DISABILITY INCLUSION POLICY

1. Scope

As a non-government-organisation working in Australia and abroad, with the primary objective of eliminating blindness, Sight For All recognises the importance of promoting and improving the rights of people with disability, particularly those living with visual impairment or who are blind.

Sight For All aims to enhance the participation of people with disability in the community; reduce poverty and improve equality including to enable education and employment opportunities. This policy recognises Sight For All's commitment to the full participation of people with disability in all aspects of the organisation.

Sight For All works to four key strategies in the fight against blindness. These strategies are comprehensive research, sustainable education, infrastructure support and eye health awareness. Sight For All's strategies and projects in Australia and in partner countries are all aimed at reducing the impact of blindness and vision impairment on individuals, their families and their communities.

This Disability Inclusion Policy provides guidance to all Sight For All representatives including Board Directors, staff, Visionaries, Fellows, volunteers, project participants and project partners, to ensure that collectively the organisation maintains a disability inclusive approach.

This policy applies to Sight For All Board Directors, staff, Visionaries, Fellows, volunteers, project participants and project partners.

2. Disability and its context defined

In 2007 Australia and New Zealand signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNCRPD) on 13 December 2006. The purpose of the URCRPD is to:

".....promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity."

The Convention aims to ensure that people with disability enjoy human rights on an equal basis with others. Sight For All's Disability Inclusion Policy emanates from this Convention as well as the Australian Government's 'Development For All' Strategy. In addition to supporting this Convention, Sight For All is a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct.

Sight For All's Disability Inclusion Policy has been written to ensure compatibility with the Australian Government's Disability Inclusion Strategy and comply with the ACFID Code of Conduct.

3. Definitions

Disability

Persons with disabilities include those who have 'long-term' physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability Article 1, 2006

Disability Inclusive Development

Promotes effective development by recognising that, like all members of a population, people with disabilities are both beneficiaries and agents of development. An inclusive approach seeks to identify and address barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating and in benefiting from development. The explicit inclusion of people with disabilities as active participants in the development processes leads to broader benefits for families and communities, reduces the impacts of poverty and positively contributes to a country's economic growth.

Disability Inclusion in the DFAT Development Program Good Practice Note April 2021

4. Guiding Principles

The principles that underpin Sight For All's Disability Inclusion Policy include:

- that to achieve the most significant and positive change, activities must be disability inclusive
- that disability can lead to social and economic disadvantages, the denial of rights and limited opportunities to equally participate in the community that extreme poverty will not be eradicated without considering the needs and rights of people with a disability
- that people with disability are entitled to human rights and as such should be included in society in every equitable way possible
- that women and girls with disability, along with the elderly, are the most marginalised and poorest in the world
- that in planning and implementing disability inclusive development, people with disability and their diversity should be respected and considered.
- that people with a disability should be included in all phases of development including planning implementation and evaluation.

5. Sight For All's work in Disability Inclusion

The nature of Sight For All's work in Australia and partner countries involves developing sustainable solutions to eye health for people who are blind or vision impaired. As such, Sight For All's work has the core function of assisting persons with disability, to eliminate blindness and moreover, provide individuals with greater opportunity for education and employment.

Sight For All projects and activities focus on addressing the impairment of blindness and on removing or reducing the systematic barriers that prevent people from having access to the services they need to restore or improve their vision. In doing so, Sight For All contributes to reducing the individual, social and economic impact of this disability.

Sight For All recognises that there are barriers that may impact on, influence and even limit, the full inclusion of people with disability in their communities. Sight For All also acknowledges that there are people with disability who, through circumstances, are particularly disadvantaged.

