



## 1. Background

There is a strong link between poverty and leprosy, and poverty eradication is at the very root of the existence and working practices of The Leprosy Mission.

By adopting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>, 139 nations have agreed in September 2015 to end poverty in all its manifestations as well as empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status by 2030. People with impairments face additional barriers, and the SDGs cannot be achieved without specifically impacting their lives and those of their families.

As an organisation focused on disability, both in leprosy and generally, The Leprosy Mission embraces and endorses the principles of the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (CRPD)<sup>2</sup> which is based on a **social model of disability** and supports a **rights-based approach to sustainable development**. As such, this Policy aims to promote practical approaches to the inclusion of people with impairments as participants and beneficiaries in all development activities implemented in partnership with developing countries, other donors, and international development agencies. It also promotes the prevention of the causes of disability as a priority.

## 2. Social model of disability

The social model of disability developed as a response to concerns that the traditional or conventional approach to disability tends to categorise people with disabilities as “different” or “special” from the general population and, as such, perpetuates the view that people with disabilities need technical or medical assistance to adapt as well as possible to the demands of society. This approach tends to emphasise difference rather than promoting inclusion.

In contrast, the social model of disability emphasises the empowerment of people with disabilities and the inclusion of their experiences; it requires society itself to adapt.

## 3. The rights-based approach to development

The Leprosy Mission Australia (TLMA) has a separate Human Rights Policy which looks at a wider range of rights than that which is addressed in this Policy. The promotion and protection of human rights are at the centre of The Leprosy Mission's work. A rights-based approach recognises that people with disabilities have the right to the same opportunities as other citizens, and to an equal share in the improvements in living conditions resulting from economic and social development.

The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities<sup>3</sup> were adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1993 and published in 1994. Their purpose is to ensure that people with disabilities, as members of their societies, may exercise the same rights and obligations as others.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2005a), UN Sustainable Development Goals <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> (accessed May 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Available at <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r096.htm> (accessed 15 March 2012)

## 4. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The CRPD came into force on 3 May 2008 following the requisite 20 ratifications. Many of the member countries in The Leprosy Mission Global Fellowship have ratified the CRPD.

The CRPD does not see disability as an unchangeable medical condition, but as the result of interaction between people and removable hurdles. "Disability," it says, "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."<sup>4</sup>

The CRPD is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st Century. It marks a "paradigm shift" in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities. It takes to a new height the movement from viewing disabled people as "objects" of charity, medical treatment, and social protection towards viewing disabled people as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent, as well as being active members of society.

The CRPD is intended as a human rights instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities, and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced.

There are eight guiding principles that underlie the CRPD and each one of its specific articles:

1. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy—including the freedom to make one's own choices—and independence of persons.
2. Non-discrimination.
3. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society.
4. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.
5. Equality of opportunity.
6. Accessibility.
7. Equality between men and women.
8. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

## 5. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) disability strategy

TLMA heartily endorses the action taken by DFAT in its disability strategy, "Development for All: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program 2015-2020"<sup>5</sup> and its Guiding Principles:

1. **Support an active and central role for people with disabilities - 'Nothing about us without us':** Provide perspectives based on experiences living with disabilities, to inform effective poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth efforts.
2. **Develop policies and programs based on evidence:** Research provides opportunities to better understand the challenges and opportunities for people with disabilities in particular country contexts, and improve disability-inclusive development practices.

