

Query title	Trade and Disability Inclusion
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1. Introduction

This Briefing Note provides guidance on how to achieve greater disability inclusion within trade and development policy and programming. It is designed to support the implementation of DFID's Economic Development Strategy, which includes trade, as well as DFID's Strategy for Disability-Inclusive Development. This Note provides basic, introductory guidance on disability inclusion to DFID advisers and managers engaging with trade and development and sets out opportunities for DFID's programmes and policy dialogue to deliver positive impacts for people with disabilities. The Note addresses two key questions:

1. What are the key linkages between and evidence gaps concerning disability inclusion and international trade and development?
2. Where might the opportunities lie for the UK to address disability inclusion in trade and development? (including in programming, partnerships, and existing policies).

We frame this guidance in terms of 'levels of ambition' which highlight differences between minimum standards and more transformative aims.

2. Background

One billion people (or 15% of the world's population) experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher in developing countries (WHO, 2011). The experience of disability varies widely, with at least as much variation amongst people with disabilities as there is amongst those without disabilities (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016).

Well-planned, inclusive trade for development can redress the exclusion of people with disabilities from economic opportunities, including trade, and potentially contribute to people with disabilities realising their broader economic and social rights and potential. Currently, disability inclusion is not consistently addressed across DFID's trade and development programming or within trade policies globally. It may not always be clear to DFID staff or partners what disability inclusion means in relation to key components of inclusive trade, trade for development or Aid for Trade, and the action they might take to achieve it. Trade for development is a vehicle for increasing disability inclusion, including through the design and delivery of inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. However, to design and deliver inclusive trade for development, it is necessary to first understand how disability manifests.

2.1 Defining disability

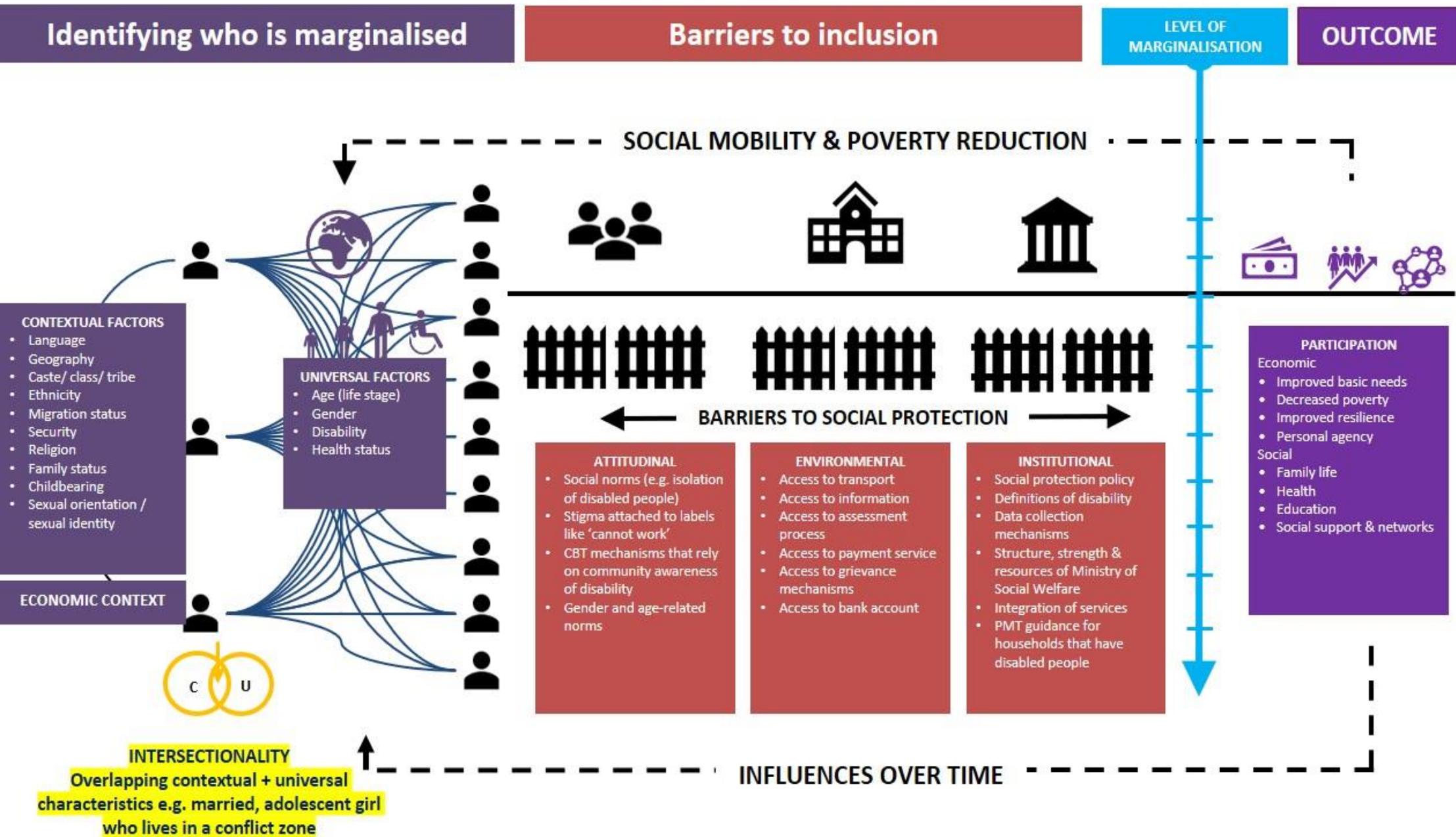
People with disabilities are:

