

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk

Project timeline: January 2019 – March 2024

Project budget: £1.3 million

Capturing the power of collaboration: Social Development Direct in liaison with all 11 Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures consortium partners.

People with disabilities often face enormous barriers when they try to get an education, earn a living or access healthcare because of misconceptions about their needs and abilities. Evidence from primary research consistently shows that people with disabilities experience poorer health outcomes, barriers to education, limited access to essential services, and exposure to stigmatising attitudes and discriminatory practices¹.

Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is using and building on existing knowledge to change negative attitudes and behaviours around disability. We want to increase evidence uptake on disability inclusion, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Learning what works to include people with disabilities

The goal of Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is to develop innovative solutions to increase disability inclusion in mainstream development and humanitarian programmes. For this six-year £29 million initiative, working with more than 11 consortium partners in six countries, research and evidence is vital to informing project design and management at every stage - as well as being a key output of all our activities. We are generating and sharing new evidence to encourage

and enable others to be inclusive in their own programmes. **Our Disability Inclusion Helpdesk, established in collaboration with Social Development Direct, is ensuring we do just this - promoting joint learning and lasting positive impact.**

How the Helpdesk is making a difference

The Disability Inclusion Helpdesk aims to deliver tangible outcomes to improve the lives of people with disability by providing evidence of ‘what works’ **and ensuring data and evidence leads to increased action and investment.**

Taking a rights-based approach, the Helpdesk **provides research and advice to the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and other UK government departments** on disability inclusion in policy, programming, and across FCDO’s five minimum standards on disability inclusion. This is delivered through demand-led, accessible advice on disability inclusion in development, education, fragile conflict affected and humanitarian settings.

The Helpdesk is staffed by Social Development Direct’s team of experienced researchers, who collaborate with over 80 disability inclusion experts specialising in different sectors and geographies. **We support policymakers and practitioners to roll-out the FCDO Disability Inclusion Strategy through rapid specialist analysis and know-how in inclusion via:**

- **On-demand research and technical assistance** in response to requests from FCDO and UK government staff. Focus is placed on the thematic pillars of the FCDO Disability Strategy – inclusive education, social protection, economic empowerment and humanitarian response, as well as health and climate to align with FCDO priorities.
- **Knowledge products** providing in-depth analysis and insights on cutting-edge issues related to disability inclusion. Knowledge uptake training sessions also provide tailored support for groups identified by the FCDO disability inclusion team to improve capacity.
- **Evidence digests** provide a summary of the latest evidence, policy news,



“It’s a brilliant service already – premised on reliability, speed and excellence. Hard to find ways of improvement”.

Helpdesk user

“The Helpdesk is a fabulous asset for our work on disability inclusion and such a great resource to draw on – really excellent work.”

Head, FCDO disability inclusion team

highlights from FCDO programmes and updates from the wider development research sector on a specific theme. These are shared quarterly through FCDO knowledge platforms, consortium partners and communities of practice.

- **Commissioned assignments** support FCDO staff and teams to deliver disability inclusive policy, programming and diplomacy work across different contexts and sectors - from contributing to the design of new programmes to facilitating engagements with organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs).
- **Maximising engagement** with OPDs and consortium partners to gain insightful learnings that are used to their fullest potential.

An **overarching strategic and learning component** further supports FCDO and His Majesty’s Government teams (including those working on diplomacy) to implement inclusion standards through engaging in strategic conversations and presentations and supporting internal capacity development.

Discovering what works: Helpdesk impact to date

In the first three years of Helpdesk activity, 130 high quality products related to disability inclusion have been delivered, in at least 24 countries. This is significantly contributing to growing the global evidence base on disability inclusion, towards advancing policies, laws and social norms that work for everyone. Highlights have included production of Country Factsheets for the British Embassies, Consulate Generals and High Commissions in Seoul, Shanghai and the Solomon Islands – **with ambassadors remarking on their effectiveness for increasing embassy staff understanding of and commitment to disability rights.**

Our COVID-19 **rapid evidence review** and **evidence digest** were vital sources of information for FCDO on the impacts of the pandemic on people with disabilities and how to mitigate these at a time when there was limited data available. Some of this work was subsequently cited in a **United Nations policy brief**. **The Helpdesk has a 97% current satisfaction rating from the FCDO. Find out more in the repository of documents available online.**

Breaking barriers for people with disabilities

Disability inclusion is critical for reaching the Global Goals and we have produced the evidence on what works in a range of different areas. We now need the allocation of resources to ensure data and evidence produced leads to increased action.

To find out more visit

sddirect.org.uk/project/disability-inclusion-helpdesk or contact Claire Walsh at **cwalsh@sightsavers.org**.

Endnotes

- 1 World Health Organization (2011) World Report on Disability 2011. Geneva: World Health Organization; as referenced in Sightsavers (2021) Disability-related stigma and discrimination in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: a systematic literature review. Haywards Heath, UK: Sightsavers.