

# Planning for equity: MAKING CONSULTATION PROCESSES INCLUSIVE OF DIVERSE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Australian Disability Development Consortium



Photo Credit: CBM Australia

A group of women involved in a self-help group for people with psychosocial disabilities in Nepal.

For international development policy and programming to be truly transformational, equity and inclusion cannot just be outcomes of the strategies or policies, they must also drive the process. Inclusion must be central to policy or program planning from the start and not just an additional extra.

The international development sector is united in its commitment to partner with people with disabilities and their representative organisations to make equitable outcomes a reality in all practices. To make this happen, all consultation processes related to the sector need to be accessible and inclusive. This is vital for activities to lead to inclusive practice and outcomes.

### **Equity in the process requires:**

1. Considering and including people with disabilities as a population group within the broader society.
2. Recognising that within the population of people with disabilities, there is a diversity of identities, lived experiences and perspectives.
3. Learning from these critical and diverse perspectives to inform effective policy, practice and outcomes, and to ensure these efforts do not create and exacerbate exclusion and injustices.

The following paper provides a summary of what good practice disability-inclusive consultation looks like, where the outcome is to create greater equity for all people with disabilities. It is informed by what has worked well in consultation processes to ensure effective inclusion and is grounded in detailed recommendations and guidelines from Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) and people with disabilities.

**Cover Image:** DRF staff visit to Albinism Umbrella's rural community outreach programs in Uganda.  
**Photo Credit:** Rucha Chitnis, Disability Rights Fund (DRF).



## CONTENTS

<u>Inclusion is a part of the process and an outcome</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>“Nothing without us”</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Developing best practice</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Lessons learnt from Development for All</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Inclusive consultation processes and best practice</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Setting up an inclusive consultation process</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Roles of strategy development teams and accountability mechanisms</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Recent research</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>More information</u>	<u>18</u>



Photo Credit:ADDC

Maselina Iuta (right), representative of the Deaf Association of Samoa and Jane Edge, CEO of CBM Australia, at Australian Parliament House to advocate for greater inclusion of women with disabilities.

## INCLUSION IS A PART OF THE PROCESS AND AN OUTCOME

To create disability equity and fully accessible environments, inclusion must be the process as well as an outcome. People with disabilities around the world are frequently unable to participate fully in consultation processes because accessibility and inclusion have not been properly integrated into the planning stages. People with disabilities, and other marginalised groups, need to be partners in consultations to ensure that their priorities, needs and ideas are reflected from the outset. It is also critical that people with disabilities are part of the consultation process across all international development policies and strategies, not just those that have a specific or sole focus on people with disabilities.

### “NOTHING WITHOUT US”

The unifying call of the disability movement is evolving from “Nothing about us without us” to “Nothing without us”. This shift amplifies the foundation of inclusion as a demand that people with disabilities are a part of all aspects of social, political, civil, environmental, and economic development. Disability equity needs to be a part of all facets of life. To realise this shift in language and purpose the preconditions for inclusion must be met. As discussed further below, if the preconditions for conditions are met within the context of planning and delivering consultations, people with disabilities will be able to fully participate and contribute their knowledge and expertise.

### DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICE

Learning as we go delivers the most inclusive and effective plans, policies and programs. A key part of building more effective inclusive practices is capturing consultation processes that are utilised as well as the lessons learnt from such processes. As human diversity is more substantively embraced and celebrated across the development sector, sharing what is and is not working in inclusive processes would lead to greater equity in the long term. To this end, ADDC would welcome any feedback, additional strategies or ideas to include in this paper and inform our inclusive practices as well as to share lessons learnt to create greater equity.



Photo credit: Rucha Chitnis, Disability Rights Fund.

Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) share strategies for inclusive sexual and reproductive health programs in Uganda during a meeting co-hosted by National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) and DRF.



## LESSONS LEARNT FROM DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

The Australian Government led donors on the inclusion of people with disabilities within international development with its first comprehensive disability inclusive development strategy, the [Development for All: Towards a Disability-Inclusive Australian Aid Program](#) released in 2009. This was followed by a [second strategy](#) that further prioritised disability inclusion in programming and practice.