Sight For All commits to:

- working with partners to treat and prevent blinding eye conditions, with the goal of contributing to a reduction in both the incidence and the impact of this disability
- promote the development of sustainable education and service provision systems with an emphasis on local ownership at state, regional and national levels
- uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- promote the general principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
- ensure adherence to ACFID's Code of Conduct and Commitment 2.4 'We promote the empowerment of people with disabilities'
- advocate on behalf of people with disability and specifically around the issue of blindness at a local, national and international level
- seek to make eye care service provision a priority issue amongst governments, local authorities and relevant stakeholders and promote the need for and benefits of sustainable services, systems and funding
- contribute to the development and implementation of national policies and programs that include involvement of people with disabilities
- develop and support partnership with organisations for persons with disabilities
- develop relationships with groups or organisations which uphold the rights and dignity of people with disability
- select and maintain partnerships with organisations with the capacity to develop comprehensive, sustainable, affordable and accessible eye care services which will contribute to reducing and eliminating blindness
- ensure our fundraising events are accessible to people with disabilities wherever possible
- provide equal employment opportunities and provide a work environment that is free from discrimination

- actively encourage and support partner organisations and governments to consider disability inclusion when planning projects and implementing health services
- work with partners to address the barriers that prevent people accessing services, including poverty, age, gender, lack of knowledge, geographic location and social stigma
- where possible (such as during infrastructure development), include design features that promote or prioritise access to and mobility within physical buildings for people who are blind, vision impaired, elderly or otherwise have a disability
- developing sustainable systems that enable appropriate intervention, education and referrals to facilitate access to affordable, quality eye care for people in isolated or rural areas
- use material, such as appropriate language and images, that uphold the rights and dignity of persons with disability
- obtain informed consent for the use of stories and images of people with disability.

6. Disability Inclusion in Project Design and Monitoring

Sight For All uses Country Situational Analysis and Capacity Assessments to identify needs in-country and that are specifically applicable to the project. Both include an analysis of barriers and existing services for people with disabilities.
Questions asked include:

- What Government strategies exist to support people with disabilities?
- What disability services exist?
- Is there a whole of Government approach to disability inclusion?
- Has there been participation for people with disabilities in project design?
- What opportunities exist for people with disabilities to participate in project collaboration and design?

Capacity Assessments determine that the facility in which the project is being conducted is physically accessible for people with disabilities and whether signage is large enough for those with a vision impairment to read.

Disability inclusion is a component of Good Development Practice Workshops delivered to project participants at the commencement of new projects. All staff, Board Directors, Visionaries, volunteers and project participants also participate in Good Development Practice Workshops.

Any disability inclusion practices that are undertaken as part of projects, are reported in the Project Completion Report. This report also allows for recommendations to be made for future projects.

Advocacy impacts and is impacted by Sight For All's other four strategist of Collaborative Research, Sustainable Education, Infrastructure Support and Eye Health Awareness.

Where possible, Sight For All advocates for blindness prevention initiatives at local, national and international levels. Sight For All seeks to make eye care service provision a priority issue and promotes the need for and benefits of sustainable services, systems and funding. As members of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and Vision 2020, Sight For All is working with peak bodies to develop accessible eye care services that contribute to reducing and eliminating blindness.

7. Disability Inclusion, Gender Equity and Poverty

Sight For All acknowledges the link between disability and gender and the impact of poverty on disability inclusion. Evidence suggests that two out of every three people who are blind are women who face greater barriers when accessing eye care. In low-middle income countries, women are much less likely than men to use eye care services.

Indirect project beneficiaries of Sight For All projects include women, men, girls and boys who present at the eye hospital for treatment. Fellows being trained by Sight For All record details of the number of patients treated, their gender and if they have a disability. Sight For All Fellows trained in Australia and in-country consists of representation of both men and women.

8. Responsibilities

The Sight For All Board of Directors has overall responsibility for ensuring that all Directors, employees, Visionaries, volunteers, project participants, Fellows and partners are aware of and act in accordance with this Disability Inclusion Policy.

9. References

United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 13th December, 2006. Available from < http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml >

10. Related Documents

Sight For All Child and Young Person Protection Policy
Sight For All Code of Conduct Policy
Sight For All Complaints Handling Policy
Sight For All Gender Equality Policy
Sight For All Photographic Consent Procedure
Sight For All Program Management Manual
Sight For All Volunteer Policy

11. Review

The Sight For All Disability Inclusion Policy is reviewed on a biennial basis.

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