Mainstreaming the Disability Dimension in Development Cooperation
Case Finland - Lessons Learned

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The presentation gives examples of policies and practices on how to strive towards mainstreaming
disability dimension in development. These examples are work in progress and systematic
evaluations have not yet been done. Experiences by now, however, have been positive. The
frameworks for the inclusion of disability in development cooperation are set by Finland’s human
rights policy and the national disability policy. Both of these require the mainstreaming of the rights
and opportunities for full participation by persons with disabilities. Consequently, development
cooperation policies must follow suit.

In the end of the paper, lessons learned from gender mainstreaming are presented. The conclusion is,
that mainstreaming can succeed (only) if the elements of the whole system, the chain from policies
to implementation and monitoring are geared towards the mainstreaming objective.

1. The National Disability Policy as the Framework

The Government of Finland established a multi-stakeholder working group to review and revise the
 Finnish disability policy in 2005. The work resulted in the Government Report on Disability Policy that
was endorsed in 2007.

The Finnish Disability Policy is based on following main principles

1. The right of people with disabilities to equality. Finland as a Member State of the United Nations and the European Union is committed to promoting a society for all. In Finland, the principle of non-discrimination of people with disabilities is enshrined in the Constitution.
2. The right of people with disabilities to inclusion. The preconditions for realization of the inclusion of people with disabilities are e.g.: positive attitudes; taking into account their needs; identification of barriers; that restrict their inclusion; and the elimination of such barriers. Consequently action is needed to remove such barriers for inclusion.
3. The right of people with disabilities to necessary services and supportive measures. Services and supportive measures are positive targeted measures for ensuring equality.
4. The policy was designed to be in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

It should be noted that Finland has signed the CRPD but has not yet ratified it. The reason is that in accordance to the legal system, a ratified Convention becomes immediately a binding part of national legislation. Consequently, work is going on to amend certain existing legislations to avoid any

conflicting obligations or provisions in the Convention and existing legislation. The amendment process takes some time. For instance, in 2011, legislation regulating health and social welfare cost sharing between the municipalities of origin and destination of internal migrants was amended in order to remove potential problems related to the right for freely choosing one’s residence by e.g. older people or people with disabilities who are in need of costly services that are to be covered by the municipality of residence.

Following the endorsement, a Task Force was set up to design a plan of action (Disability Policy Programme 2) for implementing the Policy. Through wide consultations with all relevant stakeholders the Task Force produced a detailed Programme that assigned responsibilities for various measures to promote the rights, equality and non-discrimination of people with disabilities (PWD) to all Ministries and sectors in line with their mandates for serving on equal basis all people resident in Finland. This “sector responsibility” principle implies the responsibility to integrate disability issues in the mainstream of policy and practice of all sectors rather than handling disability as a matter of social welfare sector or charity. For the Ministry for Foreign Affairs the implication was the obligation to plan and initiate action in two areas, namely (1) The General Policy on External Relations and (2) Development Cooperation. Also accessibility and equality of services by Finland’s Missions abroad is addressed.

2. Finland’s Development Cooperation Policy on Disability

Finland’s Development Policy Programme is based on Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). The rights and equal opportunities of people with disabilities has been one of the Cross-Cutting Human Rights and Equality Objectives. The whole set of Cross-Cutting Objectives has been the following: promotion of gender equality and social equality; rights and equal opportunities of easily excluded groups including children, people with disabilities; indigenous peoples and minorities. A new Policy Programme is being finalized. It’s wording is different but the above cross-cutting objectives are included under the priority of Decreasing inequalities.

Until now, most disability-related ODA-activity has consisted predominantly of disability-specific projects by NGOs rather than having been handled truly as a cross-cutting issue in bilateral cooperation. In the multilateral arena mainstreaming has been more evident.

The evaluation by Government Audit Unit (2008) criticized the Government of not having implemented the endorsed Policy adequately because disability-specific activities are not “mainstreaming”. The evaluation called thus for a more systematic approach. Consequently, a clarifying binding administrative Guidance Directive on the Cross-Cutting Objectives was prepared and issued (2009) by the Ministry’s Department for Development Cooperation.

The Directive specifies a ”3-track” strategy for integrating the cross-cutting issues – including disability - in Finland’s official Development Assistance (ODA). Gender and social equality, rights of vulnerable groups (children, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and minorities) and HIV/AIDS must be integrated in all development action through the following action lines that complement each other. In case of disability the requirement is as follows:


3 The usual term -that also was left in the official documents- is Cross-Cutting Themes (CCTs), but the CCT Advisor team at the Ministry has reminded that such policy “themes” mean that they are to be defined and handled in the same way as any other programme goals or objectives and consequently be included in the Logical Framework and result matrices.
Mainstream disability in all sectors and accommodate people with disabilities in line with the Human Rights Based Approach, and
Complement universal and equal provisions with targeted, additional support and services to equalize access and opportunities for people with disabilities and to empower them, and Include disability in policy dialogue, country negotiations and multilateral cooperation and all information dissemination.

