

Addressing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Finnish Development Cooperation and Policy



The Finnish Approach

The *Finnish Model* for addressing inequality and disability rights can be summarized in four key elements: 1) **human rights as the core for all activities**. 2) Supporting **equal, accessible and non-discriminatory national institutions, strategies and policies** and ensuring capacity of duty bearers at all levels to deliver services and protection for all. This is an investment that delivers sustainable results. 3) **Gender equality** cuts across all interventions and is a key priority for Finland. 4) **Civil society participation**, in this case meaningful participation of the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (DPO) in particular, is a principle without which no sustainable results in terms human rights for persons with disabilities can be achieved. Fully autonomous participation of persons with disabilities in societies is both an important principles as well as one of the goals of the Finnish Development Cooperation.

Finland currently has four strategic priorities which it advocates through different funding mechanisms:

- Strengthening the capacity of duty bearers
- Strengthening the capacity of persons with disabilities as rights holders
- Supporting access to basic rights and public services
- Protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action

Key Partners

The Abilis Foundation

The Abilis Foundation allocates small grants to initiatives and projects that are fully planned and implemented by Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs) in the developing countries.

Disability Partnership Finland

Disability Partnership implements development cooperation work together with its member organizations in developing countries and provides services to strengthen disability inclusion in the mainstream development agencies and programmes.

International Disability Alliance (IDA)

IDA is an alliance of eight global and six regional organizations of persons with disabilities advocating at the UN for more inclusive global policies for persons with disabilities, especially to ensure that the Agenda 2030 is inclusive and in line with the CRPD.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

This is an important human rights accountability mechanism to monitor and support the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) and the broader human rights framework, and to address the barriers persons with disabilities face in accessing the rights globally.

United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD)

The UNPRPD supports the implementation of the CRPD through facilitating coalition building and capacity development at global, regional and country level. The core focus is to develop the capacities of national stakeholders, particularly governments and organizations of persons with disabilities, for the effective implementation of the CRPD. Finland is currently the biggest donor for this multi-donor trust fund.

African Union Disability Architecture (AUDA)

Since 2013, Finland has supported the disability mainstreaming capacity of the African Union Departments, Member States and the Regional Economic Communities. The support also contributes to strengthening the accountability for the implementation of the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade for Persons with Disabilities: the project has created a continent-wide monitoring and evaluation matrix for the Plan against which the member states will report on their national implementation.

Background - Disability as a Key Development and Human Rights Concern

Disability, poverty and marginalization

Approximately 15 per cent of the world's population live with some form of disability (WHO).

80 per cent of the total live in developing countries. Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes and higher poverty rates than persons without disabilities. World Bank study shows that persons with disabilities comprise 15 to 20 per cent of the poorest individuals in the world.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities is globally the primary cause and contributor to the marginalized position of persons with disabilities. Typically the national and global economic, legislative, physical, and social environments, negative attitudes and prejudice create and maintain barriers that commonly include inaccessible health care, education and buildings, lack of accessible transport, lower access to information and communication technology (ICT), inadequate living standards and lower level of services and funding for those services.

Persons with disabilities as targets of violence and SGBV

Persons with disabilities are particularly exposed to targeted violence, exploitation and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence. Women and girls with disabilities often face double discrimination on the grounds of their gender and their impairments. Due to stigma and discrimination, physical barriers and lack of accessible information and communication materials sexual & reproductive health & rights (SRHR) services are typically inaccessible for women and men with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are four to ten times more likely to experience gender-based violence than women and children without disabilities. Gender-based violence and abuse, as well as neglect of essential health services for women and girls contribute to the higher incidences of disability among women than men.

WHO estimates that each year 20 million women acquire disabilities due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth that could be significantly mitigated with proper pre-natal, childbirth, and post-natal medical care.

What is disability?

Disability is a broad concept without any overarching definition. It can be seen as complex, multidimensional and evolving concept. Disability is as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. It is not just a health problem but phenomenon which reflects the interaction between characters of person's body and features of the society. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) categorize challenges with human functioning in three tightly interconnected areas. In this context the restrictions of action are understood as an interactive and dynamic condition, which is combined by the health and the interconnectedness of the person and the environment.

Disability can be physical, sensory, psychosocial or intellectual. It can also be either permanent or long term and either congenital or due to later impairment.

Disability and human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to all people, however persons with disabilities have often remained largely side-lined and unable to enjoy the full range of human rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) entered into force in 2008 and signalled a paradigm shift from traditional charity - or medical approaches to disability towards the Human rights based approach (HRBA).

The Convention offers standards for protection for the social, civil, cultural, economic and political rights of the persons with disabilities. It emphasizes that persons with disabilities are entitled to live independently and to make their own choices as active participants in the society. The existing human rights system is expanded by the CRPD by further developing the concept of accessibility and so that the variety of impairments and societal barriers are taken into account when identifying key barriers for inclusion and human rights by persons with disabilities. The Finnish approach to disability in development cooperation is human rights based.

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