

# Sector welcomes new development strategy advancing disability equity

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The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the peak body for international development and humanitarian agencies and the Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC), supported by 18 disability and international development organisations, today celebrate the release of the Australian Government's new *International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy (IDEARS)*.

Announced ahead of International Day of People with Disability on 3 December, the strategy reaffirms Australia's leadership in advancing disability equity across international development, humanitarian assistance, climate action, and foreign and trade policy. Heeding the sector calls, the Government also announced an additional \$12 million for assistive technology (AT) in the Indo-Pacific over four years. This is a vital investment that signals the Government's ambition for immediate implementation of the new strategy.

For the first time, the Australian government has set a target for performance on disability equity across all international and humanitarian efforts, committing to raising the bar on inclusion and rights. The strategy sets a target for 60 per cent of all programming to be performing effectively on disability equity by 2026 with a staged approach to reach 70 per cent by 2030.

This commitment is strongly welcomed by the sector – with leading Australian international development and domestic disability organisations coming together over the past 12 months to call for the strategy to be ambitious, accountable, and resourced. “The Australian Government's strategy provides a clear and actionable roadmap for advancing equity with people with disabilities in your region and globally,” said Kerryn Clarke, Executive Officer of ADDC. “Australia is setting the stage for real, lasting change that will enable people with disabilities not just to be in the room, but to have a seat at the table and lead the conversation.”

The strategy prioritises partnering with people with disabilities. With civil space shrinking in the region, elevating the voices and priorities of Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) and civil society has never been more vital.

People with disabilities make up 20 per cent of the world's poorest population and face disproportionate exclusion from opportunities in education, healthcare, and employment, particularly in times of crisis. In the Indo-Pacific region alone, over 700 million people are estimated to have a disability. For people who experience multiple layers of marginalisation, these impacts are amplified and can lead to further isolation and exclusion within their communities.

Jane Edge, Chief Executive Officer of CBM Australia, a leading Australian organisation in disability equity in international development, said “The focus on dismantling barriers to inclusion is crucial. Disability equity isn't just about participation; it's about tackling the specific challenges people with disabilities face in their daily lives including accessing education, healthcare, and employment. This strategy provides a clear path forward to ensure that people with disabilities can fully participate in society and their communities, on an equal basis with others.”

ACFID's Disability Policy and Advocacy Lead, Lanni Hamblin, called the strategy a turning point “This will move Australia's development program beyond pockets of isolated good practice, to a cohesive approach.

We commend and welcome the Government's extensive consultations with people with disabilities in developing the strategy and its commitments. This echoes the disability movement's calls of ‘nothing without us,’ and ensures that those most affected are central to the strategy's design and implementation.”

Australia's new strategy builds on its leadership in this area, being the first country to create a disability-specific international strategy and one of the first to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The sector remains committed to working with the Australian government towards achieving disability equity, so no one is left behind.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact ACFID Media on 0401 721 064 or at [media@acfid.asn.au](mailto:media@acfid.asn.au).

*Supporting organisations:*

The Leprosy Mission Australia

Mary MacKillop Today

C BM Australia

Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)

People with Disability Australia (PWDA)

WaterAid Australia

Opportunity International

Plan International Australia

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