



(Dis)ability and Global Development

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From the Disability and Global Development Project¹

Steve Estey, Council of Canadians with Disabilities
Bonnie Brayton, DisAbled Women's Network
Dr. Deborah Stienstra, Disability Studies, University of Manitoba
Dr. David Black, Political Science, Dalhousie University
Dr. Stephen Baranyi, International Development, uOttawa
Pamela Johnson, Coady Institute, St. Francis Xavier University
Shawna O'Hearn, Dalhousie University
Julianne Acker-Verney, Mount Saint Vincent University
Mathieu Simard, Rehabilitation International

Résumé

En 2010 le Canada a ratifié la Convention des Nations Unies relative aux droits des personnes handicapées (CDPH), s'engageant ainsi à assurer l'égalité des droits de plus de cinq millions de Canadiens et d'un milliard de personnes handicapées à travers le monde. Dans son premier rapport sur la mise en œuvre de la convention, en 2014, Ottawa a documenté les mesures prises par nos gouvernements, y compris les \$350 millions investis dans des projets internationaux pour lesquels le handicap était un objectif principal ou important. Malgré ces progrès, nos actions internationales n'ont pas permis de positionner le Canada comme meneur dans ce domaine, comparé à nos pairs de l'OCDE.

Les recherches scientifiques ainsi que l'expérience des organisations de personnes handicapées, suggèrent cinq démarches qu'Ottawa pourrait entreprendre pour repositionner le Canada comme chef de file sur ce dossier. 1. S'impliquer auprès des organisations des personnes handicapées au Canada et dans le monde. 2. Utiliser la CDPH de l'ONU et l'approche basée sur le genre pour orienter la mise en œuvre des objectifs de développement durable. 3. Coopérer de façon innovatrice avec les pays partenaires prioritaires. 4. Intégrer et partager les bonnes pratiques au Canada et à l'international en ce qui a trait aux articles 11 et 32 de la CDPH des Nations unies. 5. Appuyer l'innovation, la recherche et la diffusion de connaissances dans ce domaine.

¹ For more details on the project, see the "Who are we?" annex.

Background

It has been almost ten years since Canada joined the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), recognizing the equal rights of the one billion people with disabilities around the world. Well before that in 1996, Canada launched the process to negotiate the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention; that was the first international arms treaty to explicitly recognize the rights of people with disabilities with its Article 6 on victim assistance. Partly on that basis, **in 1998 then-Prime Minister Chretien accepted the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award recognizing Canada's international leadership in the area of disability rights.**

In its first report on Canada's compliance with the UN CRPD, the government documented important measures implemented at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. In the international realm, it noted that Canada was "an active co-sponsor and supporter of resolutions relating to disability rights". In line with Articles 11 and 32 of UN CRPD on humanitarian assistance and international cooperation, it noted that between 2001 and 2011, Canada "invested approximately \$350 million in international projects for which disability was a principal or significant focus, such as issues associated with landmines, natural disasters, discrimination and poor health and nutrition."²

Despite those significant contributions, Canada's international actions have since fallen behind the innovation curve in this domain. Over the past ten years, donors such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Australian Aid (AUSAID) and the World Bank have adopted new policy frameworks, partnered with disabled persons' organisations and advanced towards rights-based approaches in their programming. In contrast, our research³ suggests that Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and its predecessors:

- Partly disengaged from policy dialogue and dynamic partnerships with disabled persons' organisations, except as service-delivery agencies.
- Did not adequately update their policies or programming to reflect new international thinking – namely the shift from a prevention and rehabilitation approach to one that enhances the capacities of people with disabilities to co-construct rights-based, systemic and sustainable approaches to development.
- Missed important opportunities to move beyond short-term projects by integrating disability as a strategic priority for cooperation in partner countries, like Haiti.
- Did not rigorously evaluate Canadian programming in this area.

The International Assistance Review Consultation Document does not explicitly address issues of disability. Nonetheless, we have used key concepts in that document – such as development effectiveness, innovation, partnerships, learning from evidence and achieving sustainable results -- to frame this policy brief.

² GOC. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, First Report of Canada. 2014.

³ Deborah Stienstra, "Lost without way-finders? Disability, gender and Canadian foreign and development policy" in Rebecca Tiessen and Stephen Baranyi eds. *Omissions and Obligations: Canada's Ambiguous Actions on Gender Equality*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming in 2016.

What could Canada do to renew its actions on disability and global development?

