



INTEGRATION, MAINSTREAMING, INCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

This section looks at some key concepts, in particular the concept of *mainstreaming* and its importance in terms of disability inclusion. It discusses how to ensure mainstreaming is effective, and how we can show whether mainstreaming is taking place. It also looks at what we mean by inclusive development.

Key concepts of disability integration, mainstreaming, and inclusion

The terms disability integration, mainstreaming and inclusion are often used interchangeably but they have different meanings:

Disability integration is about providing certain features and arrangements which allow some persons with disabilities to access and participate in their environment in limited circumstances or in reaction to a stated need. Or – it is the intermixing of groups or persons with disabilities that were previously segregated. This approach is reactive rather than proactive – it integrates the person with a disability into an already established structure.

Disability mainstreaming is the consideration of the different conditions, situations and needs of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes at the stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

It is not about adding a disability component but is a strategy that ensures that the concerns of persons with disabilities are an integral dimension in any policy or programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Mainstreaming is a method to promote inclusion and address barriers that prevent equal and full participation.

It aims to ensure that persons with disabilities have the same rights as others.

Disability inclusion provides all of the features and arrangements that allow all persons with disabilities to access and participate in their environment in advance of any stated need. It is proactive and anticipatory. The goal of inclusion is to facilitate an environment in which no one is or feels left out as a result of their difference. The environment is designed to fit the person.



Benefits of disability mainstreaming

The social model of disability illustrates that disability is the result of discrimination by mainstream society, where persons with impairments are excluded by structures, policies and practices at every level that discriminate against them.

Persons with disabilities have regular needs, not special needs. If society disables persons with disabilities, the solution is to remove the barriers and include them.

Participation of persons with disabilities brings positive effects for all: it reduces negative attitudes, and allows persons with disabilities to be contributing members of society. Negative attitudes lead to low self-esteem and self-respect amongst persons with disabilities that hugely influences their potential.

Mainstreaming is a question of rights. When persons with disabilities are mainstreamed in different settings, such as education and employment, they are operating in a more natural context. For example, mainstreaming children with disabilities in education allows for their specific learning needs to be provided for in a regular classroom rather than in a special education classroom.

Children with disabilities are expected to function in society alongside non-disabled children, and if their specific learning needs are considered/provided for in a regular classroom this provides them opportunities to learn important life skills alongside their peers, especially those involving socialization.

Expectations in mainstream classrooms are also often higher than those of segregated classrooms, and students achieve greater success when they are held to higher standards.

Having children or adults with disabilities as classmates, university colleagues or work colleagues is also beneficial to non-disabled people. Mainstreaming teaches them about diversity and helps them to understand disability and to form meaningful relationships with people with different needs and experiences to themselves.

Challenges to disability mainstreaming

A major challenge to mainstreaming is negative attitudes. There remains widespread lack of understanding of the abilities of persons with disabilities as well as their needs and rights. Often they are marginalized just because they are not considered in plans and policies – and when they are not *included* they are often *excluded*.

Low self-esteem of persons with disabilities is another factor, as well as high illiteracy and poverty levels. Organizations often also have physical barriers that hinder mainstreaming.

Teamwork in disability mainstreaming

Disability mainstreaming requires the collaboration of Government, OPDs, service providers, and other players, each fulfilling a specific role:

Government is responsible for ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities in line with its national laws and policies as well as international instruments to which it has committed, such as the UN CRPD and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

OPDs are the voice of persons with disabilities and it is their role to identify their needs and identify the barriers to their inclusion. OPDs represent the views of persons with disabilities to decision makers and develop the skills of their membership to advocate and negotiate for the achievement of their rights. OPDs can play a vital role in providing peer support for persons with disabilities: empowering them to discuss their experiences and rights with people in a similar situation. OPDs can also play an important role in providing this service for parents of children with disabilities, partners, and other family members.



Service providers are responsible to provide services in line with the demands of rights holders as well as in provisions of government policies and guidelines.

Family members also play a critical role in disability mainstreaming by supporting their family member to achieve their potential, and to be included in all aspects of life and society, and advocating for their rights in every situation.

How to facilitate disability mainstreaming

To achieve mainstreaming these areas must be considered:

- **Involvement of persons with disabilities and their families:** a critical component of mainstreaming is the involvement of persons with disabilities and their families and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) from the outset.
- **Understanding the concept of mainstreaming:** all people involved must understand the principles and rationale of mainstreaming.
- **Support of stakeholders:** all key people involved need to be supportive of mainstreaming.
- **Situation assessment:** a baseline picture needs to be developed of the current situation of the area being addressed – for example mainstreaming in a school, or office, or a government ministry. This should analyze how persons with disabilities are currently excluded. The baseline should also include a stakeholder mapping exercise to document the roles of different stakeholders.
- **Develop a supportive culture:** strategies must be developed to support organizational change such as revisions of policies and procedures, and disability sensitization training.

