

Research Briefing
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Disability, development and UK aid

Summary

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates around [1 billion people](#) live with some form of disability worldwide, making up around 15% of the population. 80% of disabled people live in [developing countries](#), according to the UN. An estimated [19% of women over 18 have a disability](#), compared 12% of men—this differential is associated with greater male [access to education and employment](#).

Globally, disabled people are more likely to face [significant disadvantage](#) compared to those who are not disabled, and are more likely to experience [poorer socio-economic situations](#) due to greater challenges in accessing [education, services and employment](#), and higher rates of poverty. However, many aid projects are not specifically aimed at disability inclusion, leading to fears disabled people are often [left behind in aid spending](#).

In 2018, the UK's Department for International Development, now merged into the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), launched a [disability inclusion strategy](#), which originally ran until 2023. Its aims included improving education results for disabled children and doubling the proportion of UK aid programmes that are disability-inclusive by 2023.

In 2022, FCDO launched a [new disability strategy](#), running from 2022 to 2030. It identifies several areas of intervention, including education, health, social protection, climate change, and economic empowerment. The strategy will

be monitored using several metrics, including reducing the proportion of people with disabilities living in poverty in certain countries and increasing the number of girls with disabilities in education.

This briefing describes specific international development needs for disabled people, with a focus on poverty and the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. It also covers the UK's aid strategy, spending on improving disability inclusion worldwide, and the effectiveness of UK aid efforts.

1 Poverty and disability

Poverty and disability [are often mutually reinforcing](#), particularly for working-age adults. A lack of access to healthcare, sanitation and nutrition increases the risk of disability. Equally, disability can lead to increased exclusion from work, education, and healthcare, and incur higher costs to access services.¹

Poverty data disaggregated by disability at the country-level is not widespread, meaning estimates of prevalence are based on surveys and projections.²

Data published by the Disability Data Portal shows that in eleven surveyed low-and lower-middle income economies, such as Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, a greater proportion of those with disabilities were [living below national poverty lines](#). In the case of Bangladesh, this was 28% of disabled people, compared to 24% of those with none, and 81% in Zambia compared to 73%.³

Access to social protection systems, education and employment are important tools to prevent and escape poverty, we discuss each of these in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, below.

¹ L. Banks et al, [Poverty and disability in low- and middle- income countries: A systematic review](#), PLoS One, 12, 2017

² UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [Ending poverty and hunger for all persons with disabilities](#) (infographic), 12 November 2019, accessed 3 December 2021, p1

³ Disability Data Portal, [Country comparison view: Living below the national poverty line](#), accessed 3 December 2021

2

Coronavirus has exacerbated existing inequalities

As a group, disabled people have been some of the [most vulnerable to the health effects of the coronavirus pandemic](#) and its secondary impacts, such as reduced access to services.⁴

Much global data is [not disaggregated by disability](#). This means research often relies on estimates and surveys and it's difficult to see how people with different types of disabilities are affected. Different definitions of disability may also be used from study to study.⁵

The sections below focus on five topics which, as a group, disabled people have been at greater risk of worldwide during the pandemic.

The coronavirus pandemic is not the first time that these inequalities and risks have been illustrated on a large scale during a public health crisis: Research on the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, from 2014 to 2016, for example, also found that disabled people were more likely to lose access to services, report exclusion from public health messaging, and experience a rise in discrimination.⁶ Natural disasters also have a [disproportionate effect on disabled people](#), who often are at higher risk of death and injury, and the economic after-effects of such events.⁷

2.1

Contracting Covid-19

The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) considers disabled people are generally at higher risk of contracting coronavirus due to difficulties in accessing health information, and barriers to implementing hygiene and social distancing measures.⁸

A 2021 study commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID) found that disabled people globally have often been excluded from government planning and the delivery of responses to the pandemic. Public

⁴ UN, [A disability inclusive response to Covid-19](#), May 2020, accessed 1 December 2021

⁵ Development Initiatives, [Generating disability statistics](#), September 2020, accessed 1 December 2021

