



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) together with 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 vote, be observers in inclusive elections, and active local councils members. We put a specific focus on women's participation, but also on people who are often left behind (people with intellectual disabilities, for instance). In **Sierra Leone**, we focus on youth with disabilities' citizenship, supporting disability inclusive youth movements, programmes, and inclusive local/national youth councils.

Economic empowerment

Our programmes in **Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe** 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 and potential job-creators are supported to become job or business ready through training and mentoring. Our focus on private sector supply (value) chains is a specific differentiator in the sector, opening up employment opportunity to many more people with disabilities in both rural as well as urban spaces.

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, Pakistan,**

Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In **Ghana**, we have supported the establishment of a disability inclusion programme which focuses on the inclusion of people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities and the reduction of disability and mental health stigma. We are part of a new initiative supporting the Government to implement a national social and behaviour change programme focused on promoting healthy behaviours for all.

In **Nigeria**, we are leading a project improving access to family planning for young women and adolescent girls with disabilities. In 2023, we will join the costed extension of the WISH programme in a consortium led by MSI Reproductive Choices across eight countries in West and Central Africa, to ensure people with disabilities have equitable access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Women and girls with disabilities

Across our work, we embed a strong gender equality aspect to ensure that women and girls are benefiting from, and participating in, our project portfolios equitably. We have been mapping OPDs in the countries where we have social inclusion programmes, identifying which ones are led by women, and/or focus on women's issues in order to promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities. We continue to identify and engage in women's leadership, their active engagement in decision-making and critical roles in governance structures as core components that advance our gender equity aims.

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QR code link to our full social inclusion strategy

