

Disability Inclusion Policy

Approval Date:	<i>June 2021</i>	Next Review Date:	<i>June 2024</i>
Responsibility:	<i>Deputy Executive Director</i>	Approved by:	<i>Executive Director</i>

1. OVERVIEW

ALWS recognises the integrity and value of each person and is committed to an approach to development that is fully inclusive of people with disabilities. Affirming that all are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27) and humbly seeking to follow the example of Jesus who sought out people with disabilities, ALWS works with its partners to ensure people with disabilities can access, influence and benefit from the development activities that ALWS supports.

Many people with disabilities count among the most vulnerable, whom ALWS seeks to find, welcome, and celebrate, and whom ALWS strives to empower, enhancing their skills for life, livelihoods and leadership (ALWS Strategic Directions, Outcomes 1.1 and 1.2).

The World Health Organisation estimates that more than one billion people, approximately 15 per cent of the world's population, live with some form of disability, and that people with disability are more likely to live in poverty than those without a disability, having less access to basic health, education and other services¹.

People with disabilities are often not thought of, kept out of mind, and even rendered invisible, out of sight. They may find themselves excluded not because of some diagnosable condition, but because they encounter barriers to inclusion. These barriers – whether physical, economic, social, political, or cultural – increase their vulnerability. Thus, disability “is associated with illiteracy, poor nutrition, lack of access to clean water, low rates of immunization against diseases and unhealthy and dangerous working conditions”.²

The families of people with disabilities tend to be poorer and more vulnerable than their neighbours, with higher living costs and reduced income. Where women and girls are the primary carers, as is commonly the case, gender inequalities deepen, with reduced opportunities for education and employment. Women and girls who themselves have disabilities face even greater barriers and are also at increased risk of physical and sexual abuse³.

For these reasons, ALWS strives to seek out and include people with disabilities as active participants in the humanitarian and development activities it supports.

2. GOAL

The empowerment and full inclusion of people with disabilities in and through the work of ALWS and its partners.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To recognise, respect and promote the rights of people with disabilities, ensuring that ALWS staff and partners are conversant with the rights described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

¹ World Health Organisation, [Disability \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int), accessed 15 April 2021; DFAT, [Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program \(extended to 2021\) | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://www.dfat.gov.au), p. 6.

² United Nations 2007, *Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol*, pp.1-2.

³ DFAT, [Development for All 2015-2020](https://www.dfat.gov.au), pp. 6, 11.

- 3.2 To identify and remove any barriers to the participation of people with disabilities in the operations of ALWS and to encourage and assist partners to do likewise.
- 3.3 To support partners to engage with people with disabilities and their representative organisations to better appreciate the diversity of the lived experiences of people with disabilities, help break down attitudes that reinforce barriers to inclusion, and design approaches to disability inclusion that are appropriate to local contexts.
- 3.4 To engage with partners on a twin-track approach that involves mainstreaming the inclusion of people with disabilities in all the relief and development work that ALWS supports, while also supporting initiatives specifically for people with disabilities; and supporting this twin-track approach with advocacy work and the development of ALWS and partners as inclusive organisations (four-track approach).
- 3.5 To support partners to promote and enable the active participation and empowerment of people with disabilities as contributors, leaders and decision makers in their communities and wider society, ensuring that people with disabilities can contribute to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and risk management of programs.
- 3.6 To work with partners to reduce poverty and vulnerability among people with disabilities and their families through relief and development programs that are inclusive of people with disabilities and their families, ensuring the collection of disaggregated data that enables ALWS and partners to know how well programs are reaching and contributing to positive outcomes for people with disabilities.
- 3.7 To engage with partners to include in relief and development programs, specific strategies for the inclusion of women and children with disabilities, recognising that they have special needs and often face multiple forms of discrimination and are at greater risk of abuse and violence.
- 3.8 To develop and support partners to develop people-to-people links and engagements with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and other representative bodies, to foster best practice of ALWS and partners in relation to disability inclusion.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Human dignity: ALWS believes that all people have been created in the image of God and therefore have an inherent and invaluable human dignity.

Inclusion & participation: ALWS values opportunity and inclusion for all people so that they can fully participate in society, the workplace, homelife and other dimensions.

Non-discrimination: ALWS recognises that discrimination, marginalisation and violence can be based on gender and disability and seeks to minimise these risks and occurrences.

Empowerment: ALWS supports empowerment which enables people to determine and control their own lives.

Justice: ALWS envisages a world where all people live in just and sustainable communities.

