

The logo for the Australian Himalayan Foundation is displayed within a dark grey rectangular box. It features the organization's name in a bold, white, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines: "AUSTRALIAN", "HIMALAYAN", and "FOUNDATION". A stylized yellow mountain range with a sun-like circle above it is positioned between the words "HIMALAYAN" and "FOUNDATION".

**AUSTRALIAN
HIMALAYAN
FOUNDATION**

DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Document Control

ORIGINAL: November 2013

REVIEWED: March 2015, July 2016

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When relevant, this policy and associated documents should be translated into the local language to ensure access to all personnel.

1. INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities are the world's largest minority representing 15% of the population¹. The number of persons with disabilities is dramatically increasing, due to demographic trends and increases in chronic health conditions, among other causes. Almost everyone is likely to experience some form of disability — temporary or permanent — at some point in their life. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others². Disability is extremely diverse. Due to stigma, poor accessibility and discrimination, persons with disabilities are frequently excluded from society, education, employment and development programs. Not only do persons with disabilities experience a disproportionately high level of poverty; being poor increases their chances of having a disability and reduces their access to vital services. This cycle of disability and poverty for persons with disabilities, their families and communities can be very hard to break.³ A lack of government and community support for persons with disabilities imposes additional burdens on families exacerbating existing poverty. Women with disability are also more likely to be victims of discrimination and sexual violence, pushing back progress on gender equality.

India adopted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 2016 and Nepal the Disability Rights Act in 2017. Bhutan however is one of only 10 countries in the world whose Parliament is yet to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Whilst ratification and legislation at the national level is important, how persons with disabilities are included and treated at all levels is just as key. In all countries where AHF works, disability inclusion is not effectively mainstreamed and is often overlooked; few people with disabilities know their rights, and deeply rooted stereotypes towards persons with disabilities still exist.

AHF recognises persons with disabilities as central actors in their lives, and upholds their rights to participate and contribute to society, to enjoy social and economic well-being, to make decisions that affect their lives. Human rights are inalienable rights for all human beings and AHF is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities can access their rights.

AHF endorses the United Nations CRPD as the standard for disability inclusion. The purpose of the CRPD is to:

'...promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.'

This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

AHF Child Safeguarding Policy

¹ Guidance for the Development of a Disability Inclusion Policy, ACFID, 2021

² United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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<https://www.addc.org.au/home/disability-development/disability-and-poverty-cycle/#:~:text=Not%20only%20do%20people%20with,be%20very%20hard%20to%20break.>

AHF Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy

AHF Employee Handbook (Equal Employment Opportunity Policy; Discrimination, harassment and bullying policy)

AHF Communications Policy

2. PURPOSE

As an agency involved in international development, AHF is committed to ensure equality of rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities in its organisation and work.

This Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Policy reflects AHF's commitment to:

- integrating disability-sensitive measures into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of AHF policies and programs;
- providing disability-specific initiatives to support the empowerment of persons with disabilities where possible.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all AHF personnel including Directors, employees, volunteers, consultants and other representatives, as well as in-country partners. As AHF does not directly implement programs, working instead through local implementing partners, the Foundation will work closely with partners to operationalise the principles outlined in this policy.

4. PRINCIPLES

- **Participation:** AHF will follow the principle of "Nothing About Us, Without Us". AHF will consult and involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, and/or their representative organisations in decisions about their lives, in the development and implementation of the programs that we deliver, and in our other activities and internal working practices. We will consider other factors that can compound discrimination or exclusion, such as gender, age, ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation, whether the impairment was acquired at birth or later in life, education and social status.
- **Awareness:** AHF will raise awareness and knowledge to all personnel, partners and other stakeholders for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. We will work to combat stereotypes, prejudices, and harmful practices; and promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities, in the workplace, labour market, and society (CRPD, Article 8). We recognise that persons with disabilities have different lived experiences and comprise different identities, and that they want to be active participants and contributors within their communities.
- **Respect:** AHF will promote respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, as well as respect for inherent dignity,

individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons.

