inconsistent, with doubts about whether some programs really are disability-inclusive, an issue echoed in similar research on gender markers. And third, she pointed out that

¹ Read [Stop Work - The US aid freeze’s devastating impact on disabled people](#) by Peter Torres Fremlin, Disability Debrief, 5 February 2025 and [We have a right to be angry - Protests in France, seismic shifts in the US and curated news from 45+ countries](#) by Peter Torres Fremlin, Disability Debrief, 26 February 2025.

² The analysis in this paragraph is based on the number of allocable ODA commitments reported by DAC members. For more details on allocable ODA, see the [Handbook for data reporters and users](#).

the marker itself isn't fully aligned with the CRPD, lacking requirements like "do no harm," OPD participation, or proper budgeting for accessibility.

Polly closed with urgent calls to action: "Massively scale up funding that upholds the CRPD."

Her message was clear — while the funding landscape is bleak, there's still a chance to push for smarter, fairer, and a more inclusive use of every dollar that remains.

Sharing of best practice for tracking mechanisms for disability inclusion

Germany - new to the marker

Tino Clemens, Officer in Division Human Rights, disability inclusion, and media at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, shared how Germany recently introduced a disability marker in 2024, a long-awaited step to improve monitoring and accountability in development cooperation. This move is aligned with Germany's new human rights strategy, which positions disability inclusion as a core quality feature of its development policy. The marker allows for more stringent and effective monitoring of disability inclusion in the German development portfolio — addressing long standing gaps identified by civil society and research institutions. Early figures from 2024 suggest a positive trend, with the marker already helping to track and promote inclusive efforts more transparently.

As the host of the Global Disability Summit 2025, Germany is using this political momentum to advance the "15 for the 15" commitment — aiming to allocate 15% of development activities to disability inclusion, reflecting the fact that persons with disabilities represent more than 15% of the global population. The Berlin Declaration is central to this push, putting emphasis on both donor support and partner country ownership as equally critical. The declaration also promotes the systematic integration of inclusion across all projects, greater reporting transparency, and concrete tools to assess and grow inclusion efforts. "The declaration is more than a piece of paper — it's a starting point for sustained action," Mr Clemens noted, stressing that broad involvement and accountability will be key to achieving real change.

Italy sharing 10 years of experience with the marker

Francesca Romana Trisciuzzi, Focal person for disability at the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation shared Italy's experience with the DAC marker. Italy introduced its disability marker in 2014, embedding it into every stage of its project cycle for both development and humanitarian aid. The marker is mandatory for all project proposals funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and is designed to reflect both the proportion of funding allocated to disability inclusion and how well inclusion is integrated into project goals and outcomes. This approach has helped shift institutional mindsets, making disability inclusion a core component rather than an optional add-on.

The marker uses both qualitative and quantitative criteria, including the active involvement of persons with disabilities and their organisations, support for CRPD implementation, and the percentage of project budgets dedicated to disability. Projects are scored on a scale from 0 to 4, depending on the level of disability focus, and results are mapped to the OECD's policy marker system for international comparability.

Italy's experience has shown the value of a multi-layered verification process: initial scoring is reviewed by country offices, central units, and a final check by the accessibility focal point. Continuous staff training and a strong focus on data collection and analysis ensure the marker is used effectively. This system helps the agency track performance over time, spot funding gaps, and adjust strategies to better serve underserved sectors or regions. While not a replacement for OECD markers, Italy's system enhances them by adding measurable depth, and its insights feed directly into strategic and political planning.

EU experience of the OECD DAC Disability Marker - A shift from ad-hoc support for disability to a more systematic, mainstreamed approach

Marianna Lipponen, Policy Coordinator for Disability Inclusion at the European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) shared that the introduction of the OECD DAC disability marker within the European Union's (EU) international cooperation and development programming has been transformative, helping to shift from ad-hoc support for disability to a more systematic, mainstreamed approach. The disability marker is now a mandatory part of the EU's programme approval process, modelled partly on the OECD DAC gender marker which the European Commission already applied. To address the lack of clarity in the OECD guidance on the disability marker, the EU developed its own detailed internal criteria to distinguish between disability-mainstreamed (D1) and disability-focused (D2) programmes. While progress is visible, Marianna noted that embedding disability inclusion as part of the institutional culture takes time, especially in such a large organisation. Challenges persist, including inconsistent programme quality data, as for some it is still a tick-the-box exercise. To support improvements in applying the disability marker, the EU provides technical assistance, conducts training, and runs an annual quality correction exercise to review and refine its disability data before reporting to the OECD. With over 400 new programmes funded annually, Marianna stressed that making each one inclusive could have a significant global impact.

