Evidence Digest Focus Issue: Disability Inclusion in Healthcare Systems

Easy read booklet Issue

Who we are

We are Social Development Direct.

We give advice to people working on **International Development** on how to include all people, such as women and people with disabilities.

International Development supports people around the world who do not have enough access to the things they need.

We work with other groups to run the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk.

This booklet is part of the **19th Helpdesk Evidence Digest.** It focuses on education, disability inclusion and people with disabilities.

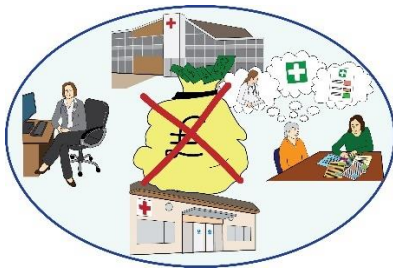Please look at the full report for links to documents or for more information.

Sometimes we need to use new or difficult words. These words are in **bold**. There is a list of what they mean at the end of the document

Healthcare and Disability Inclusion

We spoke to Jo Keatinge, an expert who has worked in healthcare systems in Africa for 20 years.

She says that health systems face problems from war, climate change, and lack of money.

Every country is different, so donors should support whole health systems, not just single diseases

People with disabilities and poor families must be included in health care.

Local primary care is most important because it reaches the most people.
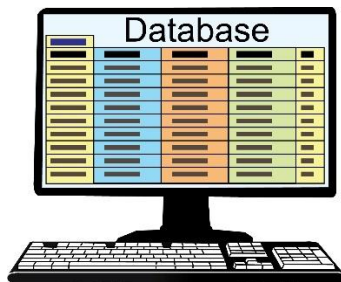
Communities and young people can improve health by speaking up and getting organised.

Examples from countries like Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Thailand show this works.

Donors should pool money, follow government plans, and stop splitting projects. Strong systems take time, so long-term and transparent funding is needed.

Data should be simple, useful, and not waste health workers' time. She says that countries need more digital skills to plan and improve health care.

The latest evidence and guidance on disability inclusion and healthcare systems

Some of organisations and researchers have recently released important resources to support disability inclusion in healthcare systems.
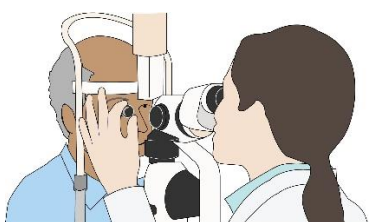
November 2024 – Guide for Disability Groups wrote a guide to help disability groups take part in health planning, budgets, training, and information.
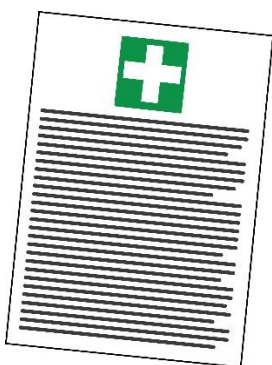
November 2024 – WHO Toolkit shared tools to help governments include people with disabilities in national health systems, with examples from several countries.
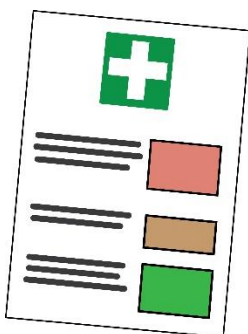
September 2024 – Inclusive Care Pathways reported that people with disabilities often get worse care for illnesses and said care must include disability in planning and training.

Inclusive Health Initiative explained how to make services like eye care and rehab open to everyone through access, training, and community support.
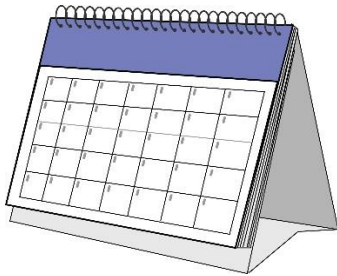
October 2024 – Research Agenda called for ending unfair treatment in health systems and offered ideas for more inclusive reforms.

