



Briefing

Re-establishing DFAT's leadership on disability equity and rights

HOW THE OECD-DAC DISABILITY MARKER CAN HELP

Acknowledgements

This paper was authored by independent researcher, Polly Meeks for CBM Australia.

Author's note

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Summary

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) aims to be a “strong and consistent advocate for disability equity and rights”.ⁱ This briefing explores a tool that can support DFAT to achieve this aim: the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee’s policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities (the OECD-DAC disability marker), which allows international cooperation actors to report standardised, project-level data on whether their Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending seeks to be disability inclusive.

DFAT has a long history as a leader in tracking ODA spending for disability equity and rights. Key elements of its own distinctive reporting include:

- Annual estimates of the amount of Australian ODA that “provides some level of assistance to disabled persons”;ⁱⁱ
- Annual data on Australia’s central disability allocation, which provides core resources for disability inclusion across the development program and funds disability targeted programs and partnerships; and
- Periodic updates on the percentage of projects that “effectively address disability equity”, based on DFAT’s Investment Monitoring Report (IMR) rating system, which scores projects’ approach to disability inclusion on a six-point scale.

This briefing argues that while these reporting processes play an essential role in capturing DFAT’s efforts towards disability equity and rights, the OECD-DAC disability marker has an important complementary contribution to make. In particular, the OECD-DAC disability marker allows (a measure of) comparisons to be made among different international cooperation actors. By making granular data publicly available, the OECD-DAC disability marker also opens up opportunities for in-depth accountability work by outside stakeholders – including organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) – that other data sources do not currently allow.

In 2021 (the most recent year with available data), DFAT applied the OECD-DAC disability marker to 100% of its “allocable”ⁱⁱⁱ ODA spending. Meanwhile DFAT reported that 18% of its total bilateral^{iv} ODA sought to be disability inclusive (either as the principal objective, or as a significant objective mainstreamed alongside others).

The briefing recommends that DFAT continue to make full use of the OECD-DAC disability marker alongside its other reporting tools. It also recommends that DFAT take up opportunities to build further on its leadership in tracking disability spending data, both as a data reporter, and as an influential advocate within the OECD-DAC and beyond.



Image: Lusiana works with local government to advocate for more inclusive infrastructure within her Fijian community. © CBM Australia 2022

As a data reporter, DFAT should take the following opportunities:

Immediate opportunities

- Drive up the quality of data reported against the OECD-DAC disability marker, including by:
 - o Ensuring that a wide range of staff and implementing partners are trained in use of the marker
 - o Refreshing training on a regular (e.g., annual) basis
 - o Providing very detailed training materials, including context-specific examples
 - o Asking reporters to give a brief justification for their scores
 - o Moderating scores, including both specialist review and peer review.

As well as considering projects scored 2 or 1 on the OECD-DAC disability marker, quality assurance should make sure that projects scored 0 have at a minimum been confirmed to do no harm.

- Increase transparency, including by:
 - o Incorporating the OECD-DAC disability marker into all core reporting processes, including the new online data portal.
 - o Making project documentation publicly available to help outside stakeholders understand the rationale for given OECD-DAC disability marker scores.
- Develop stronger data on spending that addresses intersectionalities.
- Continue to explore how to exploit overlaps between different tools for maximum efficiency.

And finally, fundamentally:

- Rapidly increase the share of ODA that seeks to support inclusion, equity and rights of people with disabilities, through:
 - o A 2030 target of 10 per cent of ODA being allocated to initiatives with disability equity as a principal objective;
 - o A requirement that all in-country programs over AUD 3 million have a disability objective;
 - o A target that 80 per cent of programs effectively address disability equity; and
 - o An increase the central disability allocation to AUD 20 million per annum with annual increases thereafter in line with overall budget increases.

More ambitious, innovative opportunities

- Selectively use tools that assess whether spending seeks to be transformative for people with disabilities, as a complement to other simpler tools.
- Trial expenditure tagging as an approach in a small sample of projects to develop more precise estimates of spending that contributes directly to disability equity and rights, and publish the results.

As a champion of transparency, DFAT should take the following opportunities:

- Advocate for the OECD-DAC to ensure that ODA data published through OECD data explorer is fully accessible to screen reader users. Consider providing funding to support this.
- Advocate for the OECD-DAC to elevate the disability marker to mandatory status. Also advocate for multilateral partners to report using the OECD-DAC disability marker.
- Advocate for the design of the OECD-DAC disability marker to be tightened, including through a requirement on participation of people with disabilities; through a criterion of 'do no harm'; and through greater alignment with the OECD-DAC gender equality marker.

A. The value of the OECD-DAC disability marker

A.1 Introduction

Australia's new International Development Policy sets out DFAT's ambition to be a "strong and consistent advocate for disability equity and rights".^v This commitment has the potential to restore DFAT to its position as a leader in promoting the rights of people with disabilities in Official Development Assistance (ODA), following a slump in recent years.^{vi} People with disabilities represent an estimated 12.8% to 16.2% of the population in Low- and Middle-Income countries:^{vii} due to the multiple inequalities they face, people with disabilities are not only over-represented among people in poverty^{viii} but also catastrophically affected by escalating global crises including conflict^{ix} and the climate emergency.^x This means a resurgence in DFAT's commitment to, and action on, the equity and rights of people with disabilities is urgently needed.

This briefing explores one tool with the potential to reinforce DFAT's work in support of disability equity and rights worldwide – the OECD-DAC disability marker. The briefing begins by introducing the OECD-DAC disability marker, summarising how DFAT has used the marker to-date, and setting out how it adds value to DFAT's wider suite of statistical and performance assessment tools. The briefing then explores two key opportunities for DFAT to make the most of the OECD-DAC disability marker, both as a reporter of data, and as an influential advocate within the OECD-DAC and beyond.

A.2 The OECD-DAC disability marker

The OECD-DAC is an official body made up of 32 countries that provide Official Development Assistance (ODA).^{xi} Its mandate includes "monitor[ing] [and] report[ing] ... the provision of resources that support sustainable development by collecting and analysing data and information on ODA and other official and private flows, in a transparent way."^{xii} The OECD-DAC gathers standardised data on every ODA project that takes place. This data includes a set of 11 policy markers that record whether projects seek to address specific policy objectives such as promoting gender equality or contributing to climate change adaptation.^{xiii}