Denmark's experience of the OECD DAC Disability Marker

Speaking from the Danish context, Ina Lykke Jensen, Senior Advisor at the Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD, IDDC member) explained that Denmark began reporting on the disability marker with 2020 ODA data, following early engagement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In alignment with Polly Meeks' earlier findings, the DPOD took an active role in analyzing both the quantity and quality of disability-inclusive ODA. Initial research, using sources like the International Aid Transparency Initiative and Danish aid databases, showed that only 3–5% of marked ODA was categorised as disability inclusive — either significant or principal. Moreover, there were serious concerns about the lack

of documentation supporting these classifications. Further research into 2021–2022 data revealed inconsistencies: some projects were marked with little evidence of inclusion, while others that appeared to be disability relevant weren't marked at all. These findings highlighted ongoing issues with marker accuracy and transparency. In response, DPOD has maintained ongoing dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and successfully encouraged Denmark to make a formal commitment to improving data quality ahead of the Global Disability Summit.

Civil Society Organisations and the OECD DAC Disability Marker

Hannah Loryman (Head of Policy, Sightsavers, Co-Chair IDDC United Nations Task Group) emphasised the crucial role Civil Society played in advocating for the disability marker, noting it was a collective achievement across many DAC member countries. Since its introduction, the focus has shifted to how the data is used, rather than just its existence. A major challenge at the OECD level is the lack of a clear mandate to report disability data as systematically as, for example, gender data — leaving the information available but not easily accessible. In response, the speaker's organisation developed a tool to visualise the data for both civil society and donors, turning it into a conversation starter and prompting reflection on performance. They stressed that while the data may be imperfect and vary in quality across countries, it's still valuable for driving accountability and dialogue. The key now, they concluded, is to make the data more usable and visible, and to start asking, "What comes next?" in leveraging the DAC marker to achieve deeper disability inclusion.

Panel discussion

In a shrinking aid landscape, knowing where the money goes matters more than ever. Hannah Loryman (Head of Policy, Sightsavers, Co-Chair IDDC United Nations Task Group)

The panel reflected on the progress and ongoing challenges in implementing and using the OECD DAC disability marker to track inclusive development financing. Germany highlighted the importance of having any data at all, noting that their marker — introduced in 2024 — must be both effective and streamlined for implementing agencies. There's international momentum towards setting minimum standards for the disability marker, similar to the gender marker, to ensure data comparability and quality.

Italy shared that collaboration with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) has helped improve data quality and focused collection on key inclusion elements. Francesca Trisciuzzi supported international proposals to standardise quality criteria and reaffirmed the value of mandatory markers aligned with CRPD principles. The EU, while making progress through mandatory tracking and quality improvements, remains reluctant to adopt fixed disability targets, citing administrative and political resistance. However, Mariana emphasised ongoing efforts to enhance disability inclusion, even without formal targets.

From a civil society perspective, Hannah Loryman stressed that targets can drive progress if they are realistic, context-specific, and do not come at the expense of quality. She advocated for using markers not just as quantitative metrics, but as tools to prompt internal reflection and accountability. Ina Lykke Jensen emphasised that dialogue between

CSOs and governments is key to pushing data quality and visibility, particularly in countries like Denmark where CSO engagement led to improved attention to disability in aid data.

The discussion acknowledged concerns over data quality and an inconsistent application of the marker, but speakers agreed that maintaining and improving the DAC marker is even more critical in a time of aid cuts. As Hannah noted, in a shrinking aid landscape, knowing where the money goes matters more than ever. Finally, the value of overlaying disability and gender markers was raised, highlighting potential for intersectional analysis, better targeting, and accountability.

Political processes and approaches to maintain and increase disability inclusive funding in development cooperation.

Bodo Ellmers, Director of Financing for the Sustainable Development Programme at the Global Policy Forum Europe, outlined three major political opportunities in 2025 for influencing global financing agendas: the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in June, the World Summit for Social Development in Qatar, and the G20 Summit under South Africa's presidency. He emphasised that while the financing conference is not a pledging event, it is a once-in-a-decade chance to shape global financial systems, including tax, debt, and private finance reforms, to close the estimated \$4 trillion annual funding gap for sustainable development. He highlighted the need for increased tax cooperation, especially as developing countries face low tax-to-GDP ratios and high debt burdens, which limit spending on public services, including disability inclusion.

Bodo noted that debt servicing now exceeds combined health and education spending in many countries, thus undermining human rights, and structural fixes are essential. He also underscored the significance of the South African G20 presidency, the only African G20 leadership in 20 years, which aims to prioritise financing equity and reduce the cost of capital, a critical issue for African nations, many are facing interest rates above 10%, compared to under 3% in some wealthy countries.

