

Stream 2: Disability, Inequality and Poverty

This call is for new research into the specific barriers to inclusion facing disabled people and the ways these can be overcome in cost effective and sustainable ways in low income countries.

Background and research gaps

More than a billion people - or approximately 15 per cent of the world's population - are estimated to live with some form of disability¹, with higher prevalence in low-income countries. **This means that disabled people comprise one of the largest single groups of excluded and chronically poor people in the developing world.**

People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, some of which are hard to detect and go undiagnosed². People with disabilities have generally poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities^{3,4}. **They also experience poverty more intensely, suffer widespread discrimination and have fewer opportunities to escape poverty than people without disabilities.** Existing evidence suggests that **there is a direct link between poverty and disability.** The onset of disability⁵ is linked with a decline in social and economic well-being and increase in poverty through a number of channels - stigma, adverse impacts on education, employment and earning levels, inaccessible basic services and increased disability-related expenditure⁶. As a result, **people with disabilities are over-represented amongst the chronically poor.** People with disabilities, particularly those with other characteristics that contribute to exclusion such as gender, age and ethnicity, are arguably some of the hardest to reach because they are often hidden away and discriminated against within their communities.

There still is a lack of systematic evidence of the links between disability and poverty, and of the institutional barriers which disabled people face in accessing services and achieving their rights. There is also a general lack of evidence on the other gendered aspects of disability and limited understanding of how men and women experience disability differently. People with disabilities are at greater risk of violence than those without⁷. Substantive evidence is not available for most regions⁸ but small scale

¹ WHO/World Bank (2011) World Report on Disability. (Washington) (based on 2010 global population estimates)

² The UK Government's accepted definition of disability is that people are disabled by the barriers erected by societal attitudes and the physical environment (the social model) rather than by their bodies (the medical model). However, there is growing appreciation that disability cannot be viewed only as a social issue and that people with disabilities also experience problems arising from their health condition.

³ WHO/World Bank (2011) World Report on Disability (Washington)

⁴ Thomas 'Disability, Poverty and the Millennium Development Goals: Relevance, Challenges and Opportunities for DFID, 2005.

⁵ *World Report on Disability*. Geneva/Washington, DC: WHO/World Bank. Also Groce, N, M. Kett, R. Lang and J-F. Trani (2011) Third World Quarterly, Vol.32(8): 1493-1513. However, the evidence base for these complex relationships between disability and poverty remain ill-defined and under-researched. Groce et al conducted a review employing systematic methods (though not a systematic review) of peer-reviewed literature of disability and poverty. Of 293 articles identified in the search, only 27 (9.3per cent) were found to be evidence-based.

⁶ World Health Organisation/World Bank (2011) *World Report on Disability* (Washington) and also Groce, N, M. Kett, R. Lang and J-F. Trani (2011) Third World Quarterly, Vol.32(8): 1493-1513.

⁷ World Health Organisation/World Bank (2011) *World Report on Disability* (Washington).

⁸ World Health Organisation (2012) 'Prevalence and risk of violence against adults with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies' K. Hughes, M. A Bellis, L. Jones, S. Wood, G. Bates, L. Eckley, E McCoy, Ch. Mikton, T. Shakespeare, A. Officer.

studies emphasise the vulnerability of women with disabilities to violence⁹. Systematic evidence is lacking, but anecdotal evidence suggests that people with disabilities face barriers to accessing social protection. These barriers can include, but are not restricted to inaccessible information, individuals being 'hidden' within households as a result of stigma, and inaccessible welfare offices. We need a better cultural understanding of disability across different contexts.

Evidence from household surveys suggests that disability has a greater impact on access to education than gender, household economic status or rural/urban divide¹⁰. Research on the experiences of disabled children and their siblings is also a considerable gap.

Disability has, until relatively recently, been largely neglected in humanitarian responses to conflict and natural disasters - beyond the intervention of specific niche NGOs such as Help Age International and Handicap International. This is a key concern in conflict areas where people are vulnerable to injury but are faced with limited access to services. The 2010 Sphere Handbook¹¹ includes disability as a cross-cutting issue.

To date, there are limited data available related to disability, including types of disability, the prevalence of disability, the experience of living with disability, and the impact of disability on access to services. Historically, data on impairment was collected but this does not equate to an understanding of living with disability. A person may be blind - but what are their needs? Where do they live? What is their support? Impairment data does not tell us about the experience of being disabled. A first stage may be to understand what is happening in terms of people's bodies, but then we need to understand the impact of their disability on their lives. **Policy and planning for the consequences of disability is needed.**

Solid, comparable data and evidence on disability and poverty in contexts and across contexts for use by national and international policy makers is required to understand the extent and impact of disability and how this may be addressed¹². Such data should include assessment of age of onset and experience of disabilities. This is critical for different impacts, needs and approaches to reach disabled people. For example, someone who is blind at birth may have very different challenges and needs from someone who is blinded later in life.