'...those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.' (Article 1, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

Impairments (e.g. physical, cognitive or sensory) become disabling when they interact with prevailing attitudes, behaviours and policies or physical spaces to effectively bar the individual(s) from participating fully in society.¹ For example, inaccessible signage or footpaths deny access to markets or workplaces for individuals with visual or physical impairments. Impairments can also combine with other key factors and characteristics to compound the level of marginalisation. These include differences based on age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, rural versus urban locations and other issues. There are also differences based on whether impairments are visible or not (see Figure 1).

¹ Medical models understand disability as an individual physical or mental impairment along with the impairment's personal and social consequences, while social models understand the association between disability and well-being as "highly contingent, mediated by a variety of environmental and social factors" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016). Social models tend to interrogate the overarching systems which classify or segregate people and their characteristics or experiences based on norms of ability and disability (ibid).

Figure 1: Disability inclusion and barrier analysis conceptual framework



2.2 The costs of ignoring disability inclusion

Inclusive trade and development can contribute to sustainable and transformative economic growth and poverty reduction, when complemented by policies and social protection that ensure prosperity is shared. Global data regarding employment underscores the scale of marginalisation and exclusion because disability inclusion is frequently overlooked; across eight geographical regions, the employment to population ratio for people with disabilities aged 15 years and older is 36 per cent on average, compared to 60 per cent for people without disabilities, and women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than men with disabilities and people without disabilities (UNDESA, 2019). Moreover, when people with disabilities can access labour markets it is often on segregated, unequal or exploitative terms.

Evidence shows that ignoring disability inclusion as well as being discriminatory is also a missed opportunity for people with disabilities' financial independence and realisation of economic rights. Ignoring disability inclusion within programme design and delivery also represents poor value for money from an economy, efficiency, effectiveness *and* equity point of view and increases reputational risks for HMG-funded programmes. Such an approach runs counter to the UK's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Evidence suggests that providing fully accessible facilities increases building costs by as little as 0.5% to 1% if planned, designed and implemented from the outset. In contrast, retrofitting facilities to make them fully accessible after they have been constructed can be very expensive and, in some cases, impossible to achieve (Metts, 2000).

3. What are the key linkages between, and evidence gaps concerning disability inclusion and international trade and development?