Inclusive Health Principles gave guidance for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including friendly spaces, staff training, and clear communication.
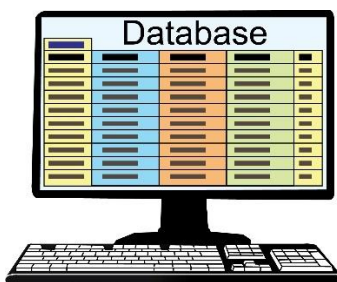
September 2024 – Special Olympics Interview shared Dr. Dimitri Christakis's ideas on prevention, check-ups, training, and system changes to improve care.
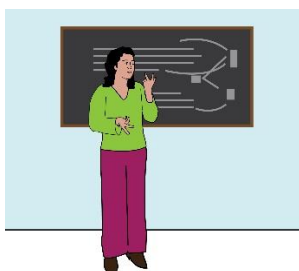
December 2024 – Universal Health Coverage Day called for including disability in health systems to reach fair health care for all by 2030.

July 2024 – Digital Exclusion Report warned that people with disabilities may be left out of online health services and asked for better tech and non-digital options.

Date not given – Inclusive Healthcare Solutions described barriers like buildings, poor communication, and untrained staff, and called for improvements including mental health care.
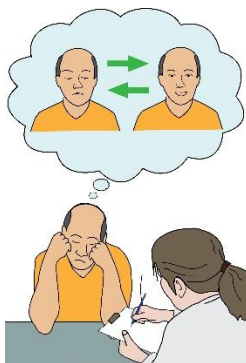
October 2024 – Disability Awareness Guide gave tips to reduce bias and promote respectful, inclusive, and tech-friendly health care.

Programme learning

June 2025 – Ensuring SRH Access for All described a disability-friendly health program in Fiji that created safe spaces and helped people meet health workers for the first time.
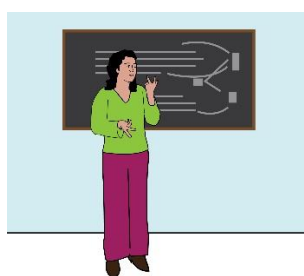
October 2024 – 10 Lessons on Disability-Inclusive Mental Health shared advice from Nigeria, including empathy, buddy systems, and safe spaces for young disabled people.

September 2024 – Driving Change reported on 12 projects in five countries and recommended early planning, strong partnerships, and good data to include disability in health, education, and work.

May 2025 – McKinsey Fellows Project highlighted training 400 health workers in Kenya and improving health access for women with disabilities through funding reforms.
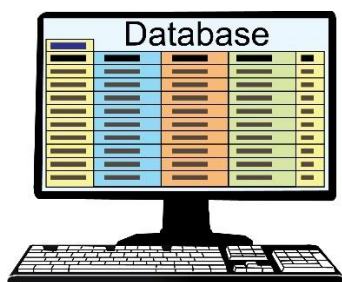

2024 – Mozambique Health Access Project showed how the World Bank and MBI worked together to train health workers and involve disability groups in planning and monitoring.
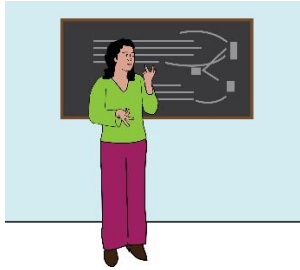
Research

February 2025 – Inclusive Health in Chile reported that while Chile has good assistive technology and accessibility, big problems remain with cost, independence, and trained staff.
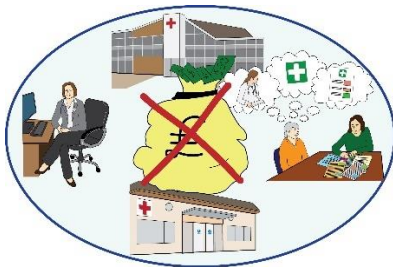

December 2024 – Maldives and Zimbabwe Tool tested a new checklist to measure disability inclusion in health systems and found gaps in data and leadership.

