



Creating a disability-inclusive world

Inside Sightsavers' social inclusion strategy

Our vision is a world where no one is blind from avoidable causes and where people with disabilities can participate equally in society.

We have developed five thematic strategies to deliver our overarching vision:

1. Social inclusion
2. Eye health
3. Inclusive education
4. Neglected tropical diseases
5. Refractive error

Our principles

1. Leave no one behind
2. Coherence
3. Sustainability
4. System strengthening
5. Quality
6. Evidence-based
7. Partnership and participation
8. Alliances
9. Safeguarding

Global frameworks that guide our social inclusion strategy



Sustainable Development Goals: 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' was adopted by 193 countries in 2015 and commits governments to deliver 17 goals. At its core is a commitment to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first. Several SDGs include crucial and significant references to disability.



UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD): The UNCRPD sets out the obligations of state's parties to "ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity". Together with its optional protocol, the UNCRPD plays a critical role in advancing disability rights across the globe.

Our approach

Sightsavers supports all people with disabilities (with a particular focus on women and girls) through their representative organisations and communities to strengthen their access to and inclusion in systems and services. We also work to contribute to lasting policy change. Our projects aim to address specific challenges and share what we learn.

Our partners include organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), civil society organisations (CSOs), academics, national and local governments and the private sector.

Our goals

Sightsavers works across three main areas – citizenship and political participation, livelihoods, and health – to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

We want to see people with disabilities, especially women and girls, participate more in society through accessing health services, being financially independent and contributing to the decisions that affect their lives.



Goal 1: Citizenship and political participation
All people with disabilities are actively contributing to public life and engaged in decision-making and governance structures, to better influence inclusive policies and local development



Goal 2: Economic empowerment
All people with disabilities can participate in, contribute to and benefit from local, national and global economies in an equitable and sustainable way



Goal 3: Inclusive health
All people with disabilities have improved access to health care and good health outcomes



Goal 4: Women and girls with disabilities
Women and girls with disabilities shape the decisions that affect them, leading to fairer outcomes. The root causes of inequality and stereotyping are addressed



Cross-cutting

1. Negative social norms, stereotypes and misconceptions about people with disabilities are reduced or removed
2. People with disabilities and their representative organisations are meaningfully involved in and influence decision-making structures and processes
3. We contribute to, and share, the evidence about what works to achieve disability inclusive development
4. Gender and intersectionality are core considerations throughout our work

Goal 1: Citizenship and political participation

We work to ensure people with disabilities are equitably, meaningfully and actively participating in national and local decision-making processes, such as local elections and development initiatives. We advocate for public policies to be more inclusive for people with disabilities, and for the decentralisation of decision-making structures.

Goal 2: Economic empowerment

We are active within labour and financial market systems to support people with disabilities access pathways that increase their confidence and capabilities to achieve their employment, entrepreneurship and financial aspirations. We work to change regulatory frameworks so that barriers to inclusion are removed and people with disabilities are valued for their participation at work.

Goal 3: Inclusive health

We contribute to the development of inclusive health systems and the achievement of universal health coverage, supporting improved access to general and specialist health services and better health outcomes for people with disabilities, in all their diversity.

We mainstream disability inclusion into eye health and NTD programmes, and in other health programmes, such as sexual reproductive health; we invest in mental health as a cross-cutting priority.

Goal 4: Women and girls with disabilities

Sightsavers promotes the rights of women and girls with disabilities, working to ensure they are respected, protected and realised within development processes and structures. We advocate for women's leadership in civil society and for the prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse of women and girls.



People with disabilities, **in all their diversity**, encompasses women, men, girls and boys of all ages and with all impairments. It includes people who identify as non-binary.

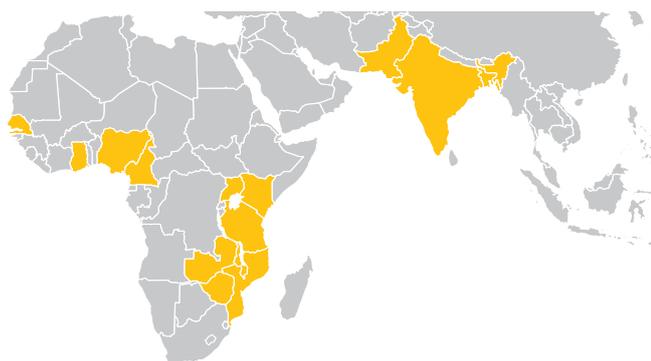
Climate change and the environment

We recognise the effects of climate change on the communities we work with. We also know the potential negative impact that our programmes may have on the environment. It's our responsibility to monitor and limit our environmental impact while supporting the communities with which we work, to increase their resilience and adaptability to the effects of climate change.

Cover image: Monica, a plumbing graduate of Sightsavers' employment training programme for young people with disabilities in Uganda.

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Our portfolio



Citizenship and political participation

In **Cameroon** and **Senegal**, we support people with disabilities to be active citizens and take part in political processes.

Economic empowerment

In, **Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda**, under our **Inclusive Futures** programme, we promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in formal employment. We support employers to be disability confident and we work for the creation and sustainability of business disability networks. Jobseekers are supported to become job-ready through training. In **Pakistan**, we are replicating what we have learned from Inclusive Futures through supporting youth with disabilities in building their employment confidence and readiness through a combination of self-learning in Accenture's Skills to Succeed Learning Exchange, soft skills lessons and mentoring from private sector volunteers.

Inclusive health

Our eye health and NTD programmes support the inclusion of people with disabilities, women and marginalised groups. Inclusive eye health projects are currently running in **Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe**. Key elements include accessibility auditing of facilities and disability and gender awareness training. In **Pakistan**, as a result of our inclusive eye health project, the government created an inclusive eye health task force and embedded disability inclusion in national and provincial policy.

As part of our COVID-19 response, we made testing and treatment facilities in Abuja, **Nigeria**, more accessible to people with disabilities. We are also working in Hausa-speaking northern states to implement an inclusive health project aimed at improving access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health and rights for people with disabilities, especially adolescent girls and young women with disabilities.

In **Ghana**, we have supported the establishment of a disability inclusion programme which focuses on mental health and we are promoting stronger policies and systemic approaches.

Women and girls with disability

Across our work, we embed a strong gender equality aspect to ensure that women are benefiting from, and participating in, our projects equitably. In our health programmes, we are exploring how to ensure that the barriers women experience are known and addressed at the start of the project. A key approach is identifying OPDs with explicit gender expertise as partners. A similar approach has been taken in our economic empowerment programmes where we also incorporate gender action plans. Women's leadership and active engagement is a core component of our citizenship and political participation work.

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QR code link to our full social inclusion strategy

