Leaving no one behind: The value for money of disability-inclusive development

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Bond is a broad network of 470 organisations working in international development or supporting those that do through funding, research, training and other services. To help achieve our common goal to eradicate global poverty, we influence governments and policy-makers, develop the skills of people, build organisational capacity and effectiveness and provide opportunities to exchange information, knowledge and expertise.

About the Bond Disability and Development Group

The Bond Disability and Development Group (DDG) is a consortium of UK-based mainstream and disability-specific organisations. Organisations within the DDG represent a large body of experience based on direct work with people with disabilities and the disability movement in developing countries, as well as advocacy and policy engagement with service providers and policymakers.

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Contents

Background and introduction 4

1. The case for inclusion 6

2. Ways of thinking about Value for Money 8

3. Assessing VfM in disability-inclusive development 9

4. Conclusion and recommendations 16

References 17

Background and introduction

The way in which Value for Money (VfM) is understood and implemented has been a concern of the Bond Disability and Development Group for a number of years. In our experience, programmes that include people with disabilities are often assumed to represent poor VfM – mainly because they have a higher cost per beneficiary when compared to non-inclusive programmes.

This paper makes the case for inclusion and argues that interventions that exclude people with disabilities do not represent good VfM. It then provides practical guidance on how to assess the VfM of programmes in an inclusive way.

The paper is not about pushing back against the need to achieve VfM. Instead it is about avoiding conflict between VfM analysis and disability inclusion, and progressing the agenda in an inclusive way. We hope it will be a useful resource for those who use VfM assessments including donors, members of the Bond Disability and Development Group and the wider NGO sector.

Value for Money (VfM) is about achieving the best possible impact with the resources available. While achieving results and maximising impact has always been a concern of development actors, in recent years achieving VfM has risen up the agenda and is now a priority for many donor governments.

At the same time, we are moving into a new era of development. While the Millennium Development Goals prioritised a focus on averages, Agenda 2030 pledges to 'leave no one behind' and to reach the furthest-behind first.[I] This shift requires us to think more carefully about who is being reached and who is being excluded.

All too often, VfM and inclusion are perceived to be in conflict. This is because VfM is often interpreted or implemented in a narrow way, and incorrectly equates the best impact with the one that reaches the most people for the lowest cost. This negatively impacts on those who are most marginalised, including people with disabilities who may be harder and more expensive to reach. Those who have complex needs (such as deafblindness) or experience multiple intersecting inequalities (for example women with disabilities) are particularly likely to be excluded.

VfM guidelines, such as those from the UK Department for International Development (DFID)[II] and the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI)[III], increasingly recognise that VfM is much more than a simple calculation of cost and quantitative output. However, translating this guidance into practice is often challenging. This is due to a number of factors, including: different interpretations and understandings of VfM; the difficulty of measuring qualitative or less tangible impact; gaps in the evidence on what works; and the associated costs that may be required when working with the most marginalised people.

If we begin from the starting point of reducing poverty for **everyone** and leaving no one behind, then development interventions cannot be considered effective, or good VfM, if they exclude certain parts of the population. The VfM agenda must not force people to choose between securing funding and reaching those who are hardest to reach. After all, if the goal is a world of 'universal respect for human rights and dignity',[IV] nothing is more fundamental to achieving VfM than leaving no one behind.

1. The case for inclusion

People with disabilities make up around 15% of the global population. This number is higher in developing countries, largely due to the cyclical relationship between disability and poverty.[V] Despite making up a significant minority of the population, and being more likely to live in poverty, people with disabilities have rarely been the focus of development.

There are multiple reasons for this, including that the exclusion of people with disabilities has led to them being less visible in society and less able to demand their rights. If disability is on the radar of international development actors, there has often been the misconception that it is too difficult or expensive to deal with, or is a medical rather than a rights issue, and should therefore be left to disability-specific organisations.

However, in recent years disability has begun to rise up the development agenda. For example, in the UK DFID introduced its first Disability Framework in 2014[VI] and the global Sustainable Development Goals agreed in 2015 are inclusive of people with disabilities. Not only do the Sustainable Development Goals explicitly reference people with disabilities and pledge to leave no one behind, but crucially, they will not be met unless both horizontal (marginalisation) and vertical (poverty) inequalities are addressed.[1]

Donors also have an obligation to ensure that development and humanitarian programmes are inclusive of and accessible to people with disabilities under articles 32 (International Cooperation) and 11 (Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).[VII] Excluding people with disabilities from development programmes on the basis of cost is discrimination – and is in conflict with the principle of non-discrimination which underpins the CRPD.