3.1 Key linkages

Understanding how people with disabilities participate in economies is the first step to understanding the linkages between disability inclusion and international trade and development. This means understanding social norms, stigma and discrimination related to disabilities as well as **people with disabilities' multiple roles and identities** as citizens, workers, consumers and public service users. There are both physical as well as social and political dimensions to the infrastructure and architecture of the trading system that limit, structure and constrain how people with disabilities participate in the public/government, policymaking, education, employment, cultural and community spaces where trade and trade policy happens. These relationships relate to:

- **Rights and Voice:** In terms of rights and citizenship, disability inclusion is linked to **consultation and participation** within trade-related programs, policies, infrastructure and services.
- **Work/Livelihoods:** In relation to work, disability inclusion means combatting employment-related discrimination while also ensuring sustainable, accessible, decent livelihoods that support people with disabilities' well-being. As for all producers, changes in prices linked to trade (e.g. new imports) may affect the goods workers with disabilities produce. Many people with disabilities work in the informal sector and in agricultural and garment value chains. Linkages include initiatives on disability inclusion though support for social entrepreneurship and MSMEs/SMEs.
- **Consumption:** There are goods and services that people with disabilities use more intensively or that are specialized which may be affected by import duties and non-tariff barriers to trade such as regulations, standards and changes in prices. The prices of assistive technologies and medical supplies are examples.
- **Public service users:** As public service users, people with disabilities are affected by changes such as privatisation or reduction of public goods and services that can be linked to trade and investment liberalisation including changes to infrastructure and

transportation. Of particular interest are trade facilitation programs which create infrastructure and transport and require multidimensional safeguarding measures.

- **Enabling environment:** The rights and ability of people with disabilities to access opportunities afforded by trade – and support when they are impacted by trade shocks or losses – relies upon people with disabilities’ ability to realize their rights, exercise voice and agency and enjoy personal and social well-being. The enabling environment also hinges on a range of factors and complementary policies related to: social safety nets and social protection; education; assets, income and property rights; legal frameworks; international standards regarding goods and services; healthcare; and support systems.

3.2 Research and evidence gaps

Given the linkages outlined above, the connections between disability and trade go far beyond a narrow focus on identifying opportunities for people with disabilities to become exporters and entrepreneurs. However, the literature on trade and disability is largely limited to **trade-related employment** either in value chains (Ethical Trade, 2018), through forms of corporate social responsibility (ILO, 2014) or in entrepreneurship (Kitching, 2014; Handicap International 2006). The recent **Helpdesk Query 41** “Addressing barriers to employment for people with disabilities: evidence and lessons learned” outlines many of these issues. Research on disability, infrastructure and transportation is also particularly relevant to understanding trade facilitation projects (Kett et al, 2020; World Bank, 2015).

Donor programming has mainly focused on trade-related employment through bilateral multilateral, philanthropic and private sector programs in value chains, particularly agricultural value chains in Africa and Latin America and garment value chains in Asia (e.g. Bangladesh, Indonesia) (Ethical Trade, 2018). Australia, Germany, Ireland, the UK and US have been the major bilateral donors to trade- and employment-related disability inclusion programming, with the World Bank (WB), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Organisation for Standards (ISO) and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) supporting multilateral work. Though it has less visibility than disability targeted programmes, organisations such as [TradeMark East Africa](#) have also considered disability in safeguarding work in relation to cross-border traders and trade infrastructure. The following section addresses key linkages and trade-related areas, outlining the evidence base, gaps and programming examples. **These are ranked high, medium and low in terms of the amount of evidence available.**

Rights and Voice (Participation, Consultation and Capacity Building) (Medium evidence available)

- **Evidence:** Mainstreaming disability issues and working with DPOs is not yet common practice in trade-related capacity building initiatives. Traidcraft has identified a lack of funding for Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) on trade-related issues as a key barrier in the case of Tanzania (Traidcraft 2018) and, we would argue, beyond. However, there are promising examples of how to reach DPOs through grassroots outreach and relationship building, accessible funding applications and setting institutional funding targets, as done by the UN Spotlight initiative² working to help end gender- and sexual-based violence.
- **Programme Example:** the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network (BBDN), launched in 2016, brings together businesses, DPOs and NGOs with the aim of generating inclusive employment for people with disabilities, running seminars and job fairs and offering practical advice to companies.
- **Evidence Gaps:** what works in relation to ensuring DPOs and people with disabilities can meaningfully participate in trade-related capacity building and various Aid for Trade initiatives (e.g. integrated border management, national trade facilitation committees etc.)