- **Inclusion:** AHF will identify, challenge and remove barriers to access to, participation of and contributions by persons with disabilities in all AHF operations and ensure they equally benefit from them.
- **Comprehensive accessibility⁴:** AHF will take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas (CRPD, Article 9).
- **Universal Design:** AHF will promote the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.⁵
- **Reasonable accommodation:** AHF will make necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments to ensure persons with disabilities can exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (CRPD, Article 2).

5. GUIDELINES

5.1 Organisation-wide

AHF will promote inclusion of people with disabilities in the Foundation's work :

- **Governance:** by encouraging and fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion in every aspect of AHF's work and organisationally, including promoting representation of persons with disabilities in governance and leadership;
- **Human Resources:** *refer to Clause 5.2 below and the AHF Employee Handbook;*
- **Partner and Program Management:** *refer to Clause 5.3 below and the AHF International Program Manual;*
- **Engagement Activities:** *refer to Clause 5.4 below and the AHF Communications Policy.*

AHF will assess its organisational disability inclusive practices periodically, including its partner's practices.

5.2. Human Resources

5.2.1 Recruitment

AHF will provide equal employment and volunteer opportunities through:

⁴ Note: accessibility is not only about physical access. Persons with disabilities have different access requirements, for example, for the deaf, or for persons with sight impairments and other impairments.

⁵ This does not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

- a disability inclusive recruitment process;
- reasonable accommodations to enable the employment and engagement of people with disability;
- a work environment free from discrimination.

5.2.2 Induction and training

At induction, all employees and volunteers will be made aware of AHF's DID Policy and procedures, and how to lodge a complaint or raise a concern. The induction process is detailed in the AHF Employee Handbook.

Training in disability awareness and disability inclusive programming will be made available to staff and volunteers on a regular basis.

5.2.3 Support to managers and wider staff

AHF will strive to build skills and confidence of managers and wider staff to recruit and support, train, and mentor appropriately skilled people with disability as staff and volunteers.

An AHF disability focal person will coordinate the implementation of the policy.

5.3 Partner and program management

AHF is committed to ensuring that disability inclusion mechanisms are embedded in its programs and partnership development.

- AHF's DID policy will be promoted and related actions undertaken throughout its work with project partners when:
 - conducting due diligence assessment, undertaken prior to partnering with an organisation and regularly during the partnership;
 - developing project design;
 - appraising the project;
 - monitoring of project, partner and risks (particularly for children living with a disability);
 - reporting of project;
 - developing partner capacity building plans where relevant;
 - evaluating projects.
- AHF will consult with persons with disabilities and conduct contextual analysis of the barriers to social inclusion and participation to inform programming and partnership development.
- AHF will strive to promote full and meaningful participation and representation of persons with disabilities in the Foundation's international programs, ensure they benefit on an equal basis and participate in decision-making about the initiatives that affect them.
- AHF will also support disability inclusion training, advocate for equitable access for persons

with disabilities and promote attitudinal and behavioural change in order to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities.

- AHF recognizes that children with disabilities can be particularly vulnerable. AHF will use various approaches to working with children with disabilities, including strengthening the capacity of partners on inclusive education; raising awareness about children with disabilities' rights; training teachers to consider the special education needs of children with disabilities; promoting a positive attitude of parents and communities towards children with disabilities; and facilitating inclusion and participation in ongoing development processes. AHF will ensure the protection of children with disability from abuse and exploitation in accordance with the AHF Child Safeguarding Policy.
- As much as possible, AHF will promote universal design for all infrastructure work supported by AHF and strive to involve persons with disabilities and/or their representative organisations in assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation of infrastructure work.
- Disability-disaggregated data will be collected to understand the extent to which AHF is reaching the most marginalised in its programs and how the policy is being applied.
- AHF will conduct regular assessment of progress in promoting empowerment of persons with disabilities in its program and monitor that the projects it supports does not inadvertently do harm or unintentionally exclude persons with disabilities.
- AHF acknowledges the particular impact that disasters have on persons with disabilities. AHF will ensure that emergency responses recognise and respond to their enhanced vulnerability during disasters.
- AHF will ensure that feedback and complaints mechanisms are in place for persons with disabilities to report.
- AHF will promote consultation with and participation of Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD).

