

Dochas Disability in International Development Working Group

Presentation to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs & Trade & Defense

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Speakers:

- Charlie Lamson, CEO Sightsavers Ireland
- Fatoumata Diouf, Sightsavers Regional Director for West Africa
- Niamh Carty, Programme Director Oxfam Ireland
- Dr Mary Keogh, Director, Disability Inclusive Initiative, CBM

Introduction

Good Afternoon,

Can I first of all thank through you Chair, the Committee for its invitation and the privilege and opportunity to present to you today and answer any questions you may have. My name is Charlie Lamson and I'm the CEO of Sightsavers Ireland and a member of the Dóchas Board.

My colleague, Fatoumata Diouf who is Sightsavers' Regional Director for West Africa and oversees Irish Aid projects on the ground, also joins me today and will present our position to the Committee.

Sightsavers fully endorses the submission from the Dóchas group with whom we have worked for several years to promote disability inclusion in Irish development policy. For too long, disability has been an afterthought in development policy, which has had the paradoxical impact of leaving people with disabilities in developing countries even further behind their peers.

*A Better World*¹ combined with Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)² offers us a golden opportunity to address this, not only to hardwire disability into Irish Aid programmes but for Ireland to be an example encouraging others to follow suit.

As the Dóchas submission highlights, we warmly welcome the acknowledgements of disability in *A Better World*. We would be particularly grateful for the Committee's support in clarifying that

¹ <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf>

² https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf

disability, especially in relation to women and girls, is included within the overarching commitment to reach the furthest behind first.

Under the 'no one left behind' theme, I would also like to amplify the asks in the Dóchas submission around, engagement and participation so that people with disabilities are at the heart of the policy development and implementation, a rights-based approach consistent with the UNCRPD and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³ as well as ensuring an integrated approach to the collection of data on disability in both development and humanitarian assistance that commits to the collection of disability disaggregated data, research and learning, and reports including adoption of the DAC Disability Marker.

In June 2018, the OECD released the DAC Disability Marker⁴. The Irish Government has a key role to play in ensuring data relating to persons with disabilities is collected and used to inform mainstreaming of disability inclusion across its development and humanitarian assistance programming and funding streams.

To ensure international comparability over time, we recommend the **application of the short set of questions developed by the Washington Group**⁵. In implementing its policy, Ireland should adopt and use the **OECD DAC Disability Marker** when reporting on expenditure and establish internal disability reporting mechanisms for partners.

In order for Ireland to be clear on how it will achieve its ambitious vision in the new policy there is a need for a clear process for accountability such as the Framework of Action, which accompanied the previous policy One World One Vision. We also recognise the crucial role of this Committee in that accountability.

In relation to Ireland's role globally, we call on Ireland's all relevant stakeholders to play a leading role in delivering DID globally. Through its policy, it should consider how it will **support the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy** recently launched at 2019 Conference of States Parties to the UNCRPD and use its membership of the Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD) to support global initiatives, such as those made at the Global Disability Summit in London in 2018, and their implementation.

Finally, we would be extremely grateful for Committee's support as it carries out its work in this area and we would like to offer our ongoing assistance in any way we can, including we hope facilitate visiting our projects to see the work for yourselves and meet those involved.

Again, thank you for the invitation today and we would be pleased to answer any questions members may have.

³ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

⁴ <https://bit.ly/2KBxBjJ>

⁵ <http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/>

1. Sightsavers Statement

Good Afternoon,

Thank you very much Chair. My name is Fatoumata Diouf and I am Sightsavers' West Africa Director based in Dakar, Senegal.

Sightsavers is a proud to be a partner of Irish Aid and through this work I am able to see for myself day in day out the impact that Ireland's assistance is having across a number of countries in the region.

As well as projects focusing in our traditional areas of preventing blindness and neglected tropical diseases, our work includes critically important initiatives such as inclusive education and political participation for people with a wide range of disabilities.

In this regard I was delighted to be in Dublin in February to speak at the launch of Sightsavers Ireland's Put us In the Picture campaign at Custom House Quay which included a photographic exhibition of our work in partnership with Irish Aid to improve political participation in Cameroon. However, as the exhibition highlighted, for people with disabilities, there is still much which needs to be done to ensure equal rights and equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.

In my speech in February, I spoke about the key role Ireland played in 2015 through co-chairing the negotiations that delivered the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals - and how we hope this proud tradition can continue in helping to ensure that disability is at the heart of international development.

As my colleague has said, we view the publication of A Better World as an opportunity for Ireland to be a champion of disability-inclusive development - both in terms of its own programmes but also through its work globally at the UN, the EU and other international bodies.

Through our campaign, we hope to engage with the Government of Ireland, TDs and Senators, Irish civic society and members of the Irish public to make them aware of how they can be a catalyst for change and make a profound difference to lives of literally millions of people who have for too long been left behind.