⁶ M. Kett et al, [The Ebola crisis and people with disabilities' access to healthcare and government services in Liberia](#), International Journal for Equity in Health, 20, 2021, Leonard Cheshire, [Impact of the 2013-2016 Western Africa Ebola epidemic on people with disabilities](#), both accessed 2 December 2021

⁷ Overseas Development Institute, [Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction: Overcoming barriers to progress](#), 23 July 2018, accessed 2 December 2021

⁸ WHO, [Disability considerations during the Covid-19 outbreak](#), 26 March 2020, p1, accessed 1 December 2021

health messaging, in particular, [was often not accessible](#) in the first months of the pandemic.⁹

Many disabled people are also reliant on others to collect water for their households. One study in Bangladesh, India, Malawi, and Cameroon found, for example, that this was the case for [between 23% and 80% of the disabled people surveyed](#).¹⁰

Disabled people are also more likely to be older, poorer, and experience comorbidities, which are associated with a greater risk of severe effects from coronavirus.¹¹

Many countries do not record the disability status of those who contract coronavirus. However, in the UK, the Office for National Statistics estimated the risk of death involving the disease from January to November 2020 was [3.1 times higher for more-disabled men and 3.5 times higher for more-disabled women](#), compared to non-disabled men and women.¹²

Unicef has called for more disability-inclusive data to be collected during the pandemic. It argues this will break the “cycle of invisibility,” and allow civil society and governments to better understand, and respond to, the effects the pandemic on disabled people.¹³ Its report, [Producing disability-inclusive data](#) (July 2020) provides more information.¹⁴

2.2 Reduced access to services

The WHO considers disabled people to be at greater risk of developing severe disease due to [barriers in accessing services and healthcare](#).¹⁵

Prior to the pandemic, the WHO’s [World report on disability](#) (2011), which remains an important resource on the experiences and rights of disabled people worldwide, found that a greater proportion of disabled people have

⁹ Social Development Direct, [Inclusive futures brief: Experiences of people with disabilities and organisations of people with disabilities during the Covid-19 pandemic](#), 2021, accessed 2 December 2021

¹⁰ I. Mactaggart et al, [Access to water and sanitation among people with disabilities](#), British Medical Journal, 8, June 2018, accessed 1 December 2021

¹¹ T. Shakespeare et al, [Triple jeopardy: Disabled people and the Covid-19 pandemic](#), The Lancet, 10282, April 2021, accessed 1 December 2021

¹² Office for National Statistics, [Updated estimates of coronavirus \(Covid-19\) related deaths by disability status, England: 24 January to 20 November 2020](#), 11 February 2021, accessed 1 December 2021. The ONS defines “more disabled” as respondents to the 2011 census that reported their day-to-day activities were limited “a lot,” in contrast to those who replied they were limited “a little.”

¹³ Unicef, [Collecting data in the age of Covid-19: Will persons with disabilities be left out?](#), July 2020, accessed 2 December 2021

¹⁴ Unicef, [Producing disability-inclusive data](#), July 2020, accessed 2 December 2021

¹⁵ WHO, [Disability considerations during the Covid-19 outbreak](#), 26 March 2020, p1; International Centre for Evidence in Disability, [The missing billion](#), July 2019 both accessed 1 December 2021

sought access health care than people who are not disabled, and a greater proportion have been turned down. Costs, lack of relevant services, and challenges in accessing transportation were the three most-cited reasons.¹⁶

For example, the WHO found that more disabled women aged 50 to 59 in surveyed low-income countries had sought outpatient care than non-disabled women (67% versus 52%), but [a larger proportion had also been turned down](#): 7% versus 4%.¹⁷

According to a WHO survey of 135 countries and territories between January and March 2021, [94% reported some degree of disruption to their health services](#) over the time period. Major causes of the disruption included supply-chain and work-force interruptions, and fewer patients visiting due to fear of the virus and greater financial difficulties.¹⁸

The survey found that services for children and adults with mental health conditions, disabilities, and dementia were [disrupted in 45% and 48% of countries](#), respectively.¹⁹

2.3

Socio-economic disadvantage

Disabled people have typically faced greater barriers in accessing employment and social protection, making them particularly vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic on the economy and work.