Christian love: ALWS believes that God's love is demonstrated through compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience⁴.

5. SCOPE

This policy applies to all ALWS personnel including Board members, employees, contractors/consultants and volunteers.

⁴ LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour, p.2 (taken from Colossians 3:12)

6. DEFINITIONS

ALWS follows the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) understanding of disability as: “an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.⁵

ALWS recognises that it is the interaction of impairments and barriers that results in disabilities (impairments + barriers = disabilities)⁶.

7. IMPLEMENTATION

To meet recognised best standards of practice, ALWS’ implementation of the policy will ensure compliance with the ACFID Code of Conduct’s Quality Principles and Commitments, particularly 2.4⁷, and fulfilment of the DFAT Australian NGO Accreditation Guidance Manual’s criteria related to disability inclusion⁸. ALWS will use the following methods to ensure implementation of its Disability Inclusion Policy overseas and at ALWS:

- Fostering an equal opportunity workplace that is inclusive of people with disabilities and supporting partners to do the same, including attending to inclusion at the intersection of gender and disability.
- Conducting awareness raising for ALWS and partners on the ALWS Disability Inclusion Policy.
- Providing socialisation and training for ALWS personnel on disability inclusion.
- Assessing the disability inclusion policies and practices of partners when conducting partner capacity assessments and through monitoring, and supporting any required capacity strengthening to meet required standards.
- Including disability as a cross-cutting issue in all program designs, appraisals, monitoring and evaluations, ensuring contextual analyses include analysis of barriers to inclusion, activities are inclusive, and that monitoring and evaluation tracks outcomes for people with disabilities.
- Supporting partners to foster the participation of people with disabilities in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and risk management of programs.
- Portraying people with disabilities in a dignified and respectful manner, whether through photos, videos, or text, and being sensitive to situations in which a person with a disability may not be able to provide informed consent.
- Promoting the voices and stories of people with disabilities and the principles of disability inclusion in public communications and community education work in Australia.
- Ensuring people with disabilities are able to participate in fundraising events.
- Conducting periodic assessments, at least every three years, of the disability inclusion practices of ALWS and its partners (for example, through self-assessments, peer reviews, or audits) and developing and implementing action plans to address any areas of weakness.
- Ensuring that there are disability inclusive feedback and complaints handling mechanisms for those in contact with the operations of ALWS and its partners.

⁵ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2007, Preamble (e).

⁶ See also DFAT, [Development for All 2015-2020](#), p. 9.

⁷ Commitment 2.4: We promote the empowerment of people with disabilities.

⁸ Indicators A1.3, A2.4, B2.3, B3.2, B3.7, B4.1.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

The ALWS Board is responsible for

- supporting management to nurture the continuous strengthening of an inclusive and non-discriminatory workplace culture at ALWS
- undertaking training and refreshers on disability inclusive development

The ALWS Management Team is responsible for

- ensuring that ALWS implements the policy
- nurturing the continuous strengthening of an inclusive and non-discriminatory workplace culture
- tracking progress and compliance related to this policy, creating opportunities and responding to any concerns that may arise
- raising awareness and fostering continuous learning on disability inclusion related matters

All ALWS personnel are individually responsible for

- understanding and complying with this policy
- participating in awareness-raising, training and reflection sessions
- contributing to policy implementation and the continuous strengthening of an inclusive workplace culture

All ALWS personnel are responsible for raising disability-related concerns or feedback with their line manager (for staff) or the Board Chair (for the Executive Director) or the General Church Board Chair (for the Board). Complaints related to disability inclusion should be reported to ALWS Complaints Manager (see ALWS Complaints Management Policy) and will be dealt with appropriately and formally.

The ALWS Program Officer with the role of focal point for disability inclusion is responsible for initiating, supporting and coordinating the implementation of this policy, including by responding to questions, accessing knowledge and expertise, and representing a disability inclusive perspective in discussions and program management.

9. RELATED DOCUMENTS

ACFID Code of Conduct (2017, revised 1 January 2019)

DFAT Australian NGO Accreditation Guidance Manual (2018)

DFAT Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability inclusive development in Australia's aid program.

Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities (2018)

LWF Disability Inclusion Guidelines (2019)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (2016)

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (2014)

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

10. REVIEW

This policy is subject to review every three years.

10.1 Record of Policy Review and Version History

Version No.	Date Approved	Approved By	Description of Changes
1.0	September 2014	ALWS Board	Introduction of new policy
2.0	June 2021	Executive Director	.
3.0			