This overall weakness in the evidence base hinders efforts to strengthen policy and action needed to enable positive change for disabled people. A stronger evidence base is needed which includes robust studies that integrate qualitative and quantitative data and analysis, and over time, find ways to build comparable data. Policymakers still argue that they do not know who the disabled are, how many people are experiencing disability or the consequences of disability for individuals, families and communities. The space for disabled people to become engaged in the policy process is often limited. Greater

⁹ Mohapatra S, Mohanty M (2005) *Abuse and activity limitation: a study on domestic violence against disabled women in Orissa, India*: Swabhiman.

¹⁰ Filmer, D. (2005) *Disability, Poverty and Schooling in Developing Countries: Results from 11 Household Surveys*. World Bank Discussion Paper.

¹¹ The Sphere handbook provides internationally agreed *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*

¹² The World Bank and the WHO are doing work on a model disability survey, collecting data on all aspects of disability. The aim is for one survey instrument, modular in format so that comparable results can be obtained across contexts. This has been piloted and is now being further tested.

understanding of what drives inclusion in policy processes and where key alliances can be built between disabled people, government and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are important.

Research is essential for increasing public understanding about disability issues, informing disability policy and programmes, and efficiently allocating resources. New research is needed on:

- Definitions/data/prevalence of disability (type, severity, age of onset, standard indicators);
- Understanding experience (experience of poverty and how disability intersects with other dimensions of vulnerability/poverty);
- Accessibility/non-accessibility of services;
- Understanding environmental factors;
- Understanding what works/has been effective in improving the quality of life and opportunities for disabled peoples (interventions, policies).

In addition, disability-focused research questions are not well embedded in established research fields. Research programmes in various sectors may consider different aspects of vulnerability such as gender or low income, but often do not include data or analysis on disability issues.

Overarching research question

From the above it is clear that there is a very wide-ranging research agenda. At the same time, there are priority areas that call for a focussed research strategy. The Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research therefore invites researchers applying under the *Poverty, Inequality and Disability in LICs* stream to respond to the following overarching research question:

What are the **specific barriers** to inclusion facing disabled children and adults in accessing health, education, social protection and labour market services, and **how can these barriers be overcome** in sustainable and cost-effective ways?

A survey of the field suggests that these four intervention areas are **all key gaps**. However, it is not a condition that all proposals must cover all four intervention areas. The funders will consider more focused proposals as long as two interventions are covered and that barriers and overcoming those barriers are both addressed.

In order to answer this overarching question, applicants are expected to consider the following:

Defining disability

Appropriate definitions of disability, including:

- Physical impairments
- Mental impairments

- Intellectual impairments
- Sensory impairments

Barriers and opportunities

- Focus on a wide range of barriers including culture, social norms and traditional legal systems in addition to economic and physical barriers.
- The different experiences of older and younger men and women, and girls and boys.
- The impact of ethnicity on barriers to access for disabled people.
- How the timing and onset of disability affects inclusion.
- The impact of environmental factors (policies, physical environment, attitudes, status, power) on people with disabilities and how this can be measured.

What works for inclusion?

- What policies and actions are effective in promoting inclusion and for whom? Within this, how do interventions improve the quality of life and well-being of disabled people?
- Cost and the cost-effectiveness of different interventions to support the inclusion of disabled people. This includes analysing both the cost/benefits of inclusion and the significant on-going costs of exclusion of disabled people from the labour market and from access to services.
- The evidence on successful mainstreaming and interventions that work towards disabled people accessing on an equal setting.
- The role of assistive technology.
- The role of external actors in developing and funding interventions.

Researchers will be required to explain within the proposal how their research addresses the above.

Research approach

ESRC and DFID recognise the need for a suitable research approach to effectively respond to the overarching question posed above. Therefore research projects funded under this call are encouraged to:

- Conduct solid comparisons between disabled and non-disabled people, looking at general patterns of exclusion, understanding who is excluded, what percentage of those excluded are disabled and how do patterns of exclusions differ/are compounded for different groups of disabled people?
- Include cross-country comparison and some attention to fragile contexts.
- Analyse existing survey data, including administrative data.
- Use disaggregated data and recognise the difference experiences of men and women.
- Employ mixed methods research, with a balance between quantitative and qualitative analysis.

- Use technology innovatively to gather information in under-researched areas, and recommendations on how technology could further be used to increase accountability for disabled people.
- Include partnerships with those groups who include and represent disabled people.

Geographical focus

This Research Programme focuses on Low-Income Countries (LICs) but may include relevant comparative work from elsewhere.¹³

However, applicants must note that proposals which include any comparison with Middle-Income Countries (MICs) must demonstrate that the research will generate new knowledge of global relevance that has the potential to benefit the lives of poor people in Low-Income Countries. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how research undertaken in Middle-Income Countries has the potential to reduce poverty in one or more Low-Income Countries and what will be done during the lifetime of the funded project to ensure that this happens. Proposals must describe what their programme will do to ensure that poor people living in low-income countries benefit from their research.

¹³ See the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients last updated in October 2011: <http://www.oecd.org/development/aidstatistics/daclistofodarecipients.htm>. For the purposes of this call LICs are taken to include both Least Developed Countries and Other Low Income Countries.