In 2020, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that [only one in three disabled people were employed on average worldwide](#)—with even lower rates for disabled women.²⁰ Globally, disabled people are also more likely to be [employed in the ‘informal economy’](#), meaning their employment is often precarious and not recognised by the state.²¹

Take up of social protection is low—in 2020, the ILO estimated only [34% of those with severe disabilities received disability benefits](#) worldwide, and was as low as 9% in low-income countries.²²

¹⁶ WHO, [World report on disability](#), 2011, pp62-3

¹⁷ WHO, [World report on disability](#), 2011, p62

¹⁸ WHO, [Second round of the national pulse survey on continuity of essential health services during the Covid-19 pandemic](#), 22 April 2021, p5, accessed 1 December 2021

¹⁹ WHO, [Tracking continuity of essential health services during the Covid-19 pandemic, January to March 2021](#), accessed 1 December 2021

²⁰ ILO, [How disability affects labour market outcomes](#), 3 December 2020, accessed 30 November 2021

²¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [Disability and development report](#), 2018, p155, accessed 30 November 2021

²² ILO, [World social protection report 2020-2022: Social protection at the crossroads: In pursuit of a better future](#), 1 September 2021, pp46, 145, accessed 30 November 2021

The ILO also found that governments were recognising the effect of the pandemic on disabled people. As of May 2021, social protection measures introduced in response to the coronavirus pandemic [explicitly referenced disabled people](#) in 98 countries (44% of total), up from 60 in May 2020. Note these figures do not include measures which may have benefitted disabled people but did not reference them.²³

2.4 Exclusion from education

Prior to the pandemic, the rate of disabled children out of school tended to be higher than children with no disabilities in many developing countries.

Based on a UN survey of 41 developing countries in 2018, an average of 87% of those aged 15 to 29 with no disabilities had attended at least one stage of school, [compared to 75% of those with disabilities](#).²⁴

In 2021, Unicef estimated that around 19% of children with functional difficulties were [not attending primary school](#) in nine developing countries (including Bangladesh and Pakistan), compared to 13% of those with none.²⁵

Disabled children were [considered some of the most vulnerable to school closures](#) made in response to the pandemic.²⁶ In the Spring of 2020, [around 180 countries temporarily closed their schools](#), affecting 94% of children globally.²⁷

Their increased vulnerability is due to the interaction of disability with other forms of exclusion, such as poverty. Households with disabled children, particularly rural and poorer ones, are [less likely to have access to books and basic sanitation](#), according to Unicef surveys.²⁸

²³ ILO, [Social protection measures for persons with disabilities and their families in response to the Covid-19 crisis: An updated overview of trends](#), June 2021, p4, accessed 30 November 2021

²⁴ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [Disability and development report](#), 2018, pp76-7, accessed 30 November 2021

²⁵ Unicef, [Seen, counted, include: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#), November 2021, p73, accessed 30 November 2021

²⁶ World Bank, [Pivoting to inclusion: Leveraging lessons from the Covid-19 crisis for learners with disabilities](#), 27 July 2020, accessed 30 November 2021

²⁷ World Bank, [Learners with disabilities and Covid-19 school closures](#), September 2021, accessed 30 November 2021

²⁸ Unicef, [Seen, counted, include: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#), November 2021, p162, accessed 30 November 2021

2.5

Domestic violence and abuse

Domestic violence and abuse are often underreported, making trends difficult to establish.

In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that, across their lifetime, around a third of women globally are [subject to either physical or sexual violence](#).²⁹ In 2019, the UN estimated 243 million women and girls aged 15 to 49 had been [subject to physical and/or sexual violence](#) over the previous year by an intimate partner.³⁰

In 2020, UN Women described a “[shadow pandemic](#),” to that of coronavirus, with rates of domestic violence reportedly increasing in some countries, due to stay-at-home restrictions, and rising health and financial concerns.³¹

Data for violence and abuse against disabled people has not been published. However, in 2017, the UN cited research suggesting disabled women and girls [experience domestic violence at twice the rate of other women](#), and experience violence specifically because of their disability.³²