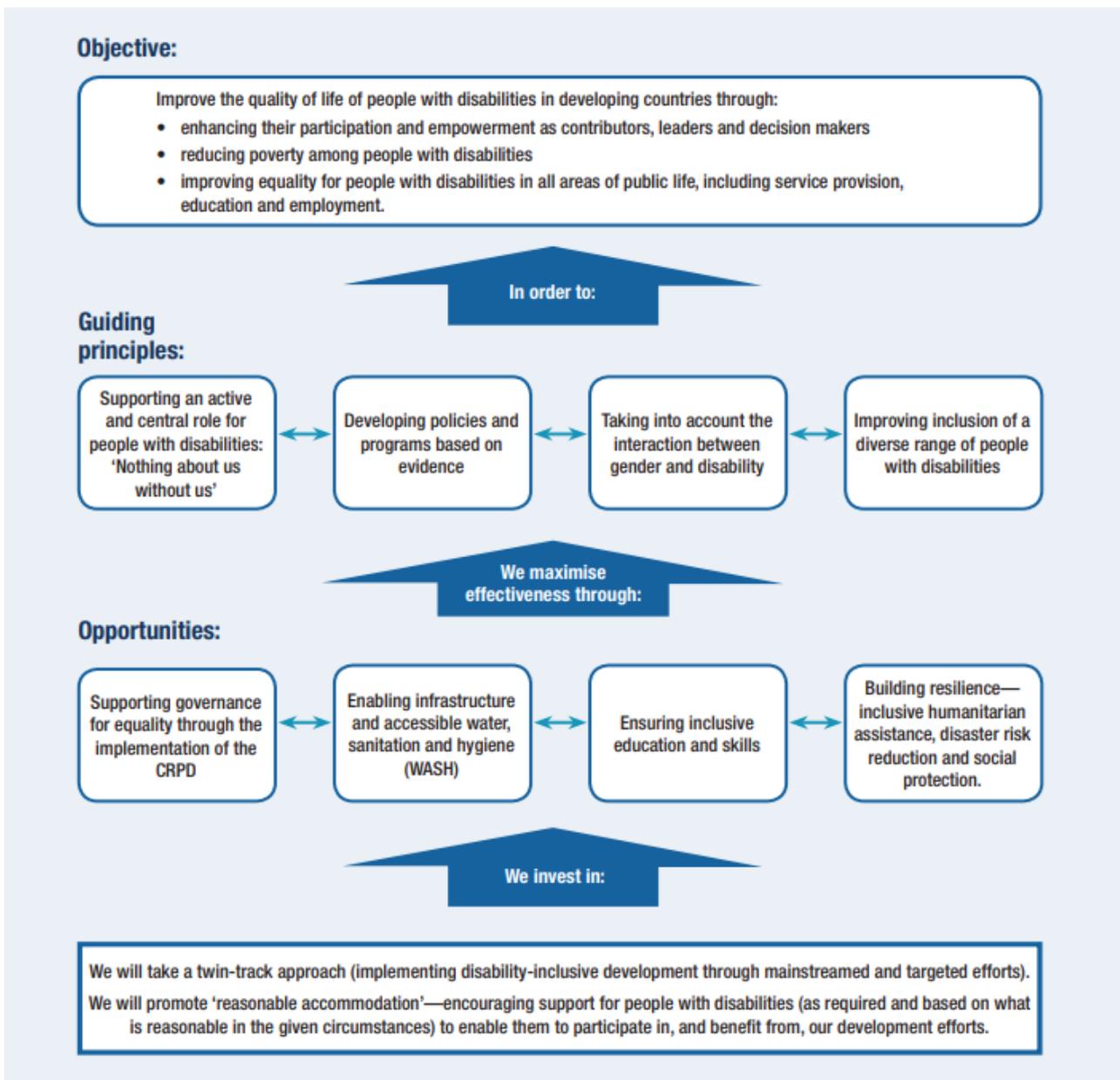
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<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/preamble.html>

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf>

3. **Take into account the interaction of gender and disabilities-** Disability can perpetuate poverty and accentuate gender inequality within a family or household. Ensuring development is inclusive involves encouraging and facilitating data collection in relation to the situation and unique needs of women and girls with disabilities and devising outreach strategies in order to highlight this group to decision-makers.
4. **Improve inclusion of a diverse range of people with disabilities:** Providing greater attention to people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities by promoting awareness to reduce stigma, encouraging partner governments to provide appropriate and accessible support services for basic needs and supporting greater inclusion, participation and empowerment enabling people to become leaders and decision-makers in areas of public life (such as education, health and employment).

This framework underpins *Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia’s aid program* and outlines how Australia will strengthen disability-inclusive development and, in turn, promote our national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, in line with the overall purpose of the aid program.



## 6. Twin-track approach to disability

TLMA adheres to a “twin-track approach,” as outlined in DFAT’s strategy, meaning both mainstreaming of disability into all strategic areas of development practice as well as supporting specific disability initiatives for the empowerment of persons with disabilities.

The work to promote mainstreaming disability will be done at all levels—local, national, and global. At a global level, we will work with other organisations and alliances, such as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Organisations (ILEP) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). This work will be focused very much on the articles of the CRPD, especially Article 32 (International cooperation).

## 7. TLMA commitments

1. TLMA will approach all its work in contributing to the achievement of the TLM’s Global Strategy<sup>6</sup>, upholding the principles of disability inclusion and the twin-track approach.
2. TLMA will promote practical approaches to the inclusion of people with impairments as participants at all levels of the organisation, and as owners of their own development activities through the projects implemented in partnership with developing countries.
3. TLMA will promote the prevention of the causes of disability as a priority for its field programs.
4. TLMA will commit to working towards having an accessible office environment and working with partners also towards this end.
5. TLMA will monitor and evaluate the empowerment of people with disabilities through our international programs.

## 8. Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed in 5 years.

### Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary
5.0	27/02/2018	Nerida Collard	New draft created for next revision
5.1	25/05/2018	Shelley-Ann D’Arcy	Review and update in accordance with latest DFAT policy guidance and Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030

### Document Approval History

Version	Date	Approved by
1.0	10 March 2003	TLMA Board
2.0	May 2008	TLMA Board
3.0	February 2010	TLMA Board
4.0	5 May 2014	TLMA Board
5.1	25 June 2028	TLMA Board

<sup>6</sup> Available online at <https://www.leprosymission.org/about-us/vision-mission-values-and-priorities>