- **Learning and networking:** lessons can be learnt from past experience or from other organizations who have facilitated mainstreaming.
- **Considerations for diversity within persons with disabilities:** the needs of persons with different disabilities must be taken into account, as well as differences in, for example, age and gender.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** systems and tools must be in place to monitor the success of the mainstreaming and adapt as necessary based on successes and challenges.

Definition of inclusive development

Inclusive development means that all stages of a development process take into account the needs of persons with disabilities. Its features include:

- **Equal rights:** The entire community benefit in the same way from mainstream development processes. Disability-inclusive development sets out to achieve equity for persons with disabilities as well as full/active participation in, and access to, all aspects of society.
- **Participation:** Persons with disabilities are actively involved and benefit from mainstream programmes and take part in decision-making.
- **Accessibility:** Environmental, institutional and attitudinal barriers are identified and addressed to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully included in all spheres of life, that they participate in society and are optimally able to achieve their ambitions.
- **Sustainability:** Inclusive development is not a one-off activity. Including persons with disabilities needs to be embedded in all levels of a country's culture, and visible in policies, systems and practices.

Inclusive development requires that all persons be provided with equal access to all areas of life. For example:

- **Inclusive education** requires that there is accessibility of the educational infrastructure including buildings, training materials and methods and that children with disabilities be included in general education.
- **Inclusive health** requires accessible buildings and equipment, appropriately trained health care providers and accessible information. It includes early assessments for children and early identification and referral systems.
- **Inclusive livelihood** requires access to areas including vocational training, skills development, financial services, wage employment and social protection initiatives.
- An **inclusive social** sector requires that there is equal availability to persons with disabilities for areas including recreation, arts and social activities, sports, and the justice system.
- **Inclusive empowerment** includes the opportunity for people to participate in decisions that affect their lives and to political participation.



Need for inclusive development

When decision makers including policy makers, planners and service providers neglect to consider the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities, the costs incurred are two-fold. Firstly, from the perspective of persons with disabilities, their persistent exclusion from development has resulted in many of them being unaware of their right to participate, leading to their own lack of ambition.

Secondly, the community and the economy suffers. There is increasing recognition that disability-inclusive development brings benefits not only to persons with disabilities and their families, but also to society as a whole. Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of disability. Poor people are more likely to become disabled, and persons with disabilities are more likely to become poor. While not all persons with disabilities are poor, in low-income countries persons with disabilities are overrepresented among the poorest. Often, too, they are neglected, discriminated against and excluded from mainstream development initiatives. For example, they often lack access to education and skills development, limiting their chances to find employment. Disability often leads to a reduction in the family income, where a parent or sibling for example is taken out of the workplace to care for a member of the family with a disability.

Disability also often incurs extra living expenses such as for items or medications. This results in greater poverty or chronic poverty, isolation, and even premature death. The costs of medical treatment, physical rehabilitation and assistive devices also contribute to the poverty cycle of many persons with disabilities. Lack of access to sufficient food, clean water and good sanitation can also lead to health issues and greater exposure to disease and disability.

Society as a whole suffers as a result of the lack of inclusion of persons with disabilities. The full participation of women, men, boys and girls with disabilities is a vital element in a sustainable society. The increased visibility and engagement of persons with disabilities in society contributes to positive changes in attitudes. Their increased participation in local and national activities increases awareness about their capabilities and issues they face and reduces stigma and misconceptions.

Promoting community collaboration and participation on inclusive development

Development efforts have often been top-down, and designed without the participation of community members. Inclusive development tries to use bottom-up approaches, fully and meaningfully involving the community. This approach can ensure that development efforts reach poor and marginalized people including persons with disabilities.

The high levels of exclusion of persons with disabilities from social, political, economic and cultural spheres of life mean that employers, service providers and the public in general may at first be reluctant to believe that persons with disabilities can participate actively and make contributions to their communities. Persons with disabilities themselves also internalize this exclusion and frequently feel that they cannot contribute or be included. Therefore community actions need to find practical ways to achieve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life.

Supporting persons with disabilities to be included helps to build their confidence, understanding of their rights, and their ability to advocate for them. When they are empowered persons with disabilities are their own best advocates for change at all levels, and their increased visibility in a positive empowered way leads to attitude change and greater understanding in communities.



Sources

World Vision, Lorraine Wapling, Kevan Moll, Sue Coe, *Practical guidelines on disability inclusive programming*