

**Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network Meeting Communiqué[[1]](#footnote-1)**

## *31 January – 2 February 2018, Helsinki, Finland*

The Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network met in Helsinki on 31 January – 2 February 2018, for its second annual meeting. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) co-chaired the meeting. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA Finland) and the Abilis Foundation (Abilis). Representatives from 40 organisations (see attached) met to identify key actions to advance disability inclusive education, social protection and humanitarian action in developing countries. Representatives also agreed to work together to prioritise the collection and analysis of data to guarantee that persons with disabilities are not left behind in development and humanitarian efforts.

Finland’s then Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Kai Mykkänen, opened the meeting by acknowledging the GLAD Network as a crucial strategic coordination platform. The Minister also emphasised the negative effects of stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities, and highlighted Finland’s leading role in promoting inclusive social, economic and development policies.

The Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, while delivering [her statement](http://ministers.dfat.gov.au/fierravanti-wells/speeches/Pages/2018/cf_sp_180131.aspx?w=p2wUlmE1t7kKl1%2BiOm3gqg%3D%3D), reaffirmed that disability is a crosscutting priority for Australia’s international engagement on human rights, development assistance and humanitarian action. The Minister also emphasised that ensuring persons with disabilities are central to the planning and delivery of development is key to addressing barriers to full participation.

Gerard Howe, Head of the Inclusive Societies Department, United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), standing in for the Rt Hon Lord Bates, Minister of State at DFID, reiterated the United Kingdom’s commitment to disability inclusion and introduced their plans to host, alongside IDA and the Government of Kenya, a Global Disability Summit on 24 July 2018 in London.

Colin Allen, Chair of IDA, outlined the aim of the Helsinki Network meeting as being to further develop a firm, coherent and practical commitment to disability-inclusive development and humanitarian action in line with the [*Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (*CRPD*),](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html) through meaningful engagement with Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), and capitalizing on the collective voice, role and resources of GLAD Network members. On behalf of the GLAD Network, he welcomed as new members the Asian Development Bank, Global Affairs Canada, Nippon Foundation, UN Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He also acknowledged the participation of interested organisations and observers at the Helsinki meeting, and the almost twofold increase in attendance since the 2017 meeting in Berlin, demonstrating increasing global recognition of the value of the GLAD Network.

**Shared experiences engaging meaningfully with Disabled People’s Organisations**

Consistent with the GLAD Network’s goal of learning from each other by sharing knowledge and resources, the Abilis Foundation chaired a session on meaningful engagement with DPOs, with perspectives from bilateral donors and DPOs.

DFAT’s technical partner CBM Australia shared [lessons learnt](https://did4all.com.au/Uploads/CreatingANewBusinessAsUsualDPOEngagementInDevelopment.pdf) from the Australian Aid program on how donors can meaningfully engage DPOs at each stage of the development and humanitarian programming cycle. DPO representatives from Indonesia and Vanuatu shared their experiences of meaningful DPO engagement within bilateral programs. Effective approaches by DFAT included: modelling an inclusive approach and promoting DPO leadership and expertise within DFAT and with partners; investing in DPOs and their capacity; and collaborating with DPOs at global, regional, country and local levels to understand concerns and share information, including through appointing dedicated disability focal points within donor and program staffing structures.

The Abilis Foundation shared its experiences as a foundation working on disability capacity building through the provisions of grants, notably by building the capacity of local DPOs through specific empowerment projects. Abilis emphasized the diversity of disability and noted the importance of adopting cross-disability approaches. Abilis recommended partners appoint a focal point for civil society engagement and invest in finding and engaging with civil society organisations that represent the broadest spectrum of the disability community.

Reflecting on the shared lessons, GLAD Network members agreed to:

* amplify the voices of DPOs by supporting their increased participation in major international forums and mechanisms; and
* commit to collaborating with DPOs and persons with disabilities when building internal capacity in disability-inclusion.

**Stakeholder sessions**

The GLAD Network is committed to supporting collaboration amongst its members, including by facilitating opportunities for open dialogue within its constituent groups. Accordingly, during the GLAD Network meeting State, multilateral agency, foundation and private sector members met separately as stakeholder groups to develop and agree priorities for a *2018-19 GLAD Network Strategic Plan*. The outcomes of these stakeholder discussions were then shared in a plenary sessions facilitated by the GLAD co-chairs.

***State members***The Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific chaired the meeting of GLAD Network’s State members.