January 2025 – Global Disability Summit Commitments reviewed 185 promises from the 2022 Summit and stressed stronger systems, more trained workers, and action against discrimination.

20 February 2025 – Disability Health Investment Report showed that only 0.4% of global health aid supports disability-inclusive services and called for bold new action.
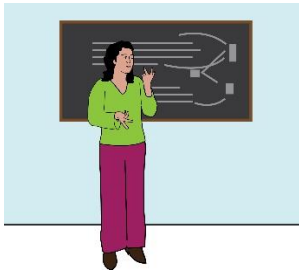
January 2025 – Social Services Briefing identified barriers in money, access, and communication, and called for care shaped by lived experience.

January 2025 – Non-Communicable Diseases and Disability argued that people with disabilities face higher risks and need better inclusion in health policies and services.

January 2025 – Disability Inclusion in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet Nam recommended stronger laws, fair benefits, and active participation by disabled people in health systems.
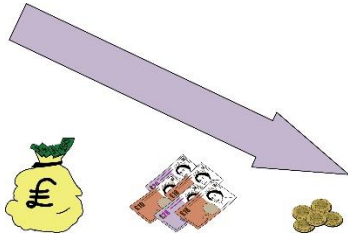

May 2024 – Sexual and Reproductive Health in Rural Nepal found health workers lacked skills and communication and recommended more training and sign language access.
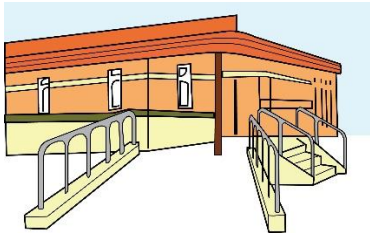
2024 – Health Access in Uganda reported that disabled people face many barriers and called for staff training, hiring disabled workers, and stronger community care.

2024 – Disabled People in Healthcare Roles showed that few disabled people work in healthcare and called for universal design, better training, and job opportunities.
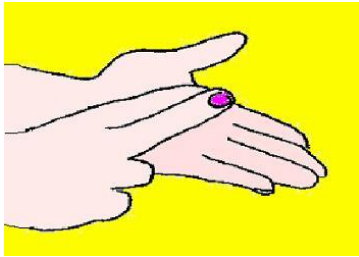
November 2024 – Inclusive Healthcare in Nigeria highlighted overlapping barriers like poverty and geography and called for new laws, training, and infrastructure upgrades.

March 2025 – Health Access in Zambia found major barriers like stigma and poor training and urged government to improve training and infrastructure.

The latest evidence and guidance on disability inclusion: Other topics

General

March 2024 – UNICEF Innocenti Report called for using the social model of disability, inclusive language, and reforms across health, education, and law.

May 2025 – D&I Pushback Report warned that global pushback on diversity could harm disability inclusion and called for leaders to keep equity a priority.

2024 – Disability Index Report showed 10 years of progress, with most organisations now having disability groups and better health benefits

March 2025 – Global Disability Inclusion Report reviewed policies, data, and spending worldwide and stressed the need to tackle stigma and scale up assistive technology.

April 2025 – Preconditions for Global Target introduced a goal that 15% of aid programmes must include disability by 2028 and called for strong laws and services.

April 2025 – Global Disability Summit Learnings shared lessons from 10 research networks, urging fair funding, disability leadership, and care in climate projects.
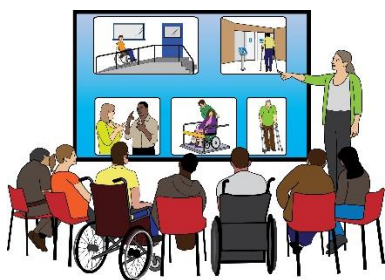

April 2025 – UN Global Disability Fund Report explained how the Fund is moving toward action, partnerships, and reaching the 15% inclusion target.