The social and human rights case

Disability inclusion needs to be primarily understood as a social and human rights issue. It is the combination of discrimination with social and environmental barriers which excludes and marginalises people with disabilities, and traps a disproportionate number in poverty.[VIII]

To take the example of education, the exclusion of children with disabilities from education not only impacts their future earning potential but it also has much wider social impacts on both individuals and societies.[IX] At an individual level, access to education gives children with disabilities the opportunity to learn; to access better health and nutrition through, for example, school feeding programmes; and to interact with peers and participate in a community. All of this impacts on their ability to participate in social life as active citizens, now and in the future.

Beyond the individual and family benefits, disability-inclusive development can benefit wider communities. Efforts to increase the quality of education to ensure effective learning for children with disabilities have the potential to improve teaching overall[X]. The inclusion of children with disabilities in inclusive education can also challenge exclusionary and potentially dangerous misconceptions around disability, resulting in more equitable and cohesive societies.

More broadly, if buildings are designed and built using the principles of universal design or if humanitarian responses are designed to be inclusive of people with disabilities – they will not just benefit people with disabilities but also be more responsive to the needs of

1. For more analysis on the centrality of people with disabilities to the wider aims of the 2030 Agenda, see for example Bond Disability and Development Group evidence to the UK International Development Committee inquiry on the Sustainable Development Goals, Annex 1. Available from: data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/sustainable-development-goals/written/21275.pdf

all people, including children, older people and those with temporary mobility restrictions.[XI]

The real value of disability-inclusive programming therefore lies in leaving no one behind, and in ensuring that everyone has "equal opportunities to realise their rights, achieve their potential and live in dignity, free from extreme poverty, exclusion, stigma, discrimination and violence."[2]

The economic case

While the social and human rights case is compelling enough on its own, disability inclusion can also have substantial economic benefits to individuals, families and societies.

If people with disabilities are able to participate in their communities without discrimination, this opens up new opportunities to contribute economically. The most obvious pathway through which this occurs is access to livelihoods. The World Report on Disability cites data from 51 countries showing that employment rates for women with disabilities are 19.6%, compared with 29.9% for women without disabilities; and 52.8% for men with disabilities, compared with 64.9% for men without disabilities.[XII] Addressing the environmental barriers and other forms of discrimination that contribute to these unequal outcomes would have clear economic benefits.[3]

But the economic benefits of inclusion are far wider than direct access to income-generating work.

People with disabilities are highly diverse: for some people with multiple or complex disabilities, work may not be a realistic option. Even in situations where work is not possible, non-discriminatory behaviour is not just a human rights imperative – it has economic benefits too. Ensuring equal access to health services, enabling children with multiple disabilities to attend school, or supporting people with complex disabilities to be more independent in self-care, can all have knock-on economic impacts. For example, one recent study in South Africa found that households of children with disabilities had on average only 70% of the earned income of other households – and this is likely to be due in part to caring responsibilities, associated with barriers to accessing inclusive education and other services.[XIII] Empowering people with disabilities to live more independently also has important implications for gender equality, since care is predominantly carried out by women.[XIV]

To give just one illustration of the breadth of economic benefits that result from disability-inclusive practices: equal access to HIV prevention for people with disabilities could save thousands of dollars per person in lifetime treatment costs, as well as reducing the risk of further infections.[XV]

People with disabilities have so far received very little attention in the literature on economic growth. The literature that does exist provides clear qualitative evidence on the pathways by which disability-inclusive development leads to economic benefits.[4] Inferences can also been drawn from the better-documented – and somewhat analogous – arguments on the economic consequences of gender inequality.[XVI] However, more research is needed to understand and quantify the full scale of the economic benefits of disability inclusion.

Whatever the exact scale of economic benefits from disability inclusion, the direct experience of Bond Disability and Development Group members is that these benefits far outweigh the costs. As one witness told the International Development Committee during its inquiry on Disability and Development:

One community leader, completely spontaneously, said to me, "It has made a huge difference. Now that disabled people are benefiting our community, the whole community has come out of poverty. [...] Before, they were dependent; they were drawing [on] our resources. Now they are productive, it means the whole community has a better potential.[XVII]

Taking together the intrinsic value of leaving no one behind, the centrality of people with disabilities to achieving the SDGs, and the social and economic benefits of disability inclusion, no agency that seeks to "maximise the impact of each pound spent" can afford not to apply a disability lens to its VfM assessments.