I am delighted to be back in Ireland this week to make that case and we very much appreciate the opportunity to present to you today and of course be of any assistance we can to the Committee going forward.

Thank you very much.

2. Oxfam Ireland Statement

Background

More than 1 billion people live with some form of disability in the world today, accounting for approximately 15% of the global population or one in seven individuals (WHO, 2011). Disability disproportionately affects people living in poverty as 80% of them live in low- and middle-income countries (CBM, 2012; WHO, 2011).

Decades of work in the disability sector led to the formulation in 2006 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – the first human rights treaty of the 21st century (UN, 2006), adopted by the United Nations to protect and reaffirm the human rights of people with disabilities (PWD). The Irish Government signed the Convention in 2007 and ratified it in March 2018. As of October 2018, the Convention has 162 signatories and 177 parties, which includes 172 states and the European Union.

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into force in view of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals aim to mobilise everyone in the fight against poverty and inequality and ensure that no one is left behind, shining a light perhaps for the first time on the world's largest minority group, PWD (Hashemi et al. 2017).

The principle of inclusion of PWD laid down in the CRPD and the SDGs is reflected in Ireland's International Development Policy, "A Better World", launched earlier this year under its banner "Reach the Furthest Behind First". This development was welcomed by Oxfam Ireland.

Oxfam's commitment to disability inclusiveness

Oxfam Ireland is a member of Oxfam International confederation, an organisation of 19 affiliates working in more than 90 countries worldwide. Oxfam's mission is to fight poverty and inequality – therefore, we strongly support the CRPD and the focus that the SDGs give to PWD. Oxfam's Code of Conduct and Partnership Principles protect and affirm the rights of vulnerable people we seek to benefit, including PWD. In 2018, Oxfam signed the Charter for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

Examples of Oxfam Ireland's work on disability

Funded by Irish Aid, Oxfam Ireland's work in development and humanitarian contexts focuses on the poorest and most marginalised communities in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Within those communities, poor women, unemployed youth, PWD and people living with HIV are our primary target. Our goals are humanitarian assistance and protection, economic empowerment, gender equality and essential services for all.

We know that very few PWD access employment and women with disabilities are two to three times more likely to face gender-based violence. Literacy rates are as low as 3% (ADD International, 2011). As well as creating economic opportunities, increasing gender equality and improving access to essential services for PWD, we also seek through our development programmes to amplify their voices by facilitating the influencing of policies and legislation frameworks relevant to PWD.

We have conducted research with Trinity College on the most effective HIV policies and programmes for PWD in sub-Saharan Africa – research we have presented to various international conferences to influence state and non-state actors on the need to design and implement these types of policies and programmes. More recently, in Malawi, we conducted research on the lack of participation of PWD in the formulation and implementation of health policies.

Malawi has some of the best health policies in the world, but insufficient public funds means that they are not put into practice. This negatively impacts everyone, but for people with disabilities, this makes life even more challenging. Take for example, Peter Simoni, a wheelchair user and member of a local disability committee. There is no wheelchair ramp in the local healthcare centre he visits – as a result, he is forced to crawl on his hands and knees to get into the building. With the support of Irish Aid and through our work with local partners, Peter has been able to reclaim his rights and demand quality healthcare for himself and his community. This includes ensuring that an ambulance designated for his local healthcare centre was made available for him and others. It was previously unavailable to those who needed it.

Through our humanitarian programme work on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), we have provided dedicated latrines at household level for PWD. The facilities include improved access, handrails, raised platforms, combined bathing and sanitation units. Households with PWD are the focus of our emergency food security and vulnerable livelihoods (EFSVL) work – they receive unconditional assistance in line with the lack of mobility of PWD and/or the burden of responsibility on carers of PWD. Through our protection work, we seek to ensure identification of those most vulnerable in a crisis. PWD are often the least visible and rarely heard. We strive to ensure that the needs and rights of PWD and their families are respected.

Future Plans

Oxfam Ireland is working with Oxfam's Global Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Team and Oxfam's Global Humanitarian Team to understand better approaches to identifying and defining disability in development and emergencies. Oxfam Ireland aspires to being a champion of disability inclusiveness in the Oxfam confederation.

Oxfam works with local partners who have experience of working with PWD to develop inclusive disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction guidelines, but we want to ensure that all Oxfam programmes and technical guidelines are updated to include the needs of PWD. This will involve assessment protocols and accountability/feedback processes accessible to PWD. We also want to see consistent reporting of data/taxonomy for disability across all Oxfam programmes. Disability responsive budgeting in Oxfam is another one of our ambitions. Finally, ways should be found to ensure that persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities – the ones most left behind – participate meaningfully in development and humanitarian action.

This will not be easy, but we are working with our colleagues in the Dóchas Disability Inclusiveness Working Group, including CBM, to make progress. Oxfam Ireland is fully aware that failure to do the above will result in leaving PWD behind. It will also mean failure to realise the commitments made in the CRPD and ultimately failure to achieve the SDGs.