Our research and the experience accumulated by civil society and disabled persons' organisations, suggest five measures that Ottawa could take to position Canada as a leader once again in this domain:

1. Engage with disabled peoples' organizations in Canada and around the world.

Since 2006, the Canadian government abandoned some disabled persons' organisations (DPOs) by discontinuing their funding at home and abroad, and shifting responsibility for supporting people with disabilities to families or charities. That approach contributes to the erosion of the capacities of people with disabilities and their organizations. Canada has the opportunity to bring key DPOs back to the table, with appropriate resources to support their effective participation. That will ensure that decisions about how to ensure inclusion and well-being are made with those most affected by changes and with the fewest resources. As the disability movement says, "Nothing about us, without us!"

For example, Ottawa could engage with Canadian DPOs during the review of Canada's first report to the UN CRPD Expert Committee in Geneva, in 2016-2017. Canada could use this opportunity to exchange views on how to better meet our obligations under the Convention, especially in relations to Articles 11 and 32, key areas for Canada's humanitarian and longer-term development assistance.

Canada could also invest in southern or north-south DPO networks such as the Africa Disability Forum. This representative, inclusive, democratic, Pan-African organization of some 50 continental, sub-regional, and national DPO federations aims to amplify the voice of Africans with disabilities and build the capacity of their organizations.⁴ A relatively small and sustained investment of resources from the Canadian government (similar to the investments made in Disabled Peoples' International by Canada after its founding in 1981) could make a vital contribution to building momentum for this and similar initiatives. It would also educate Canadian state and non-state policy makers about the needs and priorities of the estimated 180 million persons with disabilities in Africa.

2. Use the UN CRPD and Canada's Gender-based Framework as way-finders to implement the Sustainable Development Goals – in Canada and abroad.

The DGD project's most recent analysis of CIDA funded disability-related programming⁵ demonstrates that most projects take prevention or rehabilitation approaches to disability rather than one that supports human rights or the capacity building of people with disabilities. Such projects have their value, but they disproportionately benefit health care providers, drug companies or rehabilitation services. Too often, they do not necessarily address the poverty, violence, and stigma experienced by women, men, girls, and boys with disabilities nor do they

⁴ David Black and Jacqueline De Matos Ala "Building a more inclusive South Africa: progress and pitfalls in disability rights and inclusion" *Third World Thematics*, forthcoming in 2016.

⁵ Deborah Stienstra and Steve Estey, "Canada's responses to disability and global development" *Third World Thematics*, forthcoming in 2016.

enhance the human rights of people with disabilities. They do not necessarily enable people with disabilities to contribute to, and be seen to be contributing to their country's economy or society. Shifting the balance of funds to increase employment and education, enhance public security, adapt public facilities like hospitals and schools to ensure access, and transform the image of people with disabilities into able citizens -- would do a lot more to build inclusive societies.

Disability is explicitly mentioned in five of the 17 SDGs. Together with Articles 11 and 32 of the UN Convention, these instruments provide indicators for disability-inclusive sustainable development and the full realization of the rights of people with disabilities.

The UN CRPD reminds us that people with disabilities are diverse – in terms of age, gender, race, class and other identities. Using the Government of Canada's Gender-based Policy Framework, and being mindful of the UN CRPD's Article 6, which helps give particular focus to the situation of women with disabilities while addressing these intersecting effects, can help us to understand and address those differences.

For example, when developing projects to support maternal health care for women, we could start by ensuring that disabled women's organisations are involved in the design stage⁶. With them, we could ask the following questions: Are there enough affordable transportation options to the physical location of maternal health care services, particularly for poor women with disabilities? How can the adaptations required to ensure access for those women increase access for other extremely poor and marginalised citizens? Without asking these types of questions and using these methodologies, many Sustainable Development Goals will remain unattainable, especially in the South.

3. Explore new ways of cooperating with priority partner countries.

For example, despite structural obstacles compounded by the devastating earthquake in 2010, Haiti has made significant advances on disability policy and practice over the past decade.⁷ This example presents strategic opportunities for Canadian support.

In reviewing its cooperation with Haiti, Canada could collaborate with national agencies to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are advanced in priority areas for cooperation -- like sustainable economic growth, health, security and gender equality.

Canada could also provide technical and financial support directly to Bureau du secrétariat d'État pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées (BSEIPH) and to key Haitian civil society organisations to help them fulfill their role in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in public policy and in the economy.

⁶ Susan Manning, Pamela Johnson and Julianne Acker-Verney. "Uneasy intersections: Critical understandings of gender and disability in global development." *Third World Thematics*, forthcoming in 2016.

⁷ Stephen Baranyi and Ilionor Louis. "(Dis)ability and development in Haiti: Beyond one-dimensional views." *Third World Thematics*, forthcoming in 2016.

4. Learn from other leaders about their strategies to implement their responsibilities under Articles 11 and 32 of the UN CRPD.

For example, the UK has been taking a programmatic approach to funding disability rights in the South for over 20 years; on that basis, it recently introduced a Disability Policy Framework. Australia recently refocused its aid to align with the UN CRPD⁸. The European Union is considering a harmonized policy on disability-inclusive development, and mainstreaming disabilities in all of its policies and programmes, complete with mechanisms for recording disability-disaggregated data. The Pacific Disability Forum has done much to build the capacity of DPOs and to improve the lives of persons with disabilities through advocacy.⁹

UN CRPD and SDG processes present opportunities to re-engage with innovative donors in redefining the way we practice international development cooperation. Engaging with those innovative approaches initiatives has the potential to make better use of Canadian resources, while adding significant value to these collective efforts. Sharing lessons gained from Canadian experience may also benefit other countries and agencies.

5. Foster and utilise new policy research.

The current Canadian government's commitment to evidence-based policy-making is commendable. To implement that commitment in this area of international cooperation, Global Affairs Canada will need to harness emerging research much more dynamically.

For example, GAC could commission a review of its international assistance policies and programming from a disability rights angle, including a comparison of Canada's performance to that of leading OECD peers. Issues that merit study include: What are the results of more participatory approaches involving DPOs, in different countries of the South? What are the results of more programmatic approaches in different sectors? What are promising approaches to public-private financing in this domain? How can hybrid, learning-oriented networks of institutions be nurtured in this complex area? **GAC should seek out and employ new evidence-generating research in this area, including peer-reviewed publications by Canadian institutions and their Southern partners.**

Addressing poverty, and ensuring food security, health and well-being and education, as outlined in the SDGs, will require that those who have been left behind are included. As our research illustrates, with some exceptions, women, men, girls and boys with disabilities are generally been left behind in global development. When governments (re)build for inclusion and accessibility as the foundation, people with disabilities can participate, contribute and be full members of their communities. This is the vision of the UN CRPD and the SDGs. Canada's government has endorsed that vision and now needs to show its commitment to implement it in its international assistance.

⁸ For an analysis of Australia's aid shifts see Karen Soldatic and Alexandra Gartrell, "Rural women with disabilities in post-conflict zones: the forgotten sisters of Australia's Disability-inclusive Development" *Third World Thematics*, forthcoming in 2016.

⁹ For highlights of the innovative practices of certain donors, see this blog by Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo: <http://www.cips-cepi.ca/2016/05/13/a-new-era-for-persons-with-disabilities-and-international-development/>.

Annex: Who are we?

The Disability and Global Development (DGD) project is a **partnership** between the Alexa McDonough Institute for Women, Gender and Social Justice (AMI) at Mount Saint Vincent University and the Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts Institute (CYCCI) at Dalhousie University. The first phase of our work in 2015 and 2016 has been funded mainly by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

The project was designed to **build capacity and new relationships among practitioners and scholars** – to better understand the experiences of women and men, girls and boys with disabilities in post-conflict and post-disaster contexts, as well as to **identify relevant policy/practice options** for a range of stakeholders, including the government of Canada.

Since January 2015, we have:

- ✓ Used an intersectional gender-based lens to review the state of international development norms and practices with regard to persons with disabilities. With our southern partners, we also studied the experiences of people with disabilities as well as policy and practice in Haiti, Uganda and South Africa.
- ✓ Hosted a conference in Halifax on June 22-24, 2015, with a diverse range of activist persons with disabilities, professional practitioners, scholars and students. The conference significantly advanced evidence-based dialogue on these issues.
- ✓ Published a Fact Sheet, which can be found on the project website:
<http://www.msvu.ca/en/home/research/centresandinstitutes/IWGSJ/disabilityandglobaldevelopment.aspx>
- ✓ Published a series of five blog posts at the uOttawa Centre for International Policy Studies: <http://www.cips-cepi.ca/disability-and-global-development/>
- ✓ Met with officials at Global Affairs Canada on November 13, 2015. We also contributed substantially to a meeting on the margins of the Conference of State Parties to the UN CRPD in New York, on June 15, 2016. This policy brief submitted to Canada's International Assistance Review builds on that policy dialogue.

Next steps:

The final results of our research have been peer reviewed and will be published in a special issue of *Third World Thematics* by the end of 2016.

We have opened this initiative to other organizations, including governments. Together, we are crafting proposals to establish the Canadian Network on Disability and International Development (CANDID).