Further reading on disabled people and the pandemic

- Social Development Direct, [Disability inclusion helpdesk](#) (regularly updated). Includes UK Government-funded studies of disability and the pandemic. Easy-read versions are also published.
- UN Population Fund, [The impact of Covid-19 on women and girls with disabilities](#), June 2021
- International Disability Alliance, [A report on the social protection response to Covid-19 for persons with disabilities, South Asian region](#), February 2021
- UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, [Covid-19 and the rights of persons with disabilities](#) (PDF, 936KB), April 2020
- UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [Five things to know about living with a disability during Covid-19](#), undated

²⁹ World Health Organization, [Devastatingly pervasive: 1 in 3 women globally experience violence](#), 9 March 2021

³⁰ UN Women, [Covid-19 and ending violence against women and girls](#), 2021, p1, accessed 1 December 2021

³¹ UN Women, [The shadow pandemic: violence against women and girls and Covid-19](#), 6 April 2020, accessed 1 December 2021

³² UN, [Situation of women and girls with disabilities and the status of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and the optional protocol thereto](#), 2017, para 21, accessed 1 December 2021

3

UK aid strategy for disabled people

2018 strategy

In 2018, the Department for International Development (DFID) published its [disability inclusion strategy](#). This has been adopted by its successor department, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and runs until 2023.³³

The launch of the strategy followed calls in 2014 from the International Development Committee for DFID to better [prioritise disability inclusion](#) in its aid work.³⁴

The strategy sets out [four priority policy areas](#): Inclusive education, social protection, economic empowerment, and humanitarian action, and three cross-cutting areas: Tackling stigma and discrimination, empowering girls and women with disabilities, and access to assistive technology.³⁵

Targets in the strategy include [doubling the proportion of programmes that are disability inclusive by 2023](#), as tracked in the UK's reporting of aid spending to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).³⁶ DFID published a delivery plan for the strategy with a range of targets, including reaching up to 18,000 disabled girls through the Leave No Girl Behind strand of the Girls Education Challenge programme.³⁷

2022 strategy

In February 2022, the FCDO launched its new [disability inclusion and rights strategy](#), to cover the period from 2022 to 2030. The Department says it seeks to promote greater rights, voice, choice, and visibility for disabled people.³⁸

It identifies several areas of intervention, including education, health, social protection, climate change, and economic empowerment.³⁹

The strategy will be monitored using several metrics, including reducing the proportion of people with disabilities living in poverty in certain countries,

³³ FCDO, [Disability inclusion strategy 2018 to 2023](#), updated 11 November 2020, accessed 30 November 2021

³⁴ International Development Committee, [Disability and development](#), 1 April 2014, accessed 1 December 2021, para 25

³⁵ FCDO, [Disability inclusion strategy 2018 to 2023](#), updated 11 November 2020, accessed 30 November 2021, section 4

³⁶ FCDO, [Disability inclusion strategy 2018 to 2023](#), updated 11 November 2020, accessed 30 November 2021, section 4

³⁷ FCDO, [DFID's disability inclusion strategy delivery plan](#), updated 11 November 2020, accessed 3 December 2021

³⁸ FCDO, [Disability inclusion and rights strategy, 2022 to 2030](#), 16 February 2022

³⁹ FCDO, [Disability inclusion and rights strategy, 2022 to 2030](#), 16 February 2022, p7

improving their employment rate, increasing the number of girls with disabilities in education, and the number of disabled people with access to social protection and humanitarian support (e.g food, cash).⁴⁰

Diplomatic efforts

In 2018, the UK Government co-hosted the first [Global Disability Summit](#) with Kenya and the International Disability Alliance.⁴¹

The summit resulted in 170 commitments by governments and other organisations [to strengthen disability inclusion](#).⁴² Commitments by the UK included using aid to strengthen inclusive education and increasing funding to reduce violence against women and girls with disabilities.⁴³

A further global disability summit was [held in February 2022](#).⁴⁴ The UK made 18 additional commitments at the summit. These included:

- Integrating disability inclusion across its work on health, education, and other priority areas, including with multilateral organisations (eg World Bank).
- Establishing better community engagement with disabled people to increase their visibility and role in decision-making.
- Extending the Women's Integrated Sexual Health programme to help disabled people realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Call for further action to promote the rights of children with disabilities across multilateral investments.⁴⁵

4

How effective is UK aid spending?