However, he cautioned that the current political climate is challenging, and many outcomes may rely on minimum consensus or voting, rather than unanimous agreement. On disability inclusion specifically, Bodo acknowledged that only the Social Development Summit is likely to focus on the issue substantively. He criticised the EU's role for supporting disability rhetorically in the negotiations on the Financing for Development draft, but weakening concrete commitments on taxes or debt relief that are needed to create fiscal space, warning that "we risk being fooled with nice words but no substance." He called for stronger advocacy from European civil society to ensure that disability is not just mentioned symbolically but that the necessary means are included in global financing outcomes.

Civil Society engagement

Elizabeth Lockwood, representative at the United Nations for CBM Global Disability Inclusion (IDDC member) and Co-Chair of the IDDC United Nations Task Group, highlighted IDDC and the Stakeholder Group on Persons with Disabilities by putting emphasis on the long-standing engagement in the Financing for Development (FfD) process and her current role coordinating through the official UN Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities, which ensures the inclusion of persons with disabilities across all sustainable development-related processes. Elizabeth co-leads this effort with the International Disability Alliance, maintaining an OPD-led structure that reinforces representation by and for persons with disabilities.

Elizabeth reported active involvement in the preparatory work for the upcoming FfD Forum and FfD4 Conference, noting that while the zero draft of the FfD outcome document included no references to persons with disabilities, the first draft now contains three mentions — in areas such as science and technology, digital and financial literacy, and data disaggregation. There are also implicit references under human rights and citizen-generated data.

However, the key concern is retaining these references, especially in a political climate in which even the inclusion of the word “gender” is contested. Elizabeth warned that if “gender is under threat, the inclusion of persons with disabilities becomes even more at risk.” She called for continued advocacy, particularly from national governments and OPDs, to ensure disability remains a priority in the FfD agenda.

Sharing Kenya’s experience

Sally Nduta, representing the United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK), shared impactful examples of how OPDs in Kenya are influencing national disability budgeting through advocacy and policy engagement. A key milestone came after training organised by the Centre for Inclusive Policy and the African Disability Forum, which enabled OPDs to conduct an analysis of Kenya’s disability funding over five years (2019–2024). Through active participation in public budget processes — a legal requirement in Kenya — UDPK developed position papers and memoranda, leading to tangible gains: the new Social Health Insurance Fund now includes budget for assistive devices; the education budget for schools serving children with disabilities increased; and cash transfer coverage for people with high support needs expanded. Additionally, budget lines now support people with albinism and neurodiverse disabilities, and a major breakthrough was the recent enactment of Kenya’s National Disability Policy (2024), which will guide inclusive budgeting going forward.

However, Sally also highlighted persistent challenges. Chief among them is the lack of an inclusive legal framework — Kenya’s outdated disability law has limited enforceability, though a promising new Persons with Disabilities Bill (2023) is gaining momentum. She also cited data gaps, including insufficient financial and performance data, making it difficult to measure progress. Further, there is a need to build OPD capacity for policy and budget analysis, and to challenge the perception that disability is solely a national issue, when in fact county governments also have a responsibility. Lastly, Sally pointed out

problems with coordination and siloed implementation, which hinder the effectiveness of disability-related funding across ministries and agencies.

Disability inclusive budgeting needs to be scaled up

Alexandre Cote highlighted the critical issue of scale in disability-inclusive budgeting, using Kenya as a case in point. While incremental budget increases may appear positive, they are often built on an extremely low baseline, which does not address the actual scale of need. Alex shared an instructive example from Mauritania, which recently adopted a national disability strategy. When they costed the real implementation of the plan, the budget required was ten times higher than current levels — rising from 0.15% of the national budget to 1.5%, or 0.03% to 0.3% of GDP. Mauritania committed to this increase, pledging part of the funding domestically and seeking the rest through foreign aid. Crucially, this process involved coordination across multiple ministries — including Finance and Planning — showing how disability can be integrated into high-level national budget planning when backed by political will and technical support.

Alex emphasised the importance of systemic engagement in the budget cycle, with OPDs participating early, before budgets are finalised. He stressed that OPDs must understand how budgeting “machines” work to make realistic and strategic asks. Budget literacy, policy understanding, and strategic advocacy — like the kind demonstrated by Sally Nduta and Kenyan OPDs — are essential for effective influence.

He also noted that some governments allocate budget quotas for disability inclusion (e.g., 3% of ministry budgets), but without mainstreaming plans, staff training, or reliable data, these funds often go unspent. Another underutilised area is public procurement, where most countries still lack accessibility requirements — meaning public funds are often spent in ways that exclude persons with disabilities.

On the donor side, Cote raised a concerning trend: most ODA (Official Development Assistance) marked as having disability as a principal objective (score 2) is channeled through International Non-Governmental Organisations and NGOs, particularly members of the IDDC. In contrast, government-directed ODA is rarely marked for disability inclusion, suggesting that disability is missing from core donor-government dialogues. He urged donors to raise disability systematically in bilateral engagements and governments to demand disability-inclusive financing, supported by robust legal frameworks and national strategies. Without such integration, disability risks remaining sidelined in both domestic and international development agendas.