Consistent with the GLAD Network’s goal of learning from each other by sharing knowledge and resources, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) shared the findings of an evaluation of its *2013-2017 Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in German Development Cooperation*. DFAT also shared the findings of an Office of Development Effectiveness evaluation of disability inclusion in Australian development assistance. These publically available independent evaluations identified a range of mutually reinforcing measures that donors can take to build organisational capacity to deliver disability-inclusive development assistance. The German and Australian experience shows that a more systematic approach to disability inclusion mainstreaming requires a clear mandate and implementation structure, resource allocation, appropriate training and technical assistance for staff and implementing partners, better engagement with DPOs, and a system for capturing, sharing and learning from evidence of good practice programming. In addition, consistent internal leadership and credible external advocacy is necessary to drive a focus on disability-inclusion.

In considering priorities for a *2018-19 GLAD Network Strategic Plan*, its State members agreed the GLAD Network should retain a focus on all four thematic priorities, with the extent of engagement on each priority to be determined by individual members, consistent with their national priorities and capabilities. State members acknowledged the importance of working across the four priority areas and addressing gender as a crosscutting theme.

State members agreed that collectively they could be particularly effective in supporting the GLAD Network’s goals by focusing on knowledge sharing and joint advocacy. Recognising the breadth of knowledge and resources which development agencies have, State members committed to exploring options for pooling technical resources, including technical assistance and training on disability-inclusion for staff and implementing partners, in collaboration with DPOs and persons with disabilities.

State members also agreed to work together in their disability-inclusive advocacy to maximise their influence with international partners. Specifically, State members committed to including disability as a standing agenda item in their high-level consultations with UN agencies, the World Health Organization (WHO) and development banks, while also encouraging developing countries to operationalise existing commitments such as the *CRPD*. State members agreed to support the creation of an OECD DAC inclusion marker and include persons with disabilities in their delegations to major international forums. Specific forums and mechanisms that State members agreed to prioritise for collective advocacy include the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD, the High Level Political Forum, and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

State members welcomed the UK’s and IDA’s initiative to host a Global Disability Summit and agreed to support the event through ministerial level attendance, encouraging participation by countries in members’ spheres of influence, supporting DPO participation and exploring other opportunities to build momentum towards the Summit.

***Multilateral members***

The UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO) chaired the session of multilateral members. Multilateral members reviewed progress towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities within their respective organisations, and the ongoing challenges to advancing the disability agenda within their agencies. Challenges include lack of sustainable resources internally, and barriers to collecting data and evidence on the situation of persons with disabilities globally. Multilateral members discussed the lack of engagement with DPOs, including the urgent need to engage better with DPOs in the implementation of programs by UN Country teams.

Multilateral members noted the absence of an accountability framework, and the need for a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the *CRPD* across the UN and its agencies. Multilateral members stressed the importance of institutionalising disability on the global international agenda, and for the GLAD Network to leverage its collective advocacy for inclusive governance at the highest level. Multilateral members committed to work together in their disability-inclusive advocacy to maximise their influence, both outside the existing GLAD Network membership as well as internally and within UN agencies. Multilateral members committed to supporting the Global Disability Summit through representation at the highest level and by bringing relevant experiences and commitments to the event.

***Foundation and other members***

The Disability Rights Fund (DRF) and Open Societies Foundation (OSF) facilitated a discussion on the GLAD Network’s engagement with foundations and civil society organisations. Participants discussed the critical importance of leadership and commitment within their organisations as well as the need to build the capacity of both DPOs and other stakeholders to facilitate more fruitful collaboration and complementarity across the disability community. Participants committed to using existing regional and country-level fora to promote disability inclusion and the goals of the GLAD Network. Participants agreed to create a joint resource tool with evidence of good practice examples to support organisations interested in advancing disability inclusion. Participants agreed to support advocacy to encourage more donors to mainstream disability-inclusive development and humanitarian action.

Participants agreed to support the Global Disability Summit by suggesting strategic and influential attendees and speakers, including from the disability community. Participants also pledged to follow up on commitments made at the Summit.