The *Development for All* strategies were developed via an extensive design process that prioritised inclusion, accessibility and partnership with people with disabilities. This has been attributed as a significant factor in the success of both strategies. The lessons learnt from these design processes offer a useful starting point in the design of new policies and strategies.



Sitting in a rural Rwandan village hearing the priorities of women with disabilities during a DRF field visit.

Photo credit: David Nkurunziza, Disability Rights Fund.





Grace Jerry of Nigeria, a recipient of the 2022 Diana Samarasan Disability Rights Advocacy Award, recognised for her rights advocacy at the intersection of gender, disability and marginalised identities.

Recommendations from the [review of the design process for the first strategy](#), as well as [AusAID: Inclusive development: A new era in consultation](#) (see page 22) provide guidance on how this was achieved. They include:

- Getting the consultation team right, including people with disabilities and consultants with certain skill sets. This is discussed in more detail below, with specific recommendations on the nature and functions of teams.
- In-country consultations with Australian aid partners, particularly a wide breadth of OPDs.
- Expanding the reach of consultations with people with disabilities and OPDs to take an intersectional lens, ensuring they are accessible for people with various backgrounds and identities. This includes reaching emerging OPDs and networks that represent previously under-represented cohorts of people with disabilities.
- Developing and providing a guidance kit to support consistent consultations conducted by DFAT Country and Regional offices (Posts) and the consultation team (kits should include who to invite, questions to ask, reasonable accommodation and budget guidance). Also include the Terms of Reference with clear objectives of the consultation.
- A clear plan and timelines for when to engage with internal and external stakeholders.



Representatives of Fijian OPDs providing a submission for UN CRPD ratification to the Fijian Parliament.

Photo credit: Fiji Disabled People's Federation (FDPF), Fiji.

## INCLUSIVE CONSULTATION PROCESSES AND BEST PRACTICE

Summarised below are three guidelines developed by or in partnership with OPDs on how to plan and run consultation processes that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

- **Feminist Accessibility Protocol** ('the Protocol') published in December 2022 by Women Enabled International.
- **UNDIS guidelines on consulting with persons with disabilities** provide useful tools to guide consultation efforts.
- Lessons learnt from Disability Rights Fund (DRF).

The Protocol was prompted by the lack of voice and representation of diverse women, girls, trans, intersex, and non-binary people with

disabilities in discussions and decisions on gender equality, including at the Commission on the Status of Women and the Generation Equality Forum. It intends to guide the work of all actors seeking to advance gender equality at all levels – local, national, regional and global. While it has a dedicated focus on the feminist movement, its practical guidance on facilitating inclusive and accessible in-person and virtual spaces has relevant practical guidance to ensure a disability lens is applied to consultation processes. The recommendations of the Protocol along



with the tools available in the UNDIS guidelines provide a sound starting point when designing and planning consultations, with particular reference to:

- Protocol Annex 1, on good practices on ensuring accessibility in meetings and events (in-person and online); and
- Protocol Annex 2, to better understand the overall, participation and financial barriers that can be mitigated with sufficient pre-planning and allocation of budget for accessibility and reasonable accommodations.
- UNDIS guidelines Section 3 “Consultation in Practice”, to access several checklists and graphics relevant to: Key considerations for meaningful consultation; Steps for successful consultation; Checklists of elements to consider by type of consultation (in-person public meetings, workshops/focus groups, online consultations, surveys, consulting with children and young people with disabilities, etc).