Both the International Development Committee (IDC) and Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) have published evaluations on UK aid spending and the Government's strategy on disability.

⁴⁰ FCDO, [Disability inclusion and rights strategy, 2022 to 2030](#), 16 February 2022, p39

⁴¹ FCDO, [Global disability summit: Commitments](#), updated 3 August 2018, accessed 1 December 2021

⁴² DFID, [Global disability summit sparks 170 commitments to tackle discrimination and stigma against people with disabilities](#), 24 July 2018

⁴³ DFID and FCDO, [National governments: Global disability summit commitments](#), 23 July 2021

⁴⁴ International Disability Alliance, [Global disability summit: 2022](#), 9 June 2021, accessed 3 December 2021

⁴⁵ FCDO, [Global disability summit 2022: New UK commitments to progress the FCDO's work on global disability rights](#), 16 February 2022

ICAI report 2018

While acknowledging that DFID was a “leader” in promoting disability globally, the 2018 report argued the department was [starting from a “low base”](#) in its own work.⁴⁶

As of February 2018, an estimated 22% of DFID’s 1,161 programmes were provisionally marked as supporting disability inclusion, and only six were found to have disability inclusion as their primary objective. While welcoming progress on education as the area of intervention seeing the most advance, the ICAI flagged humanitarian, economic, health and discrimination as areas where greater prioritisation was needed.⁴⁷

In response, DFID cited its forthcoming disability strategy (published later in 2018) and said that [it would increase its work to understand the barriers faced for disabled people](#) in individual countries.⁴⁸ In a follow-up report in 2019, the ICAI welcomed the new strategy as “ambitious,” but raised concerns that insufficient human and financial resources would mean [its targets would be difficult to meet](#).⁴⁹

IDC report, 2019

The IDC welcomed DFID’s 2018 strategy. However, it noted three areas where it had hoped to see specific commitments: Access to universal health coverage, greater awareness of ageing and its interaction with disability, and including those with intellectual disabilities as among those targeted by UK aid.⁵⁰

The Government partially agreed with this criticism but said its priority areas were developed following consultation and where it believed UK aid could have greatest impact.⁵¹

The committee’s report was [debated in Westminster Hall](#) in October 2019.⁵²

Government progress on the 2018 strategy

In November 2020, the FCDO published an update on progress against the 2018 strategy targets. This said that:

⁴⁶ ICAI, [DFID’s approach to disability in development](#), 16 May 2018, accessed 2 December 2021

⁴⁷ ICAI, [DFID’s approach to disability in development](#), 16 May 2018, accessed 2 December 2021

⁴⁸ DFID, [Response to ICAI recommendations on: DFID’s approach to disability in development](#), 27 June 2018, accessed 2 December 2021

⁴⁹ ICAI, [Follow-up: DFID’s approach to disability in development](#), 18 July 2019, accessed 2 December 2021, p7

⁵⁰ IDC, [DFID’s strategy for disability inclusive development](#), HC 1880, July 2019, para 78

⁵¹ DFID, [Response to IDC report on DFID’s strategy for disability inclusive development](#), September 2019

⁵² HC Deb, [31 October 2019](#), c211WH-228WH

- The Girls' education challenge was reaching 100,000 girls with disabilities, including in conflict settings, and an additional 18,000 were being targeted through the specialised Leave no girl behind scheme.
- Data collection was underway to better understand the stigma and discrimination that disabled people face, and how to better include disabled people in humanitarian responses. The report noted that it was “challenging” to collect data on disability.
- The number of DFID programmes with a principal focus on disability inclusion had risen, from 202 (November 2017) to 278 (September 2020). This represented a rise from 19% to 35% of active DFID programmes.⁵³

5 Aid spending on disability

5.1 Recording aid spending on disability inclusion

Globally, the level of official development assistance (ODA) in support of disability inclusion and empowerment is unknown.

ODA refers to aid intended to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries.