² Spotlight targets funding to specialist women’s organizations and Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs): <https://unfpa.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2018/07/new-funding-to-prevent-and-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>

- **Programming Gaps:** Consultation mechanisms for working with DPOs and people with disabilities; funding and capacity building to support DPOs' trade literacy and alliances with other civil society actors.

Work/Livelihoods (Low evidence available)

- **Evidence:** There is a body of theoretical literature that discusses disability inclusion in work and livelihoods, however there is extremely limited evidence available on the effectiveness of approaches and interventions. **Self-employment** in relation to disability has been the subject of much debate and highlights issues such as lack of access to start-up capital, loss of social protection when declaring self-employment, the impact of consumer discrimination and the absence of appropriate and sensitive business support (Kitching, 2014). **Networks for entrepreneurs** with disabilities are present in some places in the global North. Most people with disabilities in the global South turn to self-employment, mainly in the informal sector, because of discrimination and lack of opportunities in the formal job market (Handicap International, 2006). Common activities include shops, farming and craft workshops as well as street vending, tailoring, carpentry (ibid). Better job placement, training and apprenticeship schemes are needed to enable people with disabilities to access work within the formal sector (Handicap International, 2018), along with schemes to reduce employer discrimination, exploitation and adhere to ethical codes (Ethical Trade, 2018).
- **Value chains.** Research on people with disabilities' work in value chains has highlighted untapped opportunities (Ogunjimia and Ajala 2016) as well as the drawbacks of private (compared to public) sector employment and low prospects for mobility (Friedner, 2013).
- At the programming level, Traidcraft has worked to engage DPOs and farmers' groups to support people with disabilities to engage in coffee and cocoa agribusinesses (Traidcraft 2018: 8). Trade in services is also an important areas for research, with most literature on disability and services being focused on hospitality, retail (e.g. Stokar, 2017).
- Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Ethiopia, India and Malaysia have introduced general or disability-specific laws, policies or strategies that promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream **Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)** systems and programmes, some of which focus on export industries (UN, 2018). Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia and South Africa are also developing disability-inclusive apprenticeship schemes, combining on-the-job-training and schooling toward an occupation, craft or trade (ibid).
- **Programme Example:** In India, the World Bank supported Rajasthan Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLM) and the North East Rural Livelihoods Project (NERLP) enhanced economic opportunities for rural populations and the most vulnerable groups, including those with physical disabilities, through self-help groups. An independent evaluation of a related World Bank funded partnership with the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) found improvement across people with disabilities' empowerment, perceived community support, impact on multidimensional poverty measures, participation in government-funded programs and citizenship activities after participation in rural self-help groups.
- **Evidence Gaps:** evidence of effectiveness of approaches and interventions, research on other forms of formal trade-related employment; further research on agricultural, garments and other value chains; research on disability and traded services.
- **Programming Gaps:** effective apprenticeship programs; entrepreneurship support programmes; effective business-to-business support.

Consumption and Imports (Low evidence available)

- **Evidence:** The areas of consumption and disability is highly under-explored and largely confined to research on import duties related to medicines and medical devices.

- **Programme Example:** duty free import of products for people with disabilities as per the Nairobi Protocol.³ These include “[a]rticles specially designed or adapted for the use or benefit of ... physically ... handicapped persons.” (Brew et al, 2018).
- **Evidence Gaps:** the effects of price changes, import duties and non-tariff barriers on goods and services used by different people with disabilities.
- **Programming Gaps:** expansion or improvement of programmes to enable duty free imports.

Public Services (Medium evidence available)

- **Evidence:** The area of public services is somewhat under-explored outside of research on transportation and the built environment (infrastructure).
- **Programme Example:** In Bhutan, the World Bank’s [Public Transport Access Project](#) supported by the Thimphu City Corporation, is expanding access to transport services for persons with mobility impairments. This included a technical assessment of public transport accessibility for travel to hospitals, schools, and markets, as well as the development of designs and specifications for bus stop infrastructure and vehicles.
- **Research Gaps:** More research is needed into the impact of trade and investment treaties on the quality of public services and their delivery for people with disabilities.
- **Programming Gaps:** safeguarding practices in public services and how they are affected by trade and within public spaces designed for trading (e.g. border markets).