DRF provides technical and financial support to OPDs to advocate for equal rights and full participation in society. From their work, DRF offers the following additional lessons:

- OPDs are representative organisations. Providing information upfront, preferably through a briefing meeting at least two weeks in advance of any consultation, enables them to take time to inform and seek input from their members and Boards. Information should be in plain language and include a glossary of terms or acronyms.
- Hold consultations with OPDs in each country rather than regionally to ensure priorities are informed by the diversity of the countries and movements in the Asia and Pacific regions.
- Hold test or preparation sessions ahead of any consultations between facilitators and support providers to brief on the consultation format and strategies to enhance participation, and address any technical accessibility issues ahead of time. This also allows accessibility and reasonable accommodation providers to prepare, clarify concepts and have stress-free space to understand the outcomes and processes from the consultations.
- For virtual and/or regional consultations, mitigate internet and bandwidth issues by



Photo Credit: Pusat Pemilihan Umum Akses Disabilitas (PPUAD).

OPDs discuss progress of the disability rights movement in Indonesia during a meeting co-hosted by Pusat Pemilihan Umum Akses Disabilitas and DRF.



Photo Credit: CBM Australia

Fellya, Leo and Rosalina from a local Organisation of People with Disabilities in Timor Leste, alongside their interpreter, Jose, are pictured working on a disability-inclusive mapping task for a program funded by Oxfam Timor-Leste.

facilitating smaller group discussions with groups who are most marginalised. For the Pacific, subregional workshops have enabled greater dialogue with less internet instability than whole-of-Pacific OPD virtual discussions.

- Written submissions are highly recommended as an addition (not as a replacement) to consultations. Where written submissions are sought, allow for the use of video, pictorial and WhatsApp/messenger platforms to share priorities and answer key questions.
- OPD representatives speak many languages. Maximise participation and diversity of voice by ensuring time is allocated to identify the various interpreters required across the various countries, including sign language, tactile, spoken and written language, and captioning services. Ensure interpreters have experience using current rights-based language and terminology. Please note, Bahasa Indonesian captioning services are now available. Contact details of accessibility and reasonable accommodation providers can be shared upon request.
- Ask individuals what accessibility requirements will maximise their participation in consultations ahead of every meeting, both virtual and in-person, to help enable the requests to be met.



## SETTING UP AN INCLUSIVE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The following steps are highlighted as important to running an inclusive consultation process and developing policies that transform exclusion into equity.

### 1. Create a Terms of Reference

**Create a Terms of Reference (TOR)** where the objectives, scope and budget of the consultation process are defined as the first step in the design process, ensuring:

- **Objectives and scope are informed by disability movement priorities.**  
Over the past decade, the disability rights movement across Asia and the Pacific has strengthened and now plays a central role in establishing priorities. Those managing the design of new strategy or policy development processes should take initial steps to understand these priorities and ensure they are foundational to the development of the strategy or policy. The strategic visions mapped out in the [Pacific Disability Forum's Strategic Plan](#) and the [ASEAN Enabling Master Plan 2025](#) are a useful starting point for understanding priorities, as are other global, regional, and country research. A list of recent reports to refer to is on the final page.
- **A defined consultation process is articulated.**  
The consultation process must be set out in the TOR with an established timeline that articulates a plan for external engagement to consult and inform, as well as garner buy-in, and educate along the way. The process must have a clear requirement that consultations begin with the disability movement in the region, ensuring “Nothing without us”. Movement priorities will help provide clearer guidance about which additional stakeholders to prioritise in consultations. The process should also have a defined Core Team, as recommended in more detail below. This will ensure a transparent consultation process that brings together a range of actors in an open way with findings shared transparently to build accountability of all actors involved.

A group of people with disabilities and their carers gather as part of a self-help group in Indonesia.



