

Disability Inclusion Policy

Version 4.0

Introduction

Equality, equity and inclusion are core principles of effective development. They are central to achieving a vision of a world where all individuals, groups and communities, including people of all genders with disabilities, are able to exercise their human rights fully and participate in society without discrimination.¹ ChildFund Australia adopts a rights-based understanding of disability. This means we recognise that the barrier is not a person's long-term physical, sensory, psychosocial or intellectual impairment itself, but rather a combination of social, attitudinal, physical and institutional obstacles which people with disabilities encounter in their daily lives. Accordingly, equity and inclusion are about identifying and removing barriers so that people with disabilities can effectively and meaningfully participate in, and equally benefit from, development and humanitarian projects and programs, and exercise their rights in the broader community.

ChildFund Australia recognises that people with disabilities are a significant marginalised and disadvantaged group: one in six people globally are persons with disabilities, and nearly one in ten children are children with disabilities.² Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of disability. Most of the causes of disabilities, such as war, illness and poverty, are preventable. These factors also prevent and/or reduce the secondary impacts of disabilities, often caused by the lack of early/timely intervention. People with disabilities are also more likely to live in poverty than those without disabilities due to barriers in society such as discrimination and exclusion from education and employment.³ We further recognise that children and young people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and marginalised. They are more likely to experience social stigma and discrimination, overprotection, deprivation and exclusion from equal participation in schooling and their community. They are especially vulnerable to a range of risks, including those posed by disasters and climate change. Children with disabilities, especially children with cognitive impairments, are also over-represented as victims of all forms of abuse and neglect.

ChildFund Australia values the participation of children and young people with disabilities as capable individuals who can make an active and meaningful contribution to their communities. In order to carry out our mission of building a world where “vulnerable children and young people, in all their diversity, assert and realise their rights”, we must address the needs and barriers to participation of children and young people with disabilities, and create an enabling environment for them to enjoy their human rights. We want to ensure that children, young people and caregivers with disabilities, and also caregivers of children and young people with disabilities, can fully and meaningfully participate in the programs and projects we support, and in the broader community. We aim to support their ability to influence and make decisions on issues affecting their lives. ChildFund Australia also aims to influence institutions, systems and structures that create barriers for persons with disabilities.

¹ CBM/PLAN, 2017. Practice Note: Collecting and using data on disability to inform inclusive development.

² WHO, 2022. Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities; UNICEF, 2021. Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities.

³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006. General Comment 9: The Rights of Children with Disabilities.

This policy applies to programming work supported in all ChildFund Offices. All ChildFund program staff are responsible for the implementation of the policy. All Heads of Program/Program Directors are accountable for this policy. All program staff should receive an induction on this policy.

This policy should be read alongside ChildFund Australia's Organisational Inclusion Policy, which establish complementary organisational commitments on disability equity and inclusion. It should also be read alongside the Gender Equality Policy, which applies to programming.

Frameworks

ChildFund Australia's work to promote and enable disability equity and inclusion is linked to the principle of "leave no one behind" that underpins all the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically relevant is Goal 10 to "reduce inequality within and among countries" in order to achieve global sustainable development.

ChildFund Australia is further guided by the following human rights standards:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which states that people with disabilities are entitled to the same rights, dignity, opportunities and support as other members of the community. Per Article 7, States should take all necessary measures to ensure children with disabilities can enjoyment all human rights on an equal basis with other children.
- Article 2, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which specifies non-discrimination against any child on the basis of their or their parent's or legal guardian's disability.
- Article 23, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that a child with disabilities should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. This includes the right to special care and assistance to the child and those responsible for their care.
- The Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 9, which recommends that States make special care and assistance to children with disabilities a matter of high priority and invest to the maximum extent of available resources in the elimination of discrimination against children with disabilities and towards their maximum inclusion in society.

Key Principles

Diversity and intersectionality: People with disabilities are a diverse group, with different impairments and experiencing different barriers in their social environment. This diversity should be recognised and valued, and programming should address this diversity. Disability also intersects with other social characteristics such as gender and age, resulting in different experiences of discrimination and exclusion. Programming should also understand and respond to the ways in which disability intersects with gender and other social characteristics, in particularly seeking to address the specific situation and needs of girls with disabilities in programs.

Accessibility and reasonable accommodation: Equity, which is necessary for people with disabilities to enjoy their right to participation and inclusion, has two key elements, accessibility and reasonable accommodation. Programs, services, meetings and events should be non-discriminatory and accessible to all people with disabilities, in terms of both physical access and communications methods utilised. Accessibility should be advocated for and incorporated into all program and project activities, wherever possible based on principles of universal design. Necessary and appropriate

modifications and adjustments should be made to ensure people with disabilities can exercise all their human rights on an equal basis with others.