Panel discussion

The panel concluded by circling back to the theme of partnerships—especially between governments and civil society—as the cornerstone of achieving meaningful progress on disability-inclusive financing. Elizabeth Lockwood stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, highlighting a successful example: a partnership around citizen data that brings together OPDs, national institutions, the United Nations, CSOs, human rights organisations, and others. This partnership is exploring ways to connect data collection with financing, helping ensure marginalised groups are counted and

included. As she aptly put it, **“We must be counted to be included, and we must be visible to be indivisible.”**

Bodo Ellmers pointed out the growing trend of governments in the Global North turning to private finance amid shrinking aid budgets. This raises concerns about the accessibility and affordability of services, especially when user fees are introduced. He advocated for greater public financing, fairer tax systems, and urgent solutions to the debt crisis, noting that without debt relief mechanisms, increased revenue simply goes to creditors instead of public services.

Sally Nduta provided a real-world example of partnership success in Kenya, where the Interagency Coordinating Committee serves as a government-led platform that aligns disability strategies with civil society efforts. She emphasised the need for coordinated action and the critical role of OPDs in bridging global discussions and local implementation.

Alexandre Cote wrapped up with a powerful reminder that this is about keeping promises. Most countries have ratified the CRPD and created disability policies, but much remains unfulfilled. While ODA is limited, many governments are beginning to increase domestic funding for disability. Cote called for continued momentum, saying, “We can fuel that — otherwise, we break the promise.”

The Questions & Answers session that followed raised tough but important questions about the role of OPDs, assistive technologies, and the political barriers to inclusion. Panelists emphasised the need for sustained advocacy, capacity building, and a long-term vision. As Sally put it, OPDs must not only be present, but also prepared and unified, because fragmentation allows governments to avoid accountability. Alexandre added that budgeting is political, and OPDs need to engage with strategy and persistence to make lasting change.

One speaker from the audience proposed launching a campaign to keep disability visible in global agendas, suggesting the slogan: “Disability matters.” Elizabeth Lockwood endorsed the idea, noting the real difference that explicit references to disability have made in the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Concluding remarks

The event closed with reflections from IDDC Chair Mary Keogh, who reminded attendees that, while the discussions were technical, they were necessary and empowering. Quoting speakers from earlier in the day, she captured the sense of urgency and solidarity: “We simply cannot afford to continue to exclude people with disabilities.” And, echoing José Viera, she urged everyone to continue the fight — “we’ve heard ‘no’ before, and we’ll keep pushing.”

Programme “United We Stand - Funding and budgeting for disability inclusion in international cooperation”

Welcome

- Dominique Schlupkothen, Director Community-Based Inclusive Development, CBM - Christian Blind Mission

Keynote speeches

- Hans-Peter Baur, Deputy Director General & Commissioner for the Global Disability Summit 2025, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Jose Viera, Executive director, International Disability Alliance

Setting the scene - sharing evidence and findings on disability funding by governments and within international cooperation

- Alexandre Cote, Social Policy Specialist, Social Protection and Disability Inclusion, UNICEF
- Polly Meeks, Independent researcher

Sharing of best practice for tracking mechanisms for disability inclusion

- Tino Clemens, Officer in Division Human rights, disability inclusion, and media, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
- Francesca Romana Trisciuzzi, Focal Person for disability, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
- Marianna Lipponen, Policy Coordinator, Disability – DG International Partnerships, European Commission
- Hannah Loryman, Head of Policy, Sightsavers and Co-Chair of the United Nations Task Group, International Disability and Development Consortium
- Ina Lykke Jensen, Senior advisor, Disabled People’s Organisations Denmark

Political processes and approaches to maintain and increase disability inclusive funding in development cooperation

- Bodo Ellmers, Director Financing for Sustainable Development Program, Global Policy Forum
- Alexandre Cote, Social Policy Specialist, Social Protection and Disability Inclusion, UNICEF
- Sally Nduta, Chief Executive Officer, United Disabled Persons of Kenya
- Dr. Elizabeth Lockwood, Representative at the United Nations, CBM Global Disability Inclusion and Co-Chair of the United Nations Task Group, International Disability and Development Consortium

Closing remarks

- Mary Keogh, Chair, International Disability and Development Consortium

Moderation

- Kathrin Kirste, Director of Business Development, International Civil Society Center

IDDC member organisations



International Disability and Development Consortium

Rue de l'Arbre Bénit 44
1050 Brussels
Belgium

www.iddcconsortium.net

Picture credits

Cover: [Thomas Fitzgerald](#)

Published by

IDDC, July 2025