Photo Credit: CBM Australia

- **The outline of the consultation process includes a clear statement and plan for ensuring an inclusive and accessible consultation process.** To maximise meaningful participation, outline:
  - i. Minimum standard accessibility provided for in-person and online consultation processes (e.g., sign language interpreters, spoken and written language interpreters, closed captioning services, accessible formats that will be provided for documents, plain language facilitators, tactile interpreters).
  - ii. That reasonable accommodation will be considered for individual participation requirements on a case-by-case basis. Note the physical, communication, information, transport and digital accessibility factors that will be considered and how possible barriers that may be experienced before, during and after consultations will be addressed.
  - iii. A definition of which groups are under-represented and with whom consultation will be specifically and actively sought.
  - iv. The plan to invite, collect (noting optionality) and analyse gender, disability and identity diversity data to understand who intends to, and who did, participate in the consultation process.
- This participation data will help identify any voices still missing from the consultation process and any strategies that can be used to seek their perspectives. If collected ahead of time, this data could also be used to identify necessary provision of accessibility and reasonable accommodations. In the event strategy design and development processes are outsourced, make the provision of accessibility and reasonable accommodations a condition within any service procured.
- **An engagement strategy with key internal and external stakeholders.** Engaging senior executive early in the development of the TOR for a strategy design process and at regular intervals through the process has been effective in previous design processes, resulting in endorsement at a high level.
- **A clear communication strategy with stakeholders:** Provide information on the consultation process and the questions to be asked well ahead of time and in plain language. This includes articulating clearly how you will inform those who have been consulted on the progress of the strategy or policy and how you will close the loop by sharing how their contributions influenced the final document. Consider and share plans about the formats and languages in which the final strategy will be available (e.g., sign language, translated languages from the region, easy read format, etc).
- **Have a sufficient timeline.** The timeline should allow for a long lead time to facilitate meaningful and open participation of people with disabilities, OPDs, and government and non-government service providers, as well as international development agencies and other stakeholders, to strategically use the process to educate leaders and create space for their involvement. Advanced planning also allows for pre-booking accessibility and reasonable accommodations, noting that these services are few and in high demand. These critical services also need time to prepare and agree on communication (e.g., Signs) for any new and complex technical terminology that may be used in consultations.





DRF staff listening to the priorities of OPDs in Indonesia during a meeting co-hosted with Pusat Pemilihan Umum Akses Disabilitas.

Photo Credit: PPUAD

## 2. Identify a team

**Identify a team with the right mix of skill sets to lead consultations, guide the process and content, and draft the strategy.** Ideally, a team with the right mix of skill sets could be achieved through:

- A Core Consultation Team to lead the consultation process and drafting.
- An Advisory/Reference group that would facilitate broader representation of stakeholders and ensure a transparent, diverse and accountable consultation process as best practice.
- A group of representatives from OPDs and other stakeholder groups invited to comment on a final draft to ensure no critical priorities or concepts are lost in document edits.

Refer below for suggested functions of the two teams.



Women with disabilities in Indonesia are trained as strategic actors and enumerators to monitor policy implementation and its impact on women with disabilities in the regions.

Photo credit: Himpunan Wanita Disabilitas Indonesia, Indonesian Association of Women with Disabilities (HWDI), Indonesia.

## 3. Develop a stakeholder list

This is a list of stakeholders to engage in the process as an initial step in the design process, including identifying stakeholders who are:

- Current and potential future partners in relevant activities and investments, particularly people with disabilities and OPDs, paying attention to ensuring consultation with diverse members of the disability movement including representatives of diverse groups.



- Government and non-government service providers across Asia and the Pacific addressing barriers to service access and working towards strengthening services and supports that focus on the pre-conditions for inclusion.
- New and emerging stakeholders in critical larger investments, like infrastructure, private sector, trade and so forth as well as stakeholders that have a mandate in areas that can address regional priorities of the disability movement including health, education, livelihoods, social protection, legislative review and so forth.
- Accessibility and reasonable accommodation providers for use in Australia, in the region and per country.

#### 4. Allocate adequate budget

**Adequate budget is allocated for accessibility and reasonable accommodations.** Take into account that the most accessible venues can be the most expensive; interpretation in all its forms is necessary, as is translation of documents and closed captioning; that larger rooms may be necessary to accommodate consultation attendees and any support persons; internet access costs; and travel costs (taxis are more costly than public transport which is inaccessible in many countries etc). Refer to the [Feminist Accessibility Protocol](#) for more guidance.



Disability rights activist in Nigeria reading Braille documents at a meeting co-hosted by the Joint National Association of Persons with Disability (JONAPWD) and DRF.