Many countries, including the UK, US and EU member states report their aid spending to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2018, the OECD, introduced a disability marker for aid spending.⁵⁴ This allows donor countries to report whether their aid promotes the inclusion and empowerment of disabled people. The proposal was based on suggestions from the UK.⁵⁵

The UK Government says the marker is voluntary.⁵⁶ In 2018, [fewer than 30% of ODA globally was assessed against the marker](#) (1,615 KB, PDF).⁵⁷

⁵³ FCDO, [FCDO's disability update: Progress against DFID's disability strategy for disability inclusive development](#), 11 November 2020, accessed 3 December 2021, pp11, 17, 20, 31, 39

⁵⁴ OECD, [DAC working party on development finance statistics: Proposal to introduce a policy marker](#) [PDF], 18 June 2018 (opens pdf)

⁵⁵ OECD, [DAC working party on development finance statistics: Proposal to introduce a policy marker](#) [PDF], 18 June 2018 (opens pdf), paras 4-5

⁵⁶ FCDO, [FCDO disability update: Progress against DFID's strategy for disability inclusive development](#), November 2020, p31

⁵⁷ Development Initiatives, [Disability-inclusive ODA: Aid data on donors, channels, recipients](#), 3 July 2020, accessed 2 December 2021

Analysis by [Development Initiatives](#), using a keyword search and analysis of aid programmes reported to the OECD, estimated that between 1.3% and 1.9% of aid programmes annually from 2014 to 2018 [had a “significant objective” of assisting or empowering people with disabilities](#).⁵⁸

5.2 UK aid spending and disability

Example programmes

Disability capacity-building programme

With a £25 million budget, the programme runs from 2020 to 2024 and [provides small grants and training](#) for governments, UN agencies, private sector bodies, and disabled persons organisations.⁵⁹

Objectives include growing the number and capability of disability rights movements worldwide and reducing stigma for disabled people.⁶⁰

The UK NGO organisation, Bond, welcomed the creation of the scheme in 2020 to build organisational capacity and skills, but recommended the department put in place transparent monitoring and accountability mechanisms to [ensure it focusses on grassroots disabled people’s organisations](#) (DPOs).⁶¹

Social Development Direct, in a survey of DPOs in Bangladesh, Nigeria and Zimbabwe during the pandemic, found that many continued to be excluded from response planning by governments and that some donors and NGOs ended funding for DPOs early, [causing “dramatic reductions” to their funding](#).⁶² The body recommended donors target a wider range of organisations, and provide more reliable, long-term funding.⁶³

⁵⁸ Development Initiatives, [Disability-inclusive ODA: Aid data on donors, channels, recipients](#), 3 July 2020, accessed 2 December 2021

⁵⁹ FCDO Development Tracker, [Disability capacity building programme](#), accessed 3 December 2021

⁶⁰ FCDO Development Tracker, [Disability capacity building programme: Business case and summary, September 2020](#), accessed 3 December 2021

⁶¹ Bond, [Disability and development group submission to the UK IDC inquiry on UK ODA effectiveness](#), May 2020, accessed 4 December 2021, para 24

⁶² Social Development Direct, [Consequences of exclusion: A situation report on organisations of people with disabilities](#), September 2021, pp10-13

⁶³ Social Development Direct, [Consequences of exclusion: A situation report on organisations of people with disabilities](#), September 2021, pp10-13, p17

Disability inclusive development programme

Running from 2017 to 2023, this £37 million programme intends to establish best practice on [improving inclusion for disabled people](#) in developing countries.⁶⁴

Its 2021 annual review found that the project had reached 169,000 disabled women, girls, and boys through targeted interventions in education, health, and prevention of negative stereotyping, and 1.4 million people with no disabilities in similar areas.⁶⁵

In 2018, the ICAI welcomed the programme as a means of researching what works for disability inclusion, and recommended the government apply any lessons to [mainstream disability in its wider aid programmes](#).⁶⁶

Leaving no-one behind programme, Ghana

This £27 million project, running from 2019 to 2024, seeks to improve the wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes of poor and marginalised people, including those with disabilities and mental health conditions.⁶⁷

Its annual review for 2020 found that 332,000 households had received a cash grant, of whom 17% were disabled people, and over 4 million Ghanaians had been reached with information on mental health topics.⁶⁸