2. DFID Disability Framework, p3.

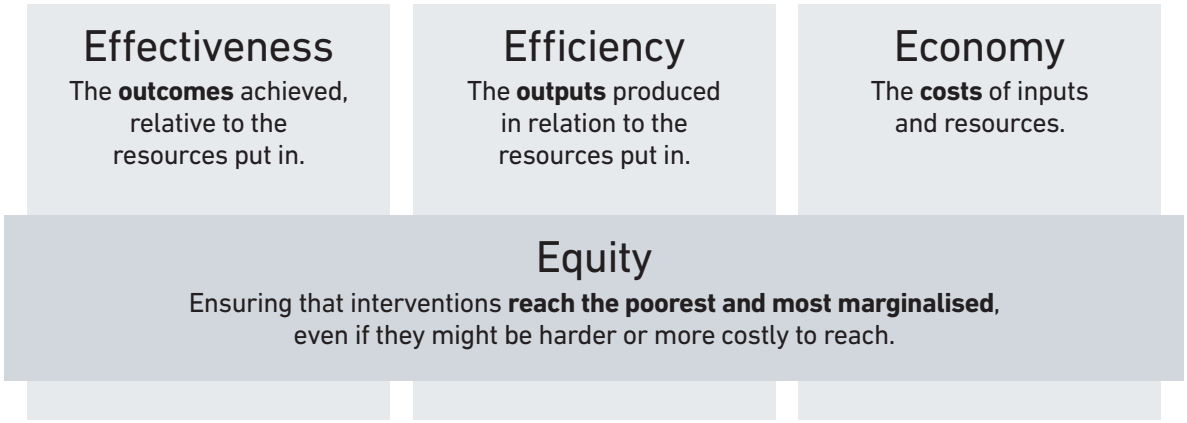
3. While our focus in this section is on access to work, we also emphasise that this should be complemented by access to comprehensive social protection floors.

4. For a review of the literature that does exist, see Banks and Pollack.

2. Ways of thinking about Value for Money

One of the most widely used definitions of VfM is the National Audit Office's definition: "the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes."[XVIII] DFID interprets this as "maximis[ing] the impact of each pound spent to improve poor people's lives."

VfM is often thought of as being made up of 3E's or 4E's:



Unfortunately, equity is not always included and even if it is in theory, it is often seen as an add-on rather than a core component of VfM assessments.

The inclusion of equity is essential if we are to ensure that VfM does not exclude those who are harder or more expensive to reach.[XIX] Equity should not be seen as undermining the other areas of VfM, even if it results in higher costs per beneficiary, or fewer beneficiaries for a given cost. These additional costs are not wasted if they are necessary to reach those who are most marginalised; in fact the opposite is true – they are necessary to maximise the effectiveness of an intervention[5].
An intervention with a low cost per beneficiary that only reaches those who are easiest to reach is not effective.

Likewise, no matter how cheap the inputs into a programme are, we should not consider it to have good economy if the inputs being purchased are increasing inequity.

Equity should cut across effectiveness, efficiency and economy as well as being a stand-alone consideration (examples of how to do this are given on pages 12-15). If we continue to consider equity as an add-on – and often optional – 'E', then VfM will continue to discriminate against those who are harder to reach.

While many agencies, including DFID and the OECD, recognise that VfM is not just about cutting costs or selecting the cheapest option, this has been challenging to put into practice. As ICAI recognises: "[the] drive for VfM [within DFID] has focused on the costs of inputs (economy) and the delivery of outputs (efficiency). While this is good for accountability it often misses the bigger picture of how to deliver the best impact."[XX]

5. This has been widely accepted in domestic policy. For example, while there are still issues around the provision of education for children with disabilities in the UK and other high income countries, the fact that additional funding is needed to meet some children's needs has long been accepted and provided for in education policy.

3. Assessing VfM in disability-inclusive development

In our view, a programme that is not inclusive of people with disabilities does not offer good VfM. But of course not all disability-inclusive programmes represent good value – or equally good VfM. This section provides some practical advice for development actors seeking to assess disability-inclusive programmes on VfM grounds. It draws on language and concepts from DFID's Approach to Value for Money[XXI], and is also broadly aligned with guidance from Bond[XXII]. The considerations outlined here apply across the project cycle – from the initial decision on whether to intervene, through detailed project planning, to implementation and evaluation.