Enabling Environment: (Low evidence available)

- **Evidence:** There is little to no research on the multiple factors related to assets, income and property rights, healthcare, support systems and more which interact with how people with disabilities access opportunities from trade.
- **Programme Example: Intellectual property rights.** [The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled](#) was adopted in 2013. Australia and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) have partnered through the project “Bringing books to the disadvantaged” to navigate global copyright rules to enable developing countries to access education material for the visually impaired. This has led to the production of accessible books and reading devices for more than 35,000 visually impaired people in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. WIPO also recently conducted a Scoping Study on Access to Copyright Protected Works by Persons with Disabilities, exploring the interaction between different types of disability and different types of protected works. While member states’ existing legislation focuses on copyright and related rights, some states also have disability and/or telecommunications legislation and/or regulations imposing accessibility requirements on certain types of works. With relation to trade countries have different frameworks allowing different groups of people with disabilities to import and export various copyrighted works. The study also identified impediments to accessibility-oriented copyright reforms (Reid and Ncube, 2017).
- **Programme Example: The International Organization for Standards (ISO)** has developed multiple standards for goods and services used by people with disabilities.⁴ ISO provides guidance on relevant International Standards and how to take into account the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities (ISO, n.d.).

³ See the following document for examples of eligible goods in the UK context: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-371-importing-goods-for-disabled-people-free-of-duty-and-vat/notice-371-importing-goods-for-disabled-people-free-of-duty-and-vat#examples-of-eligible-goods>

⁴ See <https://www.iso.org/standard/33987.html> and https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/archive/pdf/en/iso_iec_gen3_2000-en.pdf

- **Research gaps:** further research on disability and financial inclusion, and multiple “behind the border issues” – issues which arise before goods and services cross borders -- that create an overall enabling environment.
- **Programme gaps:** programmes to develop standards related to the goods and services people with disabilities use or possibly standards which may prevent or mitigate some preventable impairments.

4. Where might the opportunities lie for the UK to address disability inclusion in trade and development? (including in programming, partnerships, and existing policies)

The above overview of programming and literature can be helpful to determining areas for further programme development, research and partnerships. We would see the areas of **rights and voice** and **trade-related employment** as key areas of programming and research relevant to all of the UK’s trade programmes. It may also be helpful engage with the World Bank on disability inclusion in trade facilitation through the Support for the Implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (SITFA) programme, and ITC’s SheTrades programme on support to women entrepreneurs with disabilities and DPOs.

4.1 Disability inclusion for trade development: what does good look like?

The following four principles should underpin inclusive trade development. They do not provide comprehensive guidance, but are intended as a place to start:

- **Ground programmes and policy dialogue in strong social analysis**, including barrier analysis to identify the environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers people with disabilities face regarding trade, economic growth and poverty reduction. A country’s policies and legislative framework may offer entry points for inclusive trade and development. Weak enforcement of regulations can be a reason for policies and legislation, not translating into practice. Understanding bottlenecks or opportunities in the regulatory environment and governance structures at national, municipal and local level is critical, as is building institutional capacity to ensure standards are enforced. Cultural and behavioural factors, which influence social norms around how people with disabilities are viewed and treated in society can also have significant impacts on the inclusiveness of trade and development. Negative social and cultural attitudes towards impairments limit opportunities for persons with disabilities; this might include limited access to basic services that facilitate access to trading (including education), inaccessible physical environments and/ or restricted exposure to social support and community networks.
- **Meaningfully involve people with disabilities and their representative organisations⁵** through consultation and by ensuring that key decision makers include people with disabilities (including representation of different impairment types and women) in countries and communities. Partner with Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) and disability-focused organisations who already have links with and insights from people with disabilities. People with disabilities are critical change agents and best positioned to inform decisions that affect their lives, identify barriers to trade and form strategies for building an inclusive trade system. Involving people with disabilities in the entire trade investment process also builds skills and capacity (strengthening understanding about how to access local, national and global trade), fosters changes in attitudes, and increases mutual understanding.

⁵ Representative organisations include Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) and disability-focused organisations.