Meaningful participation: People with disabilities have the right to access information, share their views and opinions, and actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Programming and activities should be structured to ensure the equitable and meaningful participation of all people with disabilities.

Do No Harm: A “Do No Harm” approach to disability inclusion requires that projects and programs examine the potential risks of unintentionally perpetuating or reinforcing disability-related inequalities in the context of the intervention, including stigma and prejudice. Projects and programs should proactively monitor these risks and take corrective/compensatory measures if applicable.

Awareness: Many people lack awareness and understanding about disability and the rights of people with disabilities. Harmful social norms and attitudes towards people with disabilities are one of the most significant barriers negating their enjoyment of human rights. Awareness raising on the rights of people with disabilities to community and government stakeholders, including people with disabilities and ChildFund staff and partners, is a necessary step towards shifting social norms and attitudes towards people with disabilities.

“Nothing about us without us”: People with disabilities know best their unique situations and needs. They therefore should be free to make their own choices and participate in all activities and decision-making processes that affect them. Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are representative organisations run by and for people with disabilities and provide a way for the voices of people with disabilities to be heard and their perspectives included. OPDs are critical partners in disability equitable and inclusive development.

Policy Statement

ChildFund Australia will work to remove barriers to participation and achieve equal opportunity and equitable outcomes for children, young people and caregivers with disabilities. We commit to the core principles of accessibility and reasonable accommodation, and to a twin-track approach to programming that ensures people with disabilities can exercise all human rights on an equal basis with others. We will collaborate with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and raise awareness on how the rights of people with disabilities can be met. We will not support segregated or institutionalised care approaches, which breach human rights.

Policy Commitments

ChildFund Australia will:

- Apply a human rights-based approach to all programming that advances disability equity and inclusion in accordance with the international standards set out in the frameworks section of this policy.
- Ensure that all programs and projects raise awareness of the equal rights of people with disabilities, children and young people in particular, and work to addressing harmful norms and attitudes towards people with disabilities.

- Ensure that a disability analysis is undertaken for all projects to identify the risks, barriers and strategies for responding to the needs and priorities of people with disabilities, taking into account their diversity. OPDs should be consulted in the process wherever possible.
- Design ‘twin-track’ projects and programs that enable both disability specific initiatives targeted at children and young people with disabilities, and disability mainstreamed initiatives that ensure activities address barriers and include people with disabilities. Program and project designs should reflect the priorities identified in the disability analysis and build in outcomes (where appropriate) and indicators to monitor progress on disability inclusion.
- Consider and take steps, where feasible and appropriate, to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities to all project and program activities.
- Ensure project level risk assessments consider the risks for persons with disabilities, especially children with disabilities.
- Engage with people with disabilities and support their participation and/or that of OPDs in program and project decision-making structures and processes (e.g. design process, implementation and monitoring of activities, steering committees, evaluation teams, etc.).
- Add a budget line to project budgets and proposals to cover adjustments, reasonable accommodation and/or other specific actions to ensure disability inclusion.
- Monitor and evaluate ChildFund’s work to achieve disability equity and inclusion, including through using accessible data collection methods and tools, collecting and analysing disability disaggregated data wherever possible and appropriate, and ensuring evaluations assess progress towards disability equity and inclusion outcomes.
- Allocate time and resources to strengthen the capacity of staff and partners on twin-track disability rights programming and reporting on disability equity and inclusion outcomes, and provide up-to-date information on disability equitable and inclusive development practices.
- Strengthen the capacity of government institutions to recognise the rights of people with disabilities and take equitable and inclusive approaches to service delivery and policy reforms.
- Build partnerships and networks with relevant OPDs to share capacities (on child rights programming and disability equity and inclusion respectively) and work towards shared goals on disability awareness, empowerment and rights for people with disabilities.
- Ensure that emergency responses recognise and respond to the enhanced vulnerability of people with disabilities during disasters.
- Ensure that people with disabilities are consulted on the design, implementation and monitoring of ChildFund’s feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- Report to participants, donors and the public on progress on disability equity and inclusion in ChildFund’s work, including program related advocacy and communications that uphold our commitment to the equal rights of persons with disabilities, including being respectful, using inclusive and positive language and images and avoiding harmful stereotypes.
- Undertake periodic assessments of our own and implementing partners’ disability equity and inclusion practices, at least every three-five (3-5) years, including the degree to which this policy is being implemented and the ongoing quality of the policy and practices.

Guidance Notes

Please refer to the ChildFund Australia Program Handbook for supporting documents, such as Disability Inclusion Guidance Notes containing template and checklists, and other resources to assist with the implementation of this policy.

Document Information

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