Going beyond quantified comparisons

A common way of approaching VfM assessments is to make comparisons, and this was one of the biggest concerns of organisations we spoke to when preparing this paper. **While comparisons can drive improvement and inform decision–making, they are only effective if comparing like with like.**

DFID's published VfM assessments recognise the challenges in making quantified VfM comparisons between different programmes. For example, DFID's Guidance Note on Shifting Social Norms to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)[XXIII] found that "great care should be taken in attempting to benchmark VfM across different VAWG interventions and contexts. Programmes that are more costly, deliver benefits in difficult circumstances and have benefits that are challenging to measure may still provide good VfM.[6]"

We strongly agree with this caution, and think it is particularly relevant in the case of disability-inclusive programming, for several reasons:

- The **shortage of data** on disability-inclusive programming, for example on the cost drivers (see page 8).
- The particular **challenges in quantifying the benefits** of disability inclusion: for example, long-term attitude change, or the intrinsic benefits of inclusive societies, diversity, and independence, autonomy and dignity for individuals.
- **Subjectivity in deciding what is valuable**. This is a particular challenge when it comes to the inclusion of people with disabilities, who have historically been marginalised in decision-making processes, so their priorities may unintentionally be overlooked. For example, recent participatory research with people with disabilities in Bangladesh identified barriers to accessing health care that had not been considered by more top-down approaches.[7 XIV]
- The risk of taking a one-size-fits-all approach that obscures the **diversity of people with disabilities, and the barriers that they face**. For example, a programme that identifies and provides early interventions for babies with sensory impairments may cost more to support multi-sensory impairments than it does to support single sensory impairments.

6. DFID's report on Measuring and Maximising Value for Money in Social Protection Systems makes a similar point.

7. For example, very long queues, and poor understanding of disability among healthcare professionals.

In our view, the most proportionate and non-discriminatory approach to assessing VfM in a disability-inclusive context is not to take a purely quantitative focus on results.[8]

Rather, we recommend that decision-makers judge – using a range of measures, the majority of them qualitative – whether a programme has been designed and implemented in a way that maximises VfM. This view, which is broadly aligned to public sector good practice (for example ICAI's Approach to Effectiveness and Value for Money[XXV]), is described in more detail in the VfM asessment questions on pages 12-15.

A note on data quality and the need for judgement

VfM assessment in disability-inclusive development is a relatively new field, and there remains an urgent need for more detailed evidence, particularly on cost drivers. This means that the VfM assessment questions will inevitably require a high degree of judgement. However this is not unique to disability: value for money in global development is of course too complex to reduce to formulaic calculations even in sectors where quantified data is plentiful, and an element of judgement will always come into play. As DFID's Smart Rules[XXVI] recognise, a shortage of evidence should not be seen as a barrier to thinking about VfM: rather it is an opportunity to build a better evidence base with every new programme, so that future VfM judgements are informed by an ever more specific and nuanced range of information.

Bond Disability and Development Group members have been developing a range of innovative approaches that start to address these knowledge gaps, and look forward to working with DFID and others as our collective understanding of this field continues to develop.

Valuing the voices of the most marginalised people

As the VfM agenda is rooted in the drive for greater accountability to people living in extreme poverty,[XXVII] it is important for these people's voices to be heard in assessments of VfM. Participatory planning and feedback mechanisms are already widely used for other aspects of project management in global development.

We encourage development actors to explore how, with suitable facilitation,[9] these mechanisms could be adapted to ensure the voices of people with disabilities (and their representative organisations) play a central role in VfM assessments.

This, of course, bears a cost,[10] which should be taken into consideration; but the process also adds value by ensuring that programmes are better designed to realise the rights of people with disabilities.

8. We of course support work to improve quantitative data and measurement methodologies, for the purposes of learning within projects. For instance, methodologies such as Social Return on Investment offer one way to quantify wider benefits, and we think this offers interesting opportunities for learning and reflection. However, we consider such approaches involve too many assumptions to be suited to comparing different disability-inclusive programmes in different contexts.