Photo credit: Rucha Chitnis, Disability Rights Fund.

## ROLES OF STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT TEAMS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

To bring an effective mix of skills and expertise to lead and guide a policy development process, it is recommended a core consultation team works in collaboration with an Advisory/Reference Group, which leads the participatory accountability mechanism of the process.

### Advisory/Reference Group

An Advisory/Reference Group would facilitate broader representation of those involved in the process throughout the design of a strategy or policy, beyond the smaller core team, and as set out in the TOR. The Advisory/Reference Group is the first team to be established to help inform and guide the TOR as well as identify the skill sets and objectives of the Core Team. Key functions could include:

- Ensuring the design process is transparent and engages with key stakeholders.
- Ensuring an open, transparent, accountable and flexible process with people with disabilities at the centre.
- Bringing validity to the process through the involvement of broader representation from the disability sector.
- Advising on and monitoring an accessible consultation process that enables diverse voices and meaningful participation.
- Providing input and advice at key points during the development of the strategy or policy, either face-to-face or online (depending on available resources).
- Supporting the development of the TOR, the stakeholder list and other strategy development documents.
- Linking the Core Team with stakeholders as relevant.

### Core Consultation Team

The Core Team reports to the Advisory/Reference Group. ADDC recommends the following functions and make-up of the Core Consultation team:

- Tasked with developing the methodology of the design process, coordinating and facilitating accessible and inclusive consultations and writing the strategy in an accessible way.
- Collectively have a mix of skill sets, including an understanding of the current disability and regional policy context and the current and evolving policy context relevant to the strategy subject matter, skills in meaningfully and respectfully engaging with people with disabilities, demonstrated skills and experience in applying disability-inclusion principles and reasonable accommodation (the “how to”), strategy development and monitoring and evaluation skills, and cross-cultural competency.



## RECENT RESEARCH

- 🔗 [CBM – Accessible meetings and events: A Toolkit](#)
- 🔗 [CBM – Community Mental Health Good Practice Guides](#)
- 🔗 [CBM – Climate Change and Disability Rights](#)
- 🔗 [CBM – Using the Washington Group questions on disability data in development programs](#)
- 🔗 [DRF supported guides on shifting the power, disability rights and inclusion, and movement building](#)
- 🔗 [DRF page on better practices, safeguarding lessons learned, pandemic research and other resources](#)
- 🔗 [IDA report ‘Promoting Engagement with Organizations of People with Disabilities in development and humanitarian action’](#)
- 🔗 [Inclusive International report – Excluded from the Excluded: People with Intellectual Disabilities in \(and out of\) Official Development Assistance](#)
- 🔗 [OHCHR: see State and civil society reports to UN treaty bodies for the most updated country specific progress on realising human rights – in the menu, go to Countries or Topics and insert the country or topic of interest](#)
- 🔗 [PDF Disability and Climate Change in the Pacific - Findings from Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu](#)
- 🔗 [UNFPA A Needs Assessment for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender-Based Violence, and Access to Essential Services – \[Fiji\]\(#\) and \[Samoa\]\(#\)](#)
- 🔗 [UNICEF Report - Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#)
- 🔗 [WHO Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities](#)
- 🔗 [WHO Global report on assistive technology](#)



People with disabilities participating in a focus group discussion with staff of Good Return in Battambang province, Cambodia.

Photo credit: Good Return.

## More information

ADDC is an Australian based, international network focusing attention, expertise and actions on disability in the majority world, building on a human rights platform for disability advocacy. ADDC brings people together to inspire, influence and support all international development actors to embrace and deliver disability inclusive development.

Join us today to receive regular updates and attend events on disability and development via [\*\*this link\*\*](#).

**This paper was developed by ADDC in partnership with DRF and CBM Australia published in August 2023.**

For more information and to discuss the above, contact us on [\*\*info@addc.org.au\*\*](mailto:info@addc.org.au).

[\*\*www.addc.org.au\*\*](http://www.addc.org.au)



Australian **Disability+Development** Consortium