In its 2020 review of UK aid in Ghana, the ICAI noted UK aid successfully [filled a gap in mental health provision](#) in the country.⁶⁹ A Unicef report on the cash-grant programme, the Livelihood empowerment against poverty programme, found that while it reduced poverty, it had [less of a marked impact on illness incidence, nutrition and access to water and sanitation](#).⁷⁰

Girls' education challenge

The [girls' education challenge](#) was launched by the UK in 2012, with the aim of helping a million of the poorest girls receive a good education.⁷¹

As part of the programme, the UK aims to help [100,000 disabled girls receive an education](#) in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone and

⁶⁴ FCDO Development Tracker, [Disability inclusive development programme](#), accessed 3 December 2021

⁶⁵ FCDO Development Tracker, [Disability inclusive development programme: Annual review \(3\)— March 2021](#), accessed 3 December 2021, p12

⁶⁶ ICAI, [DFID's approach to disability in development](#), May 2018

⁶⁷ FCDO Development Tracker, [Leave no-one behind programme in Ghana](#), accessed 3 December 2021

⁶⁸ FCDO Development Tracker, [Leave no-one behind programme in Ghana: Annual review, May 2020](#), accessed 3 December 2021

⁶⁹ ICAI, [The changing nature of UK aid in Ghana](#), 12 February 2020

⁷⁰ Unicef, [Impacts of the Ghana livelihood empowerment against poverty 1,000 programme](#), 20 February 2020, accessed 3 December 2021

⁷¹ Girls' Education challenge, [Homepage](#), accessed 3 December 2021

Zimbabwe.⁷² Support takes the form of catch-up classes, provision of assistive devices, and adolescent sexual reproductive health training.⁷³

UK spending reductions from 2020

In November 2020, the UK Government announced it intended to spend [0.5% of Gross National Income \(GNI\) on ODA in 2021, down from 0.7%](#) in the seven years from 2013. It cited the impact of the pandemic on the UK's public finances and economy.⁷⁴

An unpublished impact assessment of the reductions, written in March 2021, reportedly concluded that this would [result in a “significant reduction” in the number and size of programmes](#) targeted at women, girls, and disabled people.⁷⁵

In January 2021, the FCDO had said disability inclusion would be embedded throughout its aid spending.⁷⁶ In July, the department said its unpublished impact assessment on country-level changes in UK aid spending showed “no evidence” that programmes targeting those with protected characteristics were more likely to be reduced or discontinued than other programmes.⁷⁷

The Treasury forecasts its fiscal tests to restore spending to 0.7% of GNI [will be met in 2024/25](#).⁷⁸

Further reading on disability and aid

- FCDO, [FCDO disability inclusion and rights strategy 2022 to 2030](#), 16 February 2022
- Bond, [Disability inclusion in UK climate change action](#), October 2021
- FCDO, [Disability inclusion strategy 2018 to 2023](#), last updated November 2020 (includes easy-read versions)
- Inclusion International, [Excluded from the excluded: People with intellectual disabilities in \(and out\) of ODA](#), November 2020
- Development Initiatives, [Disability-inclusive ODA: Aid data on donors, channels, recipients](#), July 2020
- Commons International Development Committee, [Department for International Development's work on disability](#), 2019 (includes Government response and audio version of the Committee's report)
- Development Initiatives, [How well is aid targeting disability?](#), 2019

⁷² PQ 17755 [[Education: Children](#)], 23 June 2021

⁷³ Girls' Education Challenge, [Project: Education for life](#), accessed 3 December 2021

⁷⁴ Commons Library, [The 0.7% aid target](#)

⁷⁵ Devex, [UK assessment predicted aid cuts would hurt gender equality programmes](#), 19 November 2021, accessed 2 December 2021

⁷⁶ PQ 133899 [[Overseas aid: Children](#)], 13 January 2021

⁷⁷ PQ 21233 [[Overseas aid](#)], 2 July 2021

⁷⁸ HM Treasury, [Autumn Budget and Spending Review](#), 29 October 2021, accessed 2 December 2021, p7

- UN, [Disability and development report](#), 2018 (includes easy-read summary)
- Independent Commission for Aid Impact, [DFID's approach to disability inclusion](#), May 2018

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