9. Please contact the Bond Disability and Development Group for detailed advice on facilitating participatory processes that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

10. For example, sign language interpretation, documents in easy to read formats, personal assistance, etc.

Key questions for a disability-inclusive VfM assessment

Most VfM assessments have at their core an evaluation of the benefits and costs of action, compared to alternatives.[11] Building a disability lens into such an assessment means addressing two basic questions:[12]

1. Benefits

Is the programme designed, implemented and monitored in a way that recognises the benefits of programming which includes people with disabilities?[13]

2. Costs

Are the costs of programming which includes people with disabilities explained and justified?

In other words, equity for people with disabilities should be a cross-cutting issue in VfM assessments, whether considering effectiveness, efficiency, or economy – as well as a stand-alone consideration.[14]

The following questions for assessing VfM (pages 12-15) break down in more detail the interdependencies between equity and the other three more traditional 'Es'.

They also give (simplified) examples based on a hypothetical business case for a large-scale education programme that seeks to include children with disabilities among its target group.

Using the following questions for assessing VfM

The below questions are intended to be used in technical VfM assessments of **disability-inclusive** programmes. For programmes that **do not** include people with disabilities at all, the questions are not directly relevant, as such programmes cannot, by their nature, be considered VfM (although we would hope that the questions could be a resource to help redesign such programmes and make them inclusive).

If the answer to all of the assessment questions is 'yes', this gives assurance that disability inclusion is contributing to the programme's overall VfM. If the answer to some questions is 'no', then further enquiries need to be made about whether there would be other more cost-effective ways to include people with disabilities.

The questions can be used at the programme development or option appraisal stage. They can also form the basis for developing indicators to assess VfM in real time as the programme is implemented. And crucially, the same framework can also be used retrospectively for monitoring and evaluation, to assess how far the anticipated benefits were realised, and how well the costs were understood, justified, and managed – with a view to learning from experience, to deliver even greater inclusion and VfM in future.

The questions are designed to be indicative, not prescriptive. Disability-inclusive VfM assessment is a new field, and we believe that the best way to challenge simplistic approaches to VfM is for organisations to develop and adapt their own tools that suit their contexts – while taking on board this paper's fundamental recommendations about non-discrimination.

11. This matches the key principles set out in DFID's Smart Guide on Value for Money. The assessment would usually include the 'do-nothing' option as one alternative.

12. This analysis focuses on people with disabilities. The same approach is likely to be applicable for other marginalised groups.

13. Or, put another way, is the programme causing dis-benefits by excluding people with disabilities?

14. We recognise that this dual approach, treating equity as stand-alone and cross-cutting, may appear to introduce duplication on paper. However, in practice value for money decision-making is a complex process involving multiple actors at different phases of the project lifecycle. As such, the dual approach offers a useful check and balance to ensure that equity, as a relatively recent addition to many VfM frameworks, does not get overlooked amid the other complexities of the decision-making process.

Effectiveness – equity issues

Is it possible to produce the same **outcomes** another way for less money (or, better outcomes for the same money)?

BENEFITS – Ensuring the benefits of disability-inclusive programming are recognised

Have **all the outcomes of disability-inclusive programming been fully captured** (including the intrinsic benefits of not discriminating and leaving no one behind)?

Example: *the education programme business case explicitly says that children with disabilities are among its target group, and lists a number of expected benefits from disability-inclusive programming, such as: putting into practice the commitment to leave no one behind; compliance with human rights conventions; achieving SDG 4; realising social benefits not only in education but also in health and in wider norms around diversity; and realising economic benefits for some children with disabilities and their carers.*

COSTS – Ensuring the costs of disability-inclusive programming are justified

Does the programme have a credible **theory of change** that explains how inputs, processes and outputs contribute to these disability-inclusive outcomes, while being realistic about the level of external contribution and uncertainty associated with some of the longer-term benefits?

Example: *the education programme's theory of change analyses the specific structural inequalities that children with disabilities may face (e.g. in family/community attitudes, lack of teacher training in inclusive education) and sets out how these will be tackled through the programme results chain. It recognises uncertainties (such as the level of backing from the Finance Ministry, and inter-dependencies with other sectors such as social protection for the families of extremely poor children with disabilities), but also proposes credible arguments why these are not expected to undermine success (for example, the programme will support organisations of people with disabilities to campaign for the Ministry to increase the budget for inclusive education, and it will signpost families to sources of advice on social protection).*

Efficiency – equity issues

Is it possible to produce the same **outputs** another way for less money (or, better outputs for the same money)?