5.4 Australian Engagement Activities

AHF conducts education, fundraising and marketing activities to raise awareness, funds and engagement in our work. AHF representatives, personnel and partners will at all times portray persons with disabilities in a respectful, positive and respectful manner.

Representatives and personnel should be guided and bound by AHF's Communications Policy and the associated procedures at all times when taking photographs, including obtaining genuine, informed consent for the use of images and stories from people in vulnerable circumstances and persons with disabilities.

AHF will also strive to implement accessible communications to meet persons with disabilities' right to communicate freely and without barriers.

AHF will ensure accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities is well considered in all AHF events and activities.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All AHF stakeholders, including partners, have a responsibility to create a disability inclusive environment at AHF and within our partner organisations.

6.1 Board and CEO

The Board and CEO will publicly commit to disability inclusion, champion persons with disabilities' rights and ensure that supervision and people management have a disability inclusion focus.

It is the responsibility of the Board and CEO to ensure effective disability inclusion mechanisms across all AHF areas of operations. This includes partner organisations.

6.2 Managers

Managers and senior employees are responsible for ensuring that AHF's DID policy and procedures are understood and implemented by the employees, other personnel and volunteers under their supervision and responsibility, and the partner organisations with whom they work. They are also responsible for the creation and maintenance of an environment which promotes the rights of persons with disabilities

6.3 Employee and volunteers

All employees and volunteers have the responsibility to ensure compliance with AHF's DID Policy. Employees in charge of a particular project will ensure partners are aware of the policy and will assist the partner in implementing the policy.

6.4 Consultants and other representatives

Consultants and other representatives will be expected to comply with AHF's DID Policy.

6.5 In-country partners

If in-country partners do not have a DID policy or if the policy does not reflect the same principles as AHF's policy, they will be expected to show their agreement to adhere to AHF's DID policy. AHF will also support partners to develop their own and provide training and mentoring.

7. REVIEW OF POLICY

AHF's DID Policy will be formally reviewed every five years to assess its relevance and effectiveness and ensure it meets current standards.

8. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

- Development for All 2015– 2020 (extended to 2021): Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia’s aid program, DFAT, May 2015
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Optional Protocol, United Nations, 2008
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Incheon Strategy
- ACFID Code of Conduct
- Guidance for the Development of a Disability Inclusion Policy, ACFID, 2021

Australian legislation

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)

Regulatory documents and standards

- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standard 2010 (Cth).

ANNEX A KEY DEFINITIONS

Disability: is a complex and multidimensional issue. Disability includes long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that can, in interaction with various barriers, hinder a person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Barriers can be attitudinal and/or societal (such as stigma), physical and/or environmental (such as stairs), policy and/or systemic. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) does not define 'disability' per se but notes the following: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." (Article 1)

In ACFID Code of Conduct:

IMPAIRMENT + BARRIER = DISABILITY

Barriers: Barriers prevent persons with disabilities from enjoying their rights. People with different identities and different impairments will experience very different types of barriers. Barriers can be grouped into four categories: physical and transportation, communication, institutional, and attitudinal.

- **Physical and transportation barriers:** buildings, schools, clinics, water pumps, public transport, roads, baths, etc.
- **Information and communication barriers:** including information and communications technologies and systems. This also includes written and spoken information such as media, flyers, Internet, and community meetings.
- **Institutional barriers:** including both legislation that discriminates against people with disabilities and/or an absence of legislation that might otherwise provide an enabling framework. It also includes the absence of policies and budgets that support access and inclusion.
- **Attitudinal barriers:** including negative stereotyping of people with a disability, social stigma, harmful social norms, and other forms of overt discrimination.⁶

Impairments refer specifically to a person's physiological condition, structure or mechanism that is lacking or does not fully or effectively function. Impairments may be long-term or short-term, and may be physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual, mental or other physiological conditions.

Inclusion: is the desired state that all people, including people with disabilities, equally participate in and benefit from policies and programs in political, economic and societal spheres without barriers or discrimination.

⁶ Source: Guidance for the Development of a Disability Inclusion Policy, ACFID, 2021