



**MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC  
SENATOR THE HON. CONCETTA FIERRAVANTI – WELLS**

**SPEECH**

***Together Towards an Inclusive World:*  
Parliamentary morning tea on disability-inclusive development**

**House of Representatives Alcove, Parliament House, Canberra  
Wednesday 30 November, 11:00am**

Thank you Jackie

I would just like to start by also adding my acknowledgement of country.

And I would like to acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues who are here, we are having divisions this morning so I am sure that MP's and Senators will come and go.

I am delighted to be here today to celebrate our achievements and renew our commitment to working together towards a more inclusive world.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Australian Disability and Development Consortium – and all of its members – in organising today's events and creating these wonderful videos.

Can I extend a particular thanks to Chair Jackie Lauff, Executive Officer Pascal Rigaldes and the members of the Executive Committee, for their tireless efforts to promote disability-inclusive development.

Why do we support people with disabilities through the aid program?

It is often said – but worth repeating – that approximately 1 in 7 people globally have disabilities.

This equates to around 1 billion people across the world, but it is not just that 1 billion it is themselves and their families who are disproportionately affected by poverty.

If our development efforts do not reach people with disabilities, we are falling short.

Sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, upon which our region's stability depends, is furthered when all people, including people with a disability, enjoy fruitful lives in their communities.

More equal and inclusive societies are ones where people with disabilities can access quality education and employment opportunities, and can contribute to their community.

Such societies are stronger, more prosperous and more stable.

World leaders have agreed to a shared vision for the future – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – that makes the commitment to *'leave no one behind'*.

Ah Senator Moore, can I just acknowledge Senator Moore; who is the shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific, and I think Senator Siewert may have returned as well.

This has the potential to be truly transformative for people with disabilities.

Australia is committed to working towards:

- equal and accessible education;
- inclusive economic growth and employment;
- accessible cities and transport; and
- social, economic and political inclusion for people with disabilities.

As part of this agenda, we have resolved to build better data on the situation of people with disabilities, so that we can track progress towards more equal and inclusive societies.

Otherwise we simply will not know whether our efforts are reaching those farthest behind.

That is why Australia is supporting work to strengthen disability data collection and analysis globally, so that people with disabilities are visible in the global development agenda.

Australia has a strong track record in disability-inclusion development.

DFAT's disability strategy, "*Development for All 2015-2020*", outlines our vision for supporting improved quality of life for people with disabilities through our aid investments and diplomatic efforts.

Australia was one of the first developed countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Since doing so in 2008, we have worked to make inclusion a part of how we do business.

We recognise that people with disabilities are the real experts on disability.

But they have too often been left out of development planning and implementation.

Australia's approach to development assistance is informed by consultation with people with disabilities, and their representative organisations, in our region.

Again, I would like to acknowledge the valuable role of ADDC, and of its members, in supporting this.

Australia will continue to support disabled people's organisations in developing countries, which play a vital role in giving voice to people with disabilities.

For example, we support the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund to provide small grants to disabled people's organisations in developing countries to advocate for their rights.

We work in partnership with the Pacific Disability Forum and the International Disability Alliance.

Australia is committed to advocating for disability-inclusion through international diplomacy.

Reflecting our international reputation as a strong proponent of disability inclusion, Australia is currently the co-chair, alongside the International Disability Alliance, of the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network.

GLAD is one mechanism through which Australia promotes disability-inclusive development.

Alongside the Foreign Minister, I promote development efforts that people with disabilities can benefit from, and contribute to, on an equal basis with others.

As I continue my program of visits to Pacific Island countries, I look forward to seeing first-hand some of the great work that is already being done to realise the rights of people with disabilities.

I will speak with counterparts about the importance of continuing this work; a message that is reinforced by Australia's heads of mission and diplomatic efforts across our broad diplomatic network.

Australia has very productive partnerships for inclusive development in Vanuatu, for example.

The Vanuatu Skills for Economic Growth Program has made great progress in consulting with and including people with disabilities in skills development.

The proportion of participants with disabilities in Vanuatu doubled between 2013 and 2015.

And in 2014 and 2015, it is estimated that more than half of the trainees with a disability increased their income within 6-8 months of participating in this skills development program.

This is development assistance at its best: reaching those most disadvantaged, and helping them to help themselves.

But how did Vanuatu achieve these strong results?

They worked with disabled people's organisations in government and in the private sector.

They established specific positions to drive disability inclusion, or disability focal points.

They provided disability awareness training.

They allocated a budget line to enable access and inclusion, and monitored their progress by collecting data specifically to disability issues.

As this example, and the videos being shown today, so powerfully demonstrate our work is making a real difference – not only in the individual lives of people with disabilities in our region, but also for their families and their communities.

Australia is committed to supporting people with disabilities in developing countries to advocate for their right to the same opportunity as others, and an equal say in the decisions that affect their communities.

We have seen improvement and change, but we need to keep working.

I am honoured to join such a dedicated group of people here today to renew our commitment to work together, determined that our development efforts should leave no one behind.

Thank you for your kind attention.