- **Build in accessibility and/or reasonable accommodation from the outset:** Accessibility is a critical precondition for economic inclusion. Design information, products, services, resources and buildings (for example street signage, markets and information technology) that are accessible, usable and convenient to all the people that will use them. Universal design⁶ is good design; it is not a special requirement for the benefit of only a minority of the population. Universal design may also include assistive devices for particular groups of people with disability where this is needed. Where universal design is not possible, plan to accommodate people with disabilities in alternative ways (e.g. through targeted outreach support) or through adaptations to existing products, services or resources. At the heart of accessibility is the twin-track approach that underpins the UN CRPD i.e. pursuing inclusive trade for development activities that include people with disabilities as well as activities that focus specifically on removing the barriers faced by people with disabilities.
- **Collect and monitor disability disaggregated information and data:** Information and data play a significant part in inclusive trading systems. Collecting disability disaggregated data (using the [Washington Group Questions](#)) can have a transformative impact on trade, for example by helping to strengthen the use of transport, skills training or business coaching by people with disabilities.
- **Continue to build institutional capacity on disability inclusion,** to ensure disability mainstreaming is meaningfully implemented within trade programmes. Research on gender mainstreaming has suggested that “policy development, affirmative action, training or project/programme analysis with less emphasis on [internal] organisational and institutional cultures, rules, procedures, budgets and practices have had limited success” (Rao and Friedman, 2017). Similar issues may come to play in mainstreaming disability inclusion and therefore there should be efforts to build internal institutional capacity on disability inclusion as well as implementing programming on disability issues.

4.2 Practical actions DFID can consider to ensure inclusive trade development

DFID’s work around trade development can deliver positive impacts for people with disabilities through programmes and policy dialogue. Using three levels of impact and ambition⁷, Table 1 below outlines practical entry points for DFID. The guidance suggests that DFID programmes:

- should respond to the basic needs and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities and do no harm as a minimum requirement (**compliance**).
- should consider going beyond ‘compliance’ to approaches that build individual assets, capabilities and opportunities (**empowerment**).
- should consider going further to challenge and shift persistent structural barriers to equality and inclusion (**transformation**).

Each level of impact and ambition reflects expectations set in the UN CRPD; Table 1 is intended to provide a lens through which to start to meet and then continue to strengthen compliance with the CRPD.

⁶ See DFAT “Accessibility Design Guide: Universal design principles for Australia's aid program” <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/accessibility-design-guide-universal-design-principles-for-australia-s-aid-program>

⁷ The Moser Gender and Inclusion Framework guides programmes from compliance, to empowerment to transformative change and has been used in a number of DFID-funded programmes including the Infrastructure and Cities for Economic Development programme. Each level of impact and ambition reflects expectations set in the UNCRPD; the table is intended to provide a lens through which to start to meet and then continue to strengthen compliance with the UNCRPD.

Table 1: Example entry points for disability-inclusive trade development

Level of ambition	Examples	Tools
<p>Compliance: Address basic needs and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities; Do no harm. These activities might</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure persons with disabilities are routinely consulted to identify practical needs and barriers around trade. • Ensure entrepreneurship and microfinance programs collect disability disaggregated data, to then inform program adaptations to improve the scale of disability inclusion. • Undertake operational research into the impact of trade and investment treaties on public services and their delivery for persons with disabilities, to develop minimum 'do no harm' standards. 	<p>Stakeholder needs assessment</p> <p>Mapping of value chains</p> <p>Universal design audit</p>
<p>Empowerment: Build assets, capabilities, and opportunities for people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Universal Design principles are routinely part of trade programs and complemented by appropriate enforcement mechanisms. • Make digital trading/e-commerce, customs information portals and application processes accessible to persons with disabilities. • Deliver duty free access (where not already provided) to imported products for people with disabilities. 	<p>Stakeholder needs assessment</p> <p>Universal design</p> <p>Policy change (anti-discrimination legislation and action)</p>
<p>Transformation: Addresses unequal power relationships and seek legal, institutional and societal level change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake public awareness campaigns to dispel widely held myths about people with disabilities and trading. • Facilitate links between trade bodies and DPOs; building the capacity of DPOs to shape and contribute to trade policies and legislation. 	<p>Capacity building with DPOs</p> <p>Policy change (anti-discrimination legislation and action)</p>

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