

## **Bond Disability and Development Group reaction to the new FCDO Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030**

The Bond Disability and Development Group welcome the new FCDO Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030, launched at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global Disability Summit which reaffirms the UK's ambition to act as a global leader on disability inclusion. Fulfilling the commitment by the Foreign Secretary to harness the full force of the UK's diplomatic and development expertise to deliver real change for people with disabilities is crucial to implementing the FCDO's restated aim of a rights-based twin track approach to inclusion.

### **Meaningful engagement across the diversity of disability**

The commitment to prioritise efforts to strengthen meaningful engagement with people with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs) is very positive. It is particularly encouraging that the strategy mentions support for the formation and function of OPDs and a commitment to actively seek to include underrepresented groups. We are pleased that the strategy acknowledges the role of intersectionality in increasing marginalisation, and the diversity of those facing discrimination in the disability community particularly girls and women, as well as references to older people and LGBT+ rights. The stated desire to maintain mental health and psychosocial support across all sectors is very important too, alongside a recognition of children and youth. We would further encourage this commitment to include those with complex needs and the amplification of 'quieter' voices in the disability community.

### **A clear focus for Rights, Voice, Choice and Visibility**

Alongside the desire to enable all to succeed in Rights, Voice, Choice and Visibility it is welcome that the strategy retains the previous focus on education, social protection, economic empowerment and humanitarian action, underpinned by a rights-based approach. Expanding particularly into climate change and health, both areas where the rights of people with disabilities are often neglected, is a big step forward. The commitment to embed disability inclusion within the International Climate Finance portfolio is particularly welcome, as well as the reaffirmation of commitment to Universal Health Coverage and greater focus on mental health. It is also positive that the strategy extends beyond policy and programmes to areas such as procurement which can also benefit people with disabilities, and this could be strengthened by ensuring guidance is provided to delivery partners on disability inclusion.

### **The commitment to girls and women**

We welcome the commitment to invest in accelerators for gender-transformative and disability inclusive change in services and policies and look forward to discussion and consultation on these and supporting the FCDO in their delivery. We are also heartened by the recognition of the increased risk of violence faced by women and

girls with disabilities and the need to ensure access to essential services, including protection from physical and sexual violence.

The strategy highlights the UK government's leadership on Girl's Education, and rightly acknowledges the risk of reversing 20 years of gains in this area due to Covid-19. We welcome the UK government's role in securing the Girls Education Declaration at the G7 and the new Girls Education Action Plan supporting the most marginalised children into education. Unfortunately, and especially in the light of Covid-19, the document falls short of a commitment to scale up, build on or extend projects such as the Girls Education Challenge 'Transition' and 'Leave No Girl Behind' highlighted as success stories. To continue to be seen as a leader on inclusion, the scale of the UK's investment in every sphere of its engagement, including but not limited to, inclusive education and particular allocations to girls with disabilities, should be clearer. This needs to be complemented by clarity on how the FCDO intends to monitor progress on all areas and especially around specific areas such as education for children with disabilities. This could be achieved by being better aligned with FCDO's Global Disability Summit Commitments, including the commitment to embed results tracking disaggregated by disability and the use of the Washington Group of Questions, across all new activities including health, social protection, climate and education and to ensure an inclusion focus in reporting.

### **Broader equality policy commitments**

The 'continuum' around equality is an interesting concept. The commitment to ensure that, at a minimum, interventions should do no harm and not reinforce inequalities or create additional safeguarding risks is a positive start. Nonetheless, how this approach will be implemented in practice as a mechanism to mainstream disability inclusion across the organisation needs much more clarity. This includes how it will be assessed in each programme and means defining "do no harm" clearly to ensure existing inequalities between groups are not exacerbated. It also means investing in building the capacity of delivery partners to deliver safe disability inclusive programming. As a leader on inclusion, the FCDO must have a dedicated pathway to demonstrate how they will commit to move from the minimum standard to at least medium (to actively address the needs of diverse identity groups and address barriers which includes addressing harmful social norms), and preferably to the highest level.

### **Delivery Plan and Funding**

The strategy mentions a delivery plan and we are encouraged by the commitment to develop this with meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and OPDs. Not only should this plan set clear targets, indicators and specific timelines on all programmes to exceed the minimum equality 'continuum' standard but also clarity on the way in which the strategy itself will be implemented and worked through. This requires a strong accountability mechanism for civil society on the delivery plan. These words must be translated into deliverable actions that have specific aims for

performance, funding and timeframes that provide qualitative accountability. Without such a plan the very people that are said to be being supported and empowered by this strategy will have no way of knowing what is either envisaged or when it is hoped to be achieved and the funding to make it happen, so denying any meaningful accountability. The DDG looks forward to helping support and enable such a delivery plan to be fully collated and actioned for the benefit of all parties.

### **Equalities Assessment**

In this regard, the recently published equalities assessment on ODA cuts has shown the negative impacts of the cuts on efforts to achieve gender equality and inclusive development, alongside a disregard for transparency and openness. Any lack of appropriate funding could, therefore, undermine the FCDO's ability to deliver the commitments of this ambitious strategy. The pledge of the Foreign Secretary to restore the women and girl's budget to what it was before the cuts is extremely welcome, but, as clearly flagged by the assessment, unless the increased budget is equitably allocated and targeted at the most marginalised, there is a severe risk that people with disabilities, including girls with disabilities, will not benefit from development interventions.

### **Our support as the DDG**

The strategy is a timely and positive progression that has potential to continuing the UK's leadership of disability inclusion. The Bond DDG member organisations stand ready to support the FCDO in its implementation. We look forward to seeing how the FCDO operationalise the commitments contained in the strategy and made at the Global Disability Summit. We would reiterate the importance of this being implemented through a Delivery Plan, with clear timelines, indicators, funding allocations and accountability mechanisms to enable quality impact that can be fully demonstrated, developed, and monitored in full consultation with OPDs. We are ready to encourage, support and engage with the FCDO and UK Government to achieve the ambition so clearly set out to become a reality.