We stand in solidarity with people with disabilities.

3. CBM Statement

CBM is an international disability and development organisation focusing on creating an inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential. CBM partners with over 350 organizations implementing more than 600 projects in 59 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Technical Advice

Enabling the development sector to make progress on inclusion through a Global, Regional & National Advisory Approach

- ***Meeting the technical needs of a global movement committed to inclusion.***

DID Advisors are a team of advisors with varied expertise applied specifically to identifying how development sector policies, programmes and organisations can become more inclusive of people with disabilities, using the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as a cornerstone. Advisors have a range of educational backgrounds, from disability focused, and/or clinical professions - such as disability rights, occupational therapy, speech pathology and public health - to international development, law, public policy, politics and human rights. Lived experience of disability is also valued within the team.

- ***Providing practical support on inclusion to support organisations to embed inclusion into their work, to 'bridge the gap' between intention and practice***

This can be a range of services depending on requests and needs. Advisors have sectoral specialties (such as WASH or Health), providing a depth of knowledge on priority sectors which can be drawn on by other team members. Advisors draw on each other and on knowledge and staff from the broader CBM Federation where relevant to strengthen the quality of advice.

- ***Supporting development agencies to work with the disability movement in mutually beneficial ways***

For example, CBM Australia and its ten-year partnership with DFAT has put partnership with Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) to the forefront of how we do our work.

- ***Providing advice to a range of development actors***

Including governments, contracting partners, multilaterals and non-governmental organisations.

Advisory – how this works

Whilst providing DID advice and conducting research, the DID advisory team works with DPOs. This follows the principles of participation and leadership of people with disabilities articulated in the CRPD, and ensures advisory work is credible, relevant, contextually informed and driven by advocacy and programmatic objectives. Recognising that there is not always a DPO, and that DPOs are not available for all work, we also commit to working with individuals with disabilities and disability-specific self-help groups.

CBM works with DPOs in two ways

- We work with selected DPOs on mutually decided work, separate to other advisory work. This helps us understand the priorities of people with disabilities in different contexts and with different constituencies, which informs our advocacy and advisory work more broadly. We

also strive to utilise our resources to support DPOs to achieve their own objectives, as opposed to only involving them in our work, and find this also provides opportunities for DPOs to strengthen our own capacity, improve our understanding and provide us with feedback. This may involve capacity strengthening initiatives.

- We also work alongside people with disabilities and DPOs within our advisory work, brokering space for people with disabilities and DPOs to contribute. For example, working with DPOs to co-facilitate training with development organisations within a country enables us to ensure the training is contextually relevant and informed by the experiences of people with disabilities, and it may also broker links with organisations who can support the DPO in its local advocacy or program objectives. This approach can also enable the disability inclusion support to continue from the local DPO when we are not present.

What does Advisory look like in Ireland and what is CBM doing to support.

- In Ireland there is an increasing demand for DID support from civil society. Four of the larger Irish-based INGOs and the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence have already approached CBM for advice. This work is in early development stages with scoping out of capacity gaps on disability inclusion currently underway.
- CBM DID Advisory Strategy for Ireland due for completion mid-2019 and we will be sharing it with Irish Aid and are very happy to share also with the Committee.

CBM has just returned from the UN Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP)⁶ Annual Meeting in New York where we led a side event with our partners from mainstream development and organisations representing DPOs (e.g. the European Disability Forum, the Pacific Disability Forum).

I want to share with the Committee with highlights from this event as they are pertinent to the discussions we are having today.

- The CRPD and the principle of ‘leave no one behind’ have created an imperative for mainstream international development cooperation and humanitarian actors to consider disability inclusion in all their work
- There is an ever-increasing demand for support on how to be disability inclusive from development and humanitarian partners
- This represents a new way of working for all of us in the disability sector and requires us to think about new ways of collaborating to create change, bringing our respective strengths

Finally I want to echo my colleagues’ key messages to the Committee;

In order to not leaving persons with disabilities behind, the Irish Government needs to:

- Materialize its commitment to the full implementation of its domestic policies such as A Better World⁷ combined with Ireland’s ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)⁸

⁶ <https://www.cbm.ie/latest-news/convention-of-states-parties>

⁷ <https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Irelands-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf>

⁸ https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf

- At the global scenario, support the implementation of the recently launched **UN Disability Inclusion Strategy** at 2019 Conference of States Parties to the UNCRPD and use its membership of the Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD) to support global initiatives.

Irish Aid needs to:

- Support Irish Civil Society on its increasing demand to foster DID into their programmes.
- Support and enhance partnerships which acknowledge the need for mainstreaming disability into Irish Civil Society.
- Following the release of the DAC Disability Marker, ensure the data related to persons with disabilities is collected and used to inform mainstreaming of disability inclusion across its development and humanitarian assistance programming and funding streams.

Thank you for your attention.