December 2024 – Sri Lanka Disability Rights Study identified progress and gaps in rights under the CRPD and gave guidance for future inclusive programmes.
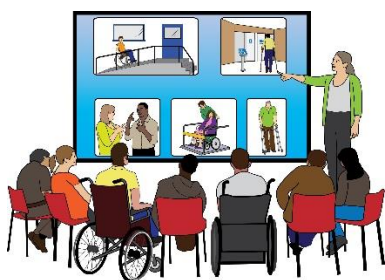
Employment

June 2025 – Global Disability Inclusion Strategy Report showed only 23% of organisations had a funded strategy and highlighted the need for leadership and business alignment.

May 2025 – Reporting on Disability Inclusion advised businesses to measure real results, use disability indices, and share accessible stories.

2025 – Uganda Graduation Programme Study tested an 18-month inclusion programme and found short-term gains but no lasting change without longer support.

2025 – EU Disability Inclusion Legal Guide explained new European laws on accessibility and reporting and gave guidance for companies to follow them.
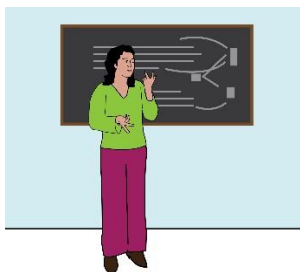
2025 – Global Research Agenda for Children with Disabilities set out a new plan for ethical, participatory research with a focus on climate risk and disability leadership.

4 April 2025 – ILO Labour Market Report showed disabled people face a 30% participation gap and called for fairer jobs and stronger social protection.

22 April 2025 – ILO Supply Chains Guide gave practical steps for including disability in supply chains, useful for both global and local businesses.

Climate

2025 – Disability Inclusive Emergency Management Project created a toolkit and online training in Australia to improve disaster safety for disabled people.

2025 – UK Climate Finance Guidance explained how the UK adds disability and gender equality into its international climate spending.

Education

April 2025 – **Inclusive Education** Strategies Report listed five ways to make schools inclusive, including teacher training and early years support.

April 2025 – Sightsavers Report said disability was excluded at a big education conference and called for fair system reforms.

June 2025 – Global Partnership for Education Report reviewed 109 grants that supported children with disabilities, with examples from Kyrgyzstan and Vanuatu.

June 2025 – World Bank Fact Sheet explained its twin-track approach and shared country examples from its Inclusive Education Policy Academy.
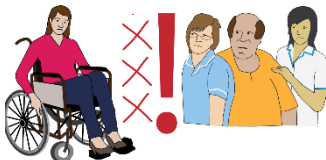
Health

2024 – Medical Education Study (USA) found few disability staff in medical schools, continuing stigma, and called for reforms and new training standards.

Infrastructure & Cities

2025 – Inclusive Energy Access Report said energy systems must include disability and gave a three-part framework to prevent exclusion.

Women and Girls with Disabilities

2025 – UN Knowledge Compendium shared 32 case studies on gender and disability, highlighting violence prevention and women's participation in decision-making.

What do these words mean?

International Development

Supports people around the world who do not have enough access to the things they need.

Stigma

Stigma means having bad or unfair thoughts about someone just because they are different.
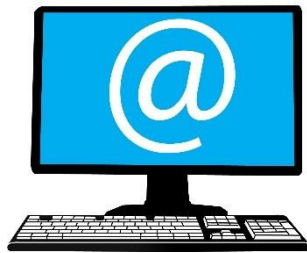
Capacity Building

Capacity building means helping people, groups, or communities get better at what they do.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education means everyone learns together in the same school and classroom, no matter their ability, background, or needs.

Contact us

If you want to talk to us, send an email to this address

enquiries@disabilityinclusion.org.uk

The full version of this document is called **Evidence Digest: Social Protection and Disability Inclusion**