

Disability, Equality, and Human Rights

Oxfam GB

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ADD

Action on Disability and Development (ADD) has a vision of a world where all disabled people are able to participate as fully as they choose, at every level of society. To achieve this, it works in partnership with networks of disabled people in some of the poorest communities in the world, to help them to campaign for the rightful inclusion of disabled adults and children in society.

ADD is the only British-based agency supporting self-help development work, exclusively, with groups of disabled people in Africa and Asia. Since 1985 it has supported more than 75,000 disabled people in their self-help activities and their fight for basic rights and equal opportunities.

ADD's aim is to see democratic, representative, and active networks of disabled people who are campaigning for the rights of all their members, whatever their disability. Through facilitating the growth of these organisations, locally and nationally, ADD aims to help to promote a vibrant people's movement.

For more information about the work of ADD, visit www.add.org.uk

Disability, Equality, and Human Rights

**A Training Manual
for Development and Humanitarian
Organisations**

Alison Harris with Sue Enfield



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Foreword

For too long disabled people – most particularly disabled women and children – have been marginalised and excluded from mainstream society. There is no country in the world which can confidently claim that its disabled citizens have realised equal rights and equal opportunities. Rarely are disabled people equally able to exercise the vote, attend school or college, gain employment, use public transport, and live independently – the basic rights that most non-disabled people take for granted.

The United Nations Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, imply a strong political commitment by member states to take measures to ensure that disabled people can realise equal rights. However, implementation of these measures is patchy – despite the fact that many international agencies acknowledge the links between disability and poverty.

International development organisations and policy makers have yet to adopt and implement policies which are fully inclusive and which affirm the value of social diversity. While it is acknowledged that disabled people are among the poorest members of their communities, many agencies consider their needs to be related solely to their impairments (in line with ‘the medical model of disability’), rather than considering their needs in the context of their rights as equal members of society (‘the social model’).

In the United Kingdom, legislation now requires public services, facilities, and buildings to be accessible to disabled people. Disability-rights activists campaigned for years for changes in legislation to outlaw discrimination and to gain recognition. But the fundamental principle that society needs to change if disabled people are to realise their full potential has yet to be internalised fully by development and humanitarian agencies, although policies to this effect do exist.

There are a few examples of countries in receipt of development assistance which do themselves have excellent policies in place to promote the rights of disabled people. (South Africa is one such.) Much could be learned from these examples. In recent years the shift to rights-based development and the struggle of the disability-rights movement around the world to ensure that its voice is heard (*‘nothing about us without us’* – Disabled Peoples’ International) have led to an acknowledgement that practice does need to change.

In the UK, the Department for International Development published an issues paper in February 2000, entitled 'Disability, Poverty and Development'. It stated: 'Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Eliminating world poverty is unlikely to be achieved unless the rights and needs of disabled people are taken into account.' There is a clear need to ensure that the most marginalised people are included in development work. This requires planners and all development workers to think multi-dimensionally, rather than to categorise people on the basis of single identities, such as gender, disability, urban/rural provenance, or HIV status. We need to be truly committed to diversity and to consider the whole person, remembering in our analyses that a disproportionate number of those experiencing social exclusion and poverty will be women, and especially disabled women and women living with HIV/AIDS. We need to look at the world through more than one lens.

However, until we are familiar with the institutional, environmental, and attitudinal barriers that exclude marginalised groups from full participation in society, we will be unable to ensure appropriate responses. That is why this manual is so important. It helps practitioners in development and humanitarian organisations to understand the issues confronting disabled children and adults, and ways in which we can go about breaking down the barriers and including people with disabilities in our work. It presents disability as a matter of human rights and moves away from the charitable and medical models of disability to argue that it is society that needs to change.

Disabled people themselves are powerful advocates for social change. Development practitioners need to hear the voices of disabled women, children, and men, in order to plan inclusive development.

Barbara Frost
Chief Executive, Action on Disability and Development

Preface

Oxfam's mandate is to overcome poverty and suffering. As this manual makes very clear, all around the world disabled people are among the poorest and most marginalised members of their communities. We need to understand why this is, and to devise ways of supporting them to take action to overcome their poverty and achieve their civil, political, social, and economic rights.

Disabled people, and particularly disabled women, are among those least likely to escape from the trap of poverty. Prejudice denies them the opportunity to develop the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence, and to make effective use of the resources that they may already have. Many people working in development agencies are, often unwittingly, guilty of discriminating against people with physical or mental impairments, and disabled people are therefore less likely than others to benefit from development interventions – for the very same reasons that explain why they are poor in the first place.

This means that people with impairments are likely to remain among the chronically poor, and when progress towards the Millennium Development Goals is measured in 2015, it will be interesting to see how many disabled people are among those who have been enabled to edge above the poverty line.

Disabled people are often made invisible by society, and invisibility can be lethal in situations of armed conflict or natural calamity. Organisations such as Oxfam must enlist the support of people with disabilities in designing and delivering their humanitarian responses, if they are to ensure that all people are able to benefit equally from them. We have some excellent examples of good practice in this regard, but we cannot afford to be complacent. This manual identifies some of that good practice and helps us to understand how to replicate it.

It is only relatively recently that disability has been considered as an issue to be taken seriously by development or humanitarian agencies. Now, when major institutions such as the World Bank, the European Commission, and the British government's Department for International Development are making explicit their analysis of the relationship between disability, poverty, and the abuse of human rights, Oxfam GB and Action on Disability and Development (ADD) offer this practical toolkit for disseminating that analysis more widely.

In this era of globalisation, one of Oxfam's priorities is to ensure that the relationship between local and global causes of poverty is understood, and that the capacity of our

partners to address these causes at every level is increased. Among those partners, we are fortunate to count disability-rights organisations which have had some notable successes in this regard: campaigning and advocacy have resulted in legislative change in Albania, Kosovo, Lebanon, and Uganda, for example. The struggle continues, however, to ensure that laws are implemented and that disabled people actually benefit from them.

The Disability Movement, like any movement of people marginalised because of their identity, needs allies and deserves the support of development and humanitarian organisations. There is a growing realisation that rights-based approaches to overcoming poverty and suffering are essential, but awareness of the abuses endured by specific groups in this regard is often low. People working in the fields of development and relief often assume that they need specialist skills in order to work with disabled people, but a good start can easily be made by ensuring that we apply our existing skills and principles to the task.

I am pleased to introduce this, Oxfam's fourth book about the rights and needs of disabled people, and its second publication in collaboration with ADD, in the hope that it will help to raise awareness of these vital issues among workers in development and in the fields of humanitarian protection and response.

Barbara Stocking
Director, Oxfam GB

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Sue Enfield, a freelance consultant, redrafted Part One to bring it into line with current international thinking about Disability Equality. Chapter 3 incorporates findings from an evaluation written by Adrienne Hopkins, with contributions from Dukagjin Kelmendi, formerly Oxfam's Disability Programme Manager in Pristina.

Finally, I am eternally grateful to the Oxfam editor, Catherine Robinson, who stuck by this project, gave it time to mature, and was a constructive yet honest critic.

Alison Harris

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADD	Action on Disability and Development
CBR	community-based rehabilitation
DETOT	Disability Equality Training of Trainers
DFID	Department for International Development
DPI	Disabled Peoples' International
DPO	disabled people's organisation
HI	Handicap International
INGO	international non-government organisation
KAPP	Kosovo Association of People with Paraplegia (now known as Handikos)
LAG	Local Active Group
NGO	non-government organisation
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nations