BENEFITS – Ensuring the benefits of disability-inclusive programming are recognised

Is there reliable **data** on the number of people with disabilities who benefit from the programme, disaggregated using the Washington Group questions, and does this data show that people with disabilities are benefiting equally?[15] Is there evidence on the **diversity** of people with disabilities reached by the programme (for example, representation of groups facing intersecting exclusion[16], and of highly marginalised impairment groups[17])?

Example: *the programme business case says that at least 15% of those who benefit should be children with disabilities (in line with national disability prevalence estimates), and will track this through its logframe using the Washington Group questions[XVIII]. Besides disability, programme data will also be disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, geographic location and other relevant characteristics, and this data will be used to monitor the inclusion of people experiencing intersecting inequalities, such as girls with disabilities from ethnic minorities. The programme will consult representative organisations of different impairment groups and their carers to check that even highly marginalised groups are being included in the programme.*

Are there **quality controls** to ensure the programme is delivered in a way that is inclusive of people with disabilities (for example, do people with disabilities play a meaningful role in implementing and evaluating the programme)?

Example: *the education programme has an advisory panel with representatives from different civil society organisations. The panel includes a representative from the national organisation of people with disabilities, who has been nominated for this role through a democratic process, and who regularly consults her members for their views, taking particular care to include those from highly marginalised groups.*

COSTS – Ensuring the costs of disability-inclusive programming are justified

If the programme includes specific processes or outputs associated with disability inclusion, is there a clear **justification for why these activities add value and contribute to the equity of the programme**, compared with alternative less costly approaches?

Example: *parts of the education programme will be delivered through local organisations of people with disabilities.*
The business case explains that this adds value by (for example): making it easier to identify highly marginalised children with disabilities who are not in school; enabling deeper insights into inequalities that people with disabilities experience locally; and directly challenging negative stereotypes about the capacity of people with disabilities
to make change.

15. For more detail on the Washington Group questions, see DFID's Disability Framework, Annex B. As a guide, it is estimated that people with disabilities make up 15% of the global population (World Bank/World Health Organisation, 2011), so we would expect that in general at least 15% of programme beneficiaries should also be people with disabilities. However, this will depend on the context, and higher percentages might be expected if the programme targets demographic groups strongly associated with disability (e.g. people in extreme poverty).

16. For example women with disabilities, LGBT people with disabilities, indigenous people with disabilities.

17. For example people with deaf-blindness, people with intellectual disabilities, people with psychosocial disabilities, people with albinism, people affected by leprosy or other stigmatising diseases. This is to ensure that the easiest-to-reach impairment groups are not prioritised over harder-to-reach impairment groups.

Economy – equity issues

Is it possible to get the same **inputs** another way for less money (or better inputs for the same money)?

BENEFITS – Ensuring the benefits of disability-inclusive programming are recognised

Do **recruitment and procurement** processes include policies to ensure equity (for example, equal opportunities policies for recruitment, accessibility policies for procurement, consideration of whether contractors' and grantees' activities have adverse effects on equity)?

Example: *people with disabilities are actively encouraged to apply for posts in the education programme. Recruitment processes are accessible: for example, all information is available in accessible formats (e.g. Braille), and the programme manager makes adjustments in the workplace to ensure employees with disabilities can carry out their duties effectively (e.g. providing sign language interpretation for a Deaf staff member for meetings). Project contracts specify that equipment procured must be accessible (for example, accessible technology). Prospective contractors' HR policies are scrutinised, and those which discriminate against people with disabilities are ruled out of the bidding process.*

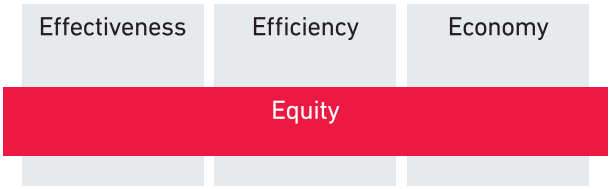
COSTS – Ensuring the costs of disability-inclusive programming are justified

Are the **cost drivers of disability inclusion** identified and justified, so that it is clear why unit costs might be higher than for a programme that does not include people with disabilities? This should include consideration of the costs of working with particularly hard-to-reach groups.[18] Are there processes to manage the cost drivers and eliminate costs that do not add value?