The “third track” reminds of the importance of addressing also the “political will” and mobilization as a prerequisite for all effective societal action, especially that by the public sector.

In order to achieve the integration of disability issues in all development cooperation as implied by the Policy and stated in the Directive, the action lines are meant to be complementary. They do not replace each other. Focusing on more disability (or gender etc.) - specific projects does not replace the requirement of mainstreaming disability (or gender etc.) matters. This message has proven difficult to get across.


This chapter shares a few examples about which there are positive experiences on mainstreaming effects. Systematic evaluations of impacts have not yet been done.

Below there are examples of system level initiatives that aim at longer term push to facilitate the integration of disability in the mainstream of development activities on the global and the regional level. These include (1) support to global processes, (2) development of simple technical tools, and (3) establishing of multi-stakeholder coordination groups, and (4) partnership contracts with DPOs. The fifth example (5) is contracting a Deaf Rap-Artist as an awareness raiser on disabled persons’ rights on the mainstream arenas of foreign and security policy. In the traditionally formal environment of foreign policy this has been a courageous – but successful - move.

3.1. Strategic support to international innovative initiatives

This item describes activities that have been supported by Finland in order to facilitate the mainstreaming of disability on the global and regional agendas. The support has not been enormous financially but has been demand driven “rapid response” and oriented to nurture selected innovative approaches that have been implemented in partnerships.

A. Global initiatives

1. Supporting the UN in its efforts to mainstream disability since 1990. The support has been political – and occasionally- financial. Recently we started supporting the UN Partnership to

4 The cooperation in the 1990s resulted e.g. in the first disability mainstreaming Manual at the UN.
Promote the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (UNPRPD). This is considered as a long awaited, welcome initiative in the spirit of “One UN”.

2. Financial support to the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Disability. The function of the Rapporteur has vitally important in keeping disability on the global and national agendas.

3. Since 2001 Finland has been cooperating with the World Bank to facilitate the inclusion of disability aspects into Poverty Reduction Strategies and sector work. Norway and Finland have also been financing the Trust Fund for Socially and Ecologically Sustainable Development (TFESSD) that supports innovative projects by the Bank staff. TFESSD provides funding to disability projects, as well.

4. Since 2005 financial and management support has been given to the Global Partnership for Disability and Development (GPDD). It is a multi-stakeholder network that is now hosted by the World Bank was established in 2004. It was funded first by Italy, Finland, Norway and the World Bank, and also been since supported by contributions by India, Germany and the Italian Fondaszioni (private sector). GPDD is a Global Platform for Dialogue and Collaboration.

B. Regional initiatives

Africa Region is the focus region of Finland’s development cooperation. There are several long-term development partners countries. In order to support the mainstreaming of the disability dimension, initiatives have been made in collaboration with African DPOs and the African Union Commission as well as the USA Department of State to initiate or support processes that facilitate the inclusion of disability dimension on the regional level agendas. These initiatives include support to e.g the following processes:

1. African Decade of Disabled Persons secretariat

2. African Union Disability Architecture (AUDA). This includes
   a. AU Protocol on the Rights of PWD
   b. Plan of Action for the Second African Decade of Persons with Disabilities
   c. Institutional development

3. “Transatlantic Partnership” USA-Finland - Africa on disability inclusive development in the above AUDA context.

C. Sector-specific mainstreaming. Support has been given on bilateral basis for inclusive education initiatives (e.g Ethiopia, South Africa, the Balkans). Also support has been channeled to EFA (Education for All) flagship for inclusive education. The global support is now being redirected.


While the Manual does not cover recent developments, it provides awareness rising material suitable to professional audiences and a step-by step guide on how disability can be taken into account in the process of development planning. The Manual is available at the UN website in PDF format.

http://www.gpdd-online.org/
3.2. **Simple desk-top tools: New Guidelines by the Ministry:**

There are currently a number of useful toolkits on how to integrate disability in development cooperation work. Many of them are, however, so thorough and detailed that it is not realistic to expect busy development professionals of e.g. infrastructure projects to study them in detail. The experience at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs is that **aiming at “the best practice” can be an enemy of a good practice - that would also be feasible in the practices of the Ministry.** There are many legitimate cross cutting concerns and prioritizing one over others calls for more political and social capital than most single issues (e.g. disability) can accumulate in this multi-sector, multi-professional and multi-stakeholder context.

There is a process going on to review and revise all guidelines, procedures and document templates of development Programme Cycle Management (PCM) at the Ministry. In the process of negotiations between various sector professionals it has been concluded, that the current Cross-Cutting Objectives will best be taken into account as one of the quality requirements by not overdoing the exercise. Therefore, **a rather simple Step-by-Step procedure has been designed** for the whole set of CCTs. The main framework consists of five similar checkpoints for each CCT with reference to more specific tools depending on the “relevance” of the theme in the given programme. For instance, for disability issues the checkpoints are the following:

1. **Check for adhering to minimum requirements for all activities:**
   1.1. No direct or indirect discrimination ("accessibility")
   1.2. No increase in health or accident risks ("safety")
2. Check for disability **relevance** of the programme;
3. Check for **information adequacy** – was there enough factual information to assess the degree of disability relevance adequately.
4. **Assess the potential impacts** on PWDs
5. **Adjust** the plan and involve PWDs according to the level of the disability relevance of the programme

Additionally, references to selected **more specific tools are provided through links on the Ministry’s website.** The Cross-Cutting Objectives (CCOs), including disability, are **being integrated in programming guidelines and programme document templates (2012) of each step of the PCM** and treated as Cross-Cutting Objectives (CCOs) that are to be taken into account in order to ensure acceptable quality of the programme. The CCOs are also included in regular training programmes, such as the Ministry’s regular basic training for new Diplomats, training on Administrative Procedures and in the preparatory course for field assignments. The CCO -team consisting of Advisors on Gender, Global Social Policy, HIV/AIDS and Children’s Rights conducts the training and provides professional support to staff on demand. In disability issues also DPOs are used as trainers.

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3.3. **Disability Coordination Groups at Various Ministries**

**In order to involve all the main stakeholder groups and to create a sense of joint mission and ownership Disability Coordination Group at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Human Rights Unit, has**

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been established. It has members from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Chair), Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, main DPOs and the “Special Representative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs on Disability”, and other experts. It meets every two months and more often if needed.

Also at the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) there is a Coordination Group for mainstreaming the implementation of the Government Plan of Action on Disability in its mandated field of work.

3.4. Partnership Agreement with Disabled Peoples Organizations at National Level

There are several development partnership arrangements to pool resources and expertise at national level for the planning and implementation of the development policy.

1) **FIDIDA (Finnish Disabled People’s International Development Association)** is an umbrella organization of six DPOs for their development cooperation. FIDIDA has been contracted as the Partner Organization for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to manage the Ministry’s disability project portfolio.

2) **ABILIS –foundation** (a DPO) has been contracted as manager of small grants programme of ODA to Southern DPOs.

These partnerships are contract-based and predictable from the perspectives of both the Ministry and the DPOs involved.

3.5. Innovative, Not-So-Obvious, Practices in Awareness Raising

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Alexander Stubb nominated in 2010 “SIGNMARK” alias Mr. Marko Vuoriheimo as his “Special Representative on Disability Rights and Tolerance”. **SIGNMARK** is a RAP-artist. He is Deaf and performs in a Sign language. A singing/raping interpreter is used by the team to get the message through to hearing audiences who do not understand Sign language.

In the new Government that took office in June 2011, there are three Ministers involved in international affairs. One for General Foreign Policy, one for Development Cooperation and one for EU Affairs and Foreign Trade. **SIGNMARK** is at the disposal of each of the Ministers and joins Ministers on selected missions and events as an “ice breaker”, particularly in contexts where disability awareness and the visibility of PWDs is still weak. Mr. Vuoriheimo, a professional with MA in education sciences, also conducts discussion sessions for awareness raising and encouragement of particularly youth with disabilities and DPOs: “everything is possible – you can do it”. Recent joint missions have been organized e.g in conjunction with the MDG Summit in New York (September 2010) at Finnish Permanent Mission and in the Washington Square Park, and during Minister’s missions to Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kazakhstan.

4. Challenges in Mainstreaming

Here we try to single out a few challenges that have this far been difficult to overcome. Identifying the obstacles for mainstreaming may help in finding the solutions.

**Demand for mainstreaming is still weak.** Relevance of disability in the poverty context is still not understood well by all development partners. There is not much demand for disability mainstreaming by all partner country governments despite demand by the DPOs in the Global South can be strong.
Disability seems still to remain a “NGO business” – not a main stream business. There is the tendency to outsource disability issues to NGOs and DPOs. Development aid must not support initiatives that help governments and public authorities to escape their duties in the securing of human rights of persons with disabilities.

Incentive structures tend to encourage disability-specific projects – not mainstreaming. In Finland, the share of organization’s own financing for Official Development Assistance (ODA) supported projects is 15% and for disability-specific projects only 9%. This does not encourage mainstreaming. There is a need to rethink these policies and practices. However, there are also strong interests involved and to be equitably resolved.

The private sector is usually not involved. Most of people’s daily activities take place in a private sector environment. People earn their living from the private sector. In many developing countries most people work in the informal sector or are “own-account-workers”. Mainstreaming is not a very accurate description of policies that cover less than half of people’s life arenas.

One difficult challenge is that also mainstreaming needs but often lacks “ownership” and a responsible lead agent. “Everybody’s business is often nobody’s business.” This holds both at the agency level, at national level and at the international level. The recent initiative by the UN Partnership to promote the rights of persons with disabilities is highly timely and welcomed.

On the global scene there is a need for an infrastructure for mainstreaming but is there enough willingness to pay. This calls for investing in core funding for agents that facilitate the global “public goods”, i.e. appropriate global infrastructure that would be needed for mainstreaming disability issues in development. Public goods are by definition things that benefit all regardless whether one contributes for the production of them or not. This feature tends to give incentives for free-riding.

In the case of disability, there are some agencies / actors that are devoted to produce the global public goods facilitating the mainstreaming of disability in development for poverty reduction. UN-DESA has been one of them for a long time. The Special Rapporteur is another. A unique infrastructure for mainstreaming is e.g. the GPDD (Global Partnership on Disability and Development). It is a multi-stakeholder platform, and the only one that involves a variety of Non-State Actors (NSAs), including research institutes and the private sector actors, and connects them with the governmental and intergovernmental agencies. These global good-doers have had difficulties to secure their core funding.

Poverty reduction is one of the global public goods. It would benefit also the rich, even those who would not pay for it. If we do not manage to reduce poverty the public “bads” affect everybody. Mainstreaming disability in development for poverty reduction would yield double benefits in reducing deprivation and exclusion. Evidence is needed.

Aid effectiveness agenda can work against “small” but important initiatives. In the bilateral cooperation, that is government-to-government cooperation disability has not gained the status of being one of the cooperation sectors. The Aid Effectiveness agenda demands that development cooperation is focused on a limited number of “sectors”. Disability issues are seldom among these prioritized sectors. This situation, again, calls for smart mainstreaming of disability issues in the main sectors.

The main challenge may be that effective mainstreaming requires that an effective and accountable system is set up at both the donor agency and the “recipient” partner. Ad hoc arrangements have been unfortunately more common case. Changing the way systems work takes time. It goes faster and more effectively if any intervention is seen in the context of the systems involved.
Let us learn from – and partner with – agencies that have been successful in mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is surely one of the success stories.

5. Lessons Learned from Gender Mainstreaming: ”System Requirements”

Women and their organizations have quite successfully managed the challenge of mainstreaming of gender equality. For instance the Finnish Government First Report on Gender Equality Mainstreaming (2010) shows this. One of the central innovations has been to approach mainstreaming as a system issue: you must change the way the whole system operates.

A good analogy comes from the computer world: If you want to install a new programme in order to be able to produce new products or results (e.g. Elaborate graphs and illustrations) the installing program specifies the “system requirements” and asks whether your computer meets those.

Analyzing the process how gender mainstreaming was so successfully done, it appears that the system requirements have been the following:

1. CONDUCIVE POLICY CONTEXT: disability inclusive policy, political will, specified mandates to focal points, all stakeholders involved
2. INFORMATION BASE: disaggregated data, knowledge of processes, ex ante impact assessments
3. OPERATIVE MACHINERY: organization, management, resources, partnerships
4. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: awareness, skills, tools, help-desks
5. FEEDBACK SYSTEMS: monitoring, evaluation, reporting, accountability

In the same way, mainstreaming disability will not be possible without addressing the whole system and its way of working. The above list may serve as a check list for identifying “DO WE HAVE THE FULL SYSTEM IN PLACE” in order to be able to get the results we consider genuine mainstreaming. In the Annex there is a checklist with examples of the essential elements of the system and with concrete examples of those elements related to disability in the Finish context.

Mainstreaming of the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities should be seen as a necessary condition for making Human Rights, inclusion and development to materialize for all. **Mainstreaming is not, however enough. Also targeted, empowering action is needed to complement mainstreaming. This is an integral element of a mainstreaming policy.** Technical skills by all stakeholders must be further developed. Learning to understand the language and working methods of other actors is necessary for effective collaboration. **Furthermore, political will and commitment needs still to be much strengthened.**

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Selected References


Development Policy Programme 2007; Ministry for Foreign Affairs
(New policy is being drafted. Forthcoming 2012)

http://formin.fi/Public/default.aspx?nodeid=43739&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI
On the website: “Tools for the promotion of cross-cutting themes in development cooperation”


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### Systemic preconditions for mainstreaming disability in development policies and practices. Case Finland: Development Cooperation Policy as part of National Disability Policy (© Ronald Wiman /THL, GPDD 2011 ➔ CSocD 2012)

#### Preconditions to be ensured /created

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Examples of elements</strong></th>
<th><strong>Examples of practices in Finland (Links to pages in English)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>I. <strong>A CONDUCIVE POLICY CONTEXT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Policies in line with international standards</td>
<td>Policy on disability; Plan of Action or Gov. Programme including mainstreaming - Active participation in UN forums and EU processes; - <a href="http://www.vane.to/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=56:vampo-preparation-of-the-disability-policy-programme-&amp;catid=4&amp;Itemid=49">Government Report on Disability Policy</a> and Plan of Action in line with the Convention; - Civil society involvement in dialogue with Government; - DPOs and other expert inputs to Government Programmes;</td>
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<td>• Stakeholder involvement</td>
<td>mobilization of DPOs - Forums for dialogue -DPO Umbrella Organization for development cooperation, FIDIDA, contracted to manage Ministry’s disability portfolio for development cooperation, to train DPOs and to promote mainstreaming; <a href="http://www.fidida.fi/english/index.htm">http://www.fidida.fi/english/index.htm</a> -Disability rights Coordination Group at Ministry for Foreign Affairs ( Ministries, DPOs and experts); -Civil society hearings in preparing Gov. Report;</td>
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#### Adequate information and knowledge base

- Statistics - Analytic information - Research - Disaggregated data bases; information on roles, opportunities, obstacles, participation, administration, disability specific outcomes; -Disability Impact Assessments - Relevant research at Universities; - Contracted research on the rights of people with disabilities in Finland’s foreign policy; - Ex ante impact assessments are rare and data are poor
III. **Functional and functioning operative machinery**

- **Institutional structures**
  - Organization;
  - Responsible units/persons
  - A focal point
  - Focal points in other ministries;
  - Collaboration platforms;
  - Civil society involvement platforms
  - National Council on Disability (Ministries, DPOs, Representative of Municipalities);
  - Municipal Disability Councils;

- **Management practices & results based management**
  - Inclusion of disability equality goals in result matrices;
  - Non-discrimination personnel policies
  - Rights and opportunities of PWDs as one of the cross-cutting objectives to be reported;

- **Resources**
  - Allocated time; Finances, reallocation of existing funds;
  - Human resources
  - Social Policy Advisor’s time (10%);
  - Subcontracted expertise;
  - Best option sought: Ambassador on disability (not in place)
  - Best option sought: A specific budget line

- **Partnerships and stakeholder involvement systems**
  - Policy dialogue across sector lines:
    - Joint working groups,
    - Joint plan of action
    - Division of labor/responsibilities
    - Follow-up arrangements
    - Communication strategies
  - The Disability Coordination Group at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; consists of experts from Ministries and DPOs and Academia

IV. **System for capacity development**

- **Awareness raising**
  - Guidelines,
  - Attractive, accessible training available frequently
  - Awareness raising
  - skills development
  - Manuals
  - Special Representative on Rights of People with Disabilities of the Minister for Foreign Affairs (A Deaf rap artist joining the Minister to selected missions) 
  - Disability included in core training of new diplomats (KAVAKU) and in the preparatory course for all staff departing to field (KEVALKU)

- **Skills training**
- **Toolkits**
  - Toolbox for integrating disability in development projects

- **Toolbox for integrating disability in development projects**
  - Disability included in core training of new diplomats (KAVAKU) and in the preparatory course for all staff departing to field (KEVALKU)

V. **Feedback systems**

- **Follow up/monitoring**
  - Joint monitoring of processes
  - Cross-cutting issues team at Ministry for Foreign Affairs

- **Reporting**
  - National reporting;
  - International reporting, e.g. to regional bodies
  - Reports to Parliament on Development Cooperation must include reporting on the Cross-Cutting Objectives

- **Evaluation**
  - Regular self-assessment of achievement indicators;
  - Independent external evaluations;
  - Studies of public perceptions

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8 An example on video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YucJFqFFeo&feature=related