

Development and Disability Policy

1. Policy Description

The policy of Mukti Australia Inc. (hereafter MA) on Development and Disability outlines our response to linking disability and development and the implications for the programs and projects of our partner organisations in India, Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission (hereafter PRMM) and Sri Lanka, Wings of Hope, (hereafter WoH) which we fund.

2. The Context

Disability is the disadvantage and exclusion individuals face resulting from interactions between individuals with impairments, whether physical, mental, intellectual or sensory, and their community and environment, due to the failure of society to take account of their rights and needs¹. The UN estimates that approximately 10 per cent of the world's population (around 650 million people) have a disability, and about 80 per cent of the population with a disability live in developing countries².

People living in poverty with disabilities are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and disability, each being both a cause and consequence of the other.³ As many as 50% of physical impairments are preventable and directly linked to poverty.⁴ Poor nutrition, lack of access to medical care, bad sanitation and hygiene, war and conflict, crime and many other factors both contribute to disability and reinforce the poverty experienced by those living with disability.⁵

Despite the high proportion of people in developing countries living with a disability or impacted by the disability of a family member, people with disabilities have often been excluded from the development process⁶. However, to effectively address poverty, disability needs to be mainstreamed into development initiatives, and people with disabilities need to be included and have meaningful participation in the development

¹ *Ibid*

¹ AusAID op cit, p.7

¹ Jones, D & Webster, L 2006. *A Handbook on Mainstreaming Disability*, VSO, retrieved 5 May 2010, http://www.asksource.info/pdf/33903_vsomainstreamingdisability_2006.pdf, p.6

² AusAID 2008, *Development for All: Towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid program 2009-2014*, AusAID, p.7, retrieved 5 May 2010, http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/FINAL%20AusAID_Disability%20for%20All.pdf, p.5

³ Department For International Development, 2000. *Disability, Poverty and Development*, retrieved 6 May 2010, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications/disabilitypovertydevelopment.pdf>, p.1

⁴ *Ibid*, p.3

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ AusAID op cit, p.7

process⁷. To do this, people with disabilities need to be consulted in the formulation and implementation of development projects so that they can benefit equally from the development process and so that inequality is not perpetuated⁸.

3. MA's Response

MA recognises that because people living with disabilities are amongst the poorest, most marginalised and vulnerable groups in the communities with which our partners, PRMM (India) and WoH (Sri Lanka) work, it is important that people with disabilities are considered, consulted and involved in the development process. Without this involvement of people with disabilities, MA recognises that the effectiveness and long term sustainability of projects may be compromised and their impact on communities minimised.

MA will encourage PRMM and WoH to ensure that:

- all people living with disabilities are afforded meaningful opportunities for participation and inclusion in the development process and that they experience empowerment, equality of entitlement and responsibility, dignity, justice and respect as would be provided to people without disabilities, irrespective of nationality, race, religion, gender, age or political persuasion;
- in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects, people living with disabilities benefit equally, and inequality and barriers to participation and inclusion are not perpetuated;
- awareness amongst staff is raised of the links between disability, poverty and development and of the importance of mainstreaming people with disabilities into programs and projects.

⁷ Australian Disability and Development Consortium, 2009, *Mainstreaming Disability*, <http://www.addc.org.au/2009/03/about-mainstreaming/>, retrieved 6 May 2010

⁸ *Ibid*