Example: *the education programme identifies a number of cost drivers of disability inclusion, such as: time taken to identify hard-to-reach children with disabilities who are out of school (e.g. children with deafblindness or nomadic children with disabilities); time taken to demonstrate and document models of inclusive education to build technical capacity of policymakers; time needed for teachers to learn and implement inclusive methodologies; time taken to establish links with other inter-dependent sectors (for example signposting the families of extremely poor children to sources of social protection or livelihood support); the costs of teaching assistants for learners with complex disabilities; the costs of preparing materials in accessible formats such as Braille or Alternative Augmentative Communication.[19] It explains why these costs are needed in order to reach marginalised children with disabilities, and goes on to explain how other non-essential costs will be kept down (e.g. through hiring skilled local staff, rather than expat consultants).*

18. For example, children with deafblindness may need an individual teaching assistant in order to benefit from inclusive education.

19. Alternative Augmentative Communication is an umbrella term for a wide range of communication methods that can be used to replace or supplement speech – for example, through systems of visual symbols.



Equity – cross-cutting issues

Are benefits accessible to all people, including the most marginalised?

BENEFITS – Ensuring the benefits of disability-inclusive programming are recognised

Are processes in place to **enable and evaluate** the inclusion of people with disabilities, in inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes?

Example: *The business case explicitly says that children with disabilities are among the programme's target group, and articulates the benefits of disability inclusion. Disability inclusion is considered at every stage of the results chain, from the procurement of inputs, to the monitoring of outputs and outcomes (including through disaggregated data and 'downwards' accountability mechanisms).*

COSTS – Ensuring the costs of disability-inclusive programming are justified

Are the cost drivers of disability inclusion **understood, justified, and linked to a credible theory of change**?

Example: *The education programme theory of change clearly shows how the programme's inputs, outputs and outcomes are expected to tackle the inequalities that people with disabilities face. This includes measures to address the root causes of inequality (e.g. working with organisations of people with disabilities to challenge harmful social norms) and measures to reach groups affected by extreme marginalisation (e.g. providing teaching assistants for children with complex disabilities). The business case is clear about the costs of these measures to achieve disability inclusion, and explains how these costs will be controlled to avoid incurring expense that does not add value.*

4. Conclusion and recommendations

All development actors need to ensure that they are responsibly delivering programmes that are an effective and efficient use of resources. At its best, VfM has the potential to improve development outcomes for highly excluded people living in poverty, while generating important new evidence informed by the voices of the most marginalised people.

But if VfM assessment is interpreted too narrowly, as it often is, it risks encouraging programmes that leave some people further behind, and which fail to capitalise on the long-term social and economic benefits of more inclusive practices.

Building on VfM guidance from DFID and others, this paper proposes practical approaches to ensure disability-inclusive VfM judgements. With 'leave no one behind' now at the centre of global development priorities, all development actors have a role to play in ensuring that value for money assessment does not unintentionally discriminate against people with disabilities.

We recommend that those responsible for designing, implementing, and assessing the VfM of global development programmes should:

1. **Recognise the value of disability-inclusive programming.** Leaving no one behind should be recognised as intrinsically beneficial – even before the wider social and economic benefits of inclusion are taken into account. In practical terms, where value for money assessments are using a 3Es framework, this should be updated to incorporate the fourth E, equity, as both a cross-cutting and a stand-alone issue.
2. **Never draw VfM conclusions based on comparing the unit costs of disability-inclusive programmes with the unit costs of programmes that do not include people with disabilities**, as this misses the point that exclusionary programmes, by their very nature, do not offer good value for money.
3. **Ensure a like-for-like comparison that allows for contextual differences and measurement uncertainties** when comparing the VfM of different programmes that are disability inclusive. Do this by taking into account a range of considerations, including qualitative as well as quantitative factors. Our asessment questions provide just one of many possible ways to do this.
4. **Ensure that people with disabilities participate meaningfully at all stages of value for money assessment.** This is a complex and controversial field, making it all the more important to hear the voices of people who have historically been marginalised.
5. **Follow best practice in project management and cost control.** International development actors have a responsibility to invest in disability inclusion – whether this is funding for accessibility or for challenging discriminatory social norms. But they also have a responsibility to ensure these investments are well managed, as with any other programme.

We also recommend that research funders, academics, think tanks and development practitioners should continue to document and share evidence on the cost drivers and wider benefits of disability inclusion, so that the evidence base for VfM decisions becomes ever more informative.

As SDG implementation gets underway, Bond Disability and Development Group members offer our support to help development practitioners reach the people who are furthest behind, while also maintaining the highest standards of value for money. We hope this paper plays a part in ensuring that the rapidly evolving VfM agenda delivers on its full potential.

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