**Mobilising our collective purchasing power**

Business Disability International (BDI) introduced and defined the concept of ‘disability confident procurement’ and facilitated a plenary session on mobilising the potential of the GLAD Network’s collective purchasing power. Presentations were made by the WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) illustrating the importance of accessibility and assistive products as essential components for disability inclusion. WHO presented on the [*Priority Assistive Products List*](http://www.who.int/phi/implementation/assistive_technology/global_survey-apl/en/), which provides a model from which states can develop National priority assistive products lists. WHO also highlighted the need for identification of products requiring immediate market shaping. The session reflected on the experience of various multilateral health organisations in making medicines and vaccines affordable and accessible through partnership and bulk-purchase, and discussed the potential to lower the cost of assistive and accessible products through collective bulk purchasing. This would facilitate inclusion by enabling more persons with disabilities to benefit from mainstream development initiative.

UNICEF highlighted the importance of consistently applying accessibility standards in the built environment by presenting on the International Organization for Standardization standards on [*Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment*](https://www.iso.org/committee/291991/x/catalogue/p/1/u/0/w/0/d/0) and UNICEF procurement, monitoring and reporting procedures to achieve accessible infrastructure.

The GLAD Network agreed to explore how its members can use their knowledge, influence and collective purchasing power to shape the market towards achieving affordable assistive products and accessibility of the built environment. This will include exploring how the GLAD Network can influence existing mechanisms such as the Global Procurement Taskforce, and how GLAD Network members can work towards inclusive procurement processes within their own organisations through engagement with their respective procurement sections.

**Thematic Working Group Sessions**

Working groups to progress collaborative action on the GLAD Network’s agreed focus areas of disability-inclusive education, social protection and humanitarian action met during the Network meeting and reported back to a plenary session facilitated by the GLAD Co-chairs.

***Humanitarian action***

DFAT and Abilis facilitated a meeting of the GLAD Humanitarian Action Working Group that commenced with Finnish Church Aid and Abilis providing insights from the field, presenting findings from a recent joint mission to Uganda. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (IASC-TT) provided an update on the *Global Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, and identified opportunities for the GLAD Network to contribute to their development.

The Working Group further developed a firm, coherent and practical commitment to ensure the safety and dignity of all people in humanitarian crises, leaving no one behind, centred on encouraging endorsement and implementation of the [*Charter on Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action*](http://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org/). The Working Group committed to improving disability data collection, and promoting gender equality, women’s empowerment and women with disabilities in leadership. The Working Group agreed to advance these priorities by sharing knowledge and resources and through joint advocacy on disability-inclusive humanitarian action by GLAD Network members at key development and humanitarian events. The priorities will also be progressed by supporting the development of the IASC-TT *Global Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action* and helping to shape successful outcomes at the Global Disability Summit. The Working Group further committed to enhancing engagement of persons with disabilities and DPOs, including by building the capacity of DPOs and supporting their participation in major international meetings, including where possible as members of national delegations.

***Education***IDA and USAID facilitated a meeting of the GLAD Education Working Group which included presentations from members on approaches to inclusive education. UNICEF presented on technical level coordination and mapping, and the option for the GLAD Network to build upon and identify common areas of work to enable capacity sharing among the members. DFID provided a donor perspective to the Global Partnership on Education (GPE), and the members identified ways in which the Working Group could work collaboratively with the GPE Secretariat on disability inclusion. The Working Group reiterated the need to develop and widely disseminate key messages to support consistent advocacy for including disability in key forums and on mainstream agendas.

The Working Group noted that the GLAD Network Online Knowledge Sharing Platform provides a means to share information, develop and disseminate consistent messaging, and connect with colleagues between organisations to coordinate common positions. Members committed to using the platform to engage in webinars and mutually learn from experiences. DFID and OSF will co-chair the Working Group in future.

***Social protection***

ILO, GIZ and IDA facilitated a meeting of the GLAD Social Protection Working Group that ran parallel with, and was attended via teleconference by social protection experts from ILO and the Finnish Ministry attending the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board meeting and UN Conference of Commission for Social Development in New York. The Working Group noted the significance of the two New York meetings simultaneously considering disability, reflecting the enhanced profile that disability-inclusive social protection was now receiving.  In considering the *Joint Statement Towards Inclusive Social Protection System Supporting Full and Effective Participation of Persons with Disabilities* (the ‘*Joint Statement*’) and the ILO[*World Social Protection Report 2017-19*](http://ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/world-social-security-report/2017-19/lang--en/index.htm), the Working Group further noted that they demonstrate a paradigm shift needed in the design of social protection policies. This implies moving away from a charity or “incapacity to work” approach to a new enabling approach that recognizes the capacities of all persons with disabilities and addresses the barriers which they face in the labour market. Such approach should promote an adequate and flexible combination of income security and disability-related support to promote economic empowerment.

In the subsequent plenary session, the GLAD Network endorsed the *Joint Statement*, reflecting the GLAD Network’s shared commitment to inclusive social protection systems for persons with disabilities. The GLAD Network agreed to encourage partners to disseminate and apply the *Joint Statement* consistent with the *CRPD* and the *2030 Agenda*.

The GLAD Network also supported the development of a global disability-inclusive social protection project to develop tools and expertise to assist in the design and implementation of inclusive social protective systems. It also showed its support for initiatives that will facilitate and strengthen meaningful DPO engagement in this process.

**Measuring equality through disability data**

In March 2017 the GLAD Network, meeting in Berlin, acknowledged the urgent need for better data on the situation of persons with disabilities globally and endorsed the use of the [*Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions*](http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/short-set-of-disability-questions/) and the [*UNICEF/Washington Group Child Functioning Module*](http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/child-disability/) for SDG data disaggregation. Recalling this endorsement, the Network welcomed the 30 October 2017 *Joint Statement by the United Nations Statistics Division and the Washington Group*. This *Joint Statement* noted that the Washington Group tools have been tested extensively and, when added to other surveys, can be an efficient way to disaggregate data by disability status to assist in monitoring the implementation of the *CRPD* and the *SDGs*. The Network reaffirmed its support for these tools and agreed to advocate for their use, including at the 49th Session of the UN Statistical Commission on 6–9 March 2018.

**Towards a new OECD DAC Disability Marker**

The GLAD Network supports the coordination among Network members towards the adoption of a DAC Secretariat [*Proposal for the Introduction of a Policy Marker to Track Development Finance in Support of Persons with Disabilities in the DAC Creditor Reporting System*](http://search.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)14&docLanguage=En). State members agreed to engage in joint advocacy towards this end, including through their country representatives on the DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics.

**GLAD Network Updates**

The GLAD Co-chairs chaired a session on the work undertaken by the GLAD Secretariat since the 2017 GLAD Network meeting to facilitate greater cooperation and coordination by GLAD Network members. The Co-chairs formally launched the [GLAD Network online knowledge-sharing platform](https://gladnetwork.net/) for facilitating out of session communication, information sharing and collaboration, and IDA presented on its functionality.

Amendments to the [*GLAD Network Terms of Reference*](https://gladnetwork.net/search/resources/glad-terms-reference) were adopted by an overwhelming majority, bringing a troika governance arrangement into effect such that there are up to three GLAD Co-chairs at any one time. DFID was nominated as the incoming rotating GLAD Co-chair, commencing in July 2018 for a period of 12 months. BMZ announced a financial contribution of € 50 000 to the GLAD Secretariat in 2018 to support the work of the Network.

**Next steps**In closing, co-chairs re-iterated a number of themes that had emerged during the meeting, including:

* the importance of members supporting the GLAD Secretariat, through financial or in-kind contributions, so that it can support the work of the Network
* the importance of meaningful engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all of the GLAD Network’s activities
* the capacity for GLAD Network members to utilise the Network to ensure collective and consistent advocacy on an issue, including through drafting messages that can be disseminated by the Secretariat via the knowledge sharing platform.

The GLAD Secretariat will develop, for Network endorsement a *GLAD Network 2018/2019 Strategic Plan*, and key messaging on each of the four key thematic priority areas for use in high-level advocacy.

***Upcoming meetings***

The GLAD Steering Committee will meet in New York on Friday 15 June 2018, following the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD.

It is anticipated that the next GLAD Network meeting, hosts for which the GLAD Secretariat is seeking volunteers, will be held in the first quarter of 2019. The 15 June 2018 Steering Committee meeting will consider possible dates and locations. This timely announcement will facilitate early arrangements for Ministerial representation.

## **../Dropbox/glad%20network/Logo/GLAD-logo/for%20website.jpgGlobal Action on Disability (GLAD) Network Meeting 31 January to 2 February 2018, Helsinki**

**Participant list**

Jointly organised by the GLAD Co-chairs, the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (DFAT) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and co-hosted by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA Finland) and the Abilis Foundation.

*\*\*Denotes GLAD Steering Committee Member; \*Denotes GLAD Network Member; No star denotes Observer or Guest to meeting*

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1. Issued by GLAD co-chairs as a consensus document in consultation with meeting participants. GLAD Network commitments are voluntary and non-binding on individual members. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)