

# The value for money of leaving no one behind

A decorative graphic consisting of a horizontal band of red dots of varying sizes and colors (from light pink to dark red) that spans the width of the page. The dots are arranged in a way that creates a sense of movement and depth, with some dots appearing to be in front of others.

The Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to “leave no one behind” places the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) at the forefront of global development priorities. Meanwhile, some governments and donors have also opted to prioritise value for money.

All too often, these two priorities are seen as being in conflict, because “reaching the furthest behind first” often costs more and requires dedicated resources. Decision makers and development workers tell us that they often feel forced to choose between leaving no one behind and delivering value for money.

The Bond Disability and Development Group believe that this is a false choice. No programme that discriminates against persons with disabilities, or other marginalised groups, can really be considered good value for money.

Guidance from agencies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) emphasises that value for money is not just about simple comparisons of the cost and economic return per beneficiary. Although this is recognised in theory, putting it into practice has been more challenging, and there has been a tendency to take a narrow approach to value for money which risks excluding persons with disabilities. In response to this, the Bond Disability and Development Group has been developing guidance for those who want to reach the furthest behind while also maintaining the highest standards of value for money.

## Key recommendations

- 1. Recognise the value of disability-inclusive programming.** Respect for human rights and equitable inclusion of persons with disabilities should be recognised as intrinsically beneficial and as basic pre-requisites of value for money. Disability-inclusive programming has wider benefits for societies and economies<sup>1</sup> – but the value for money case should not hinge on these instrumental arguments: human rights are a compelling value for money argument on their own.
- 2. Avoid quantitative comparisons between different disability-inclusive programmes.** Such comparisons can be very misleading, given that costs and benefits are highly context-dependent, under-researched, and often difficult to measure. Qualitative analysis of the value for money of disability-inclusive programmes is more meaningful, and the Bond Disability and Development Group has developed a draft framework to help with this.
- 3. Ensure that disability-inclusive programmes follow best practice in project management and cost control.** Programmers have a responsibility to invest in disability inclusion – whether this is funding for accessibility or for challenging discriminatory social norms. But they also have a responsibility to ensure these investments are well managed, as with any other programme.
- 4. Document and share evidence on the cost drivers, and wider benefits, of disability inclusion,** so that the evidence base for value for money decisions becomes ever more informative.
- 5. Ensure that persons with disabilities participate meaningfully at all stages.** Value for money assessment is a complex and controversial field; the principle of “nothing about us without us” is particularly important in this context. This, of course, bears a cost, which should be taken into consideration, but the added value of participation means that programmes will be better designed to realise the rights of persons with disabilities.

It is ten years since the adoption of the CRPD. Isn't it time to put human rights, equality and non-discrimination at the heart of value for money assessment, for the benefit of all?

## Further information

This note was written by the Bond Disability and Development Group, a consortium of UK-based international NGOs working to promote the systemic inclusion of disabled people within international development policies and programmes. For more on value for money, please visit:

[bond.org.uk/value-for-money](http://bond.org.uk/value-for-money)

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<sup>1</sup> For more on these benefits, see: M Banks and S Polack, The Economic Costs of Exclusion and Gains of Inclusion of People with Disabilities (CBM, International Centre for Evidence in Disability, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2014). Available from: <http://disabilitycentre.lshtm.ac.uk/files/2014/07/Costs-of-Exclusion-and-Gains-of-Inclusion-Report.pdf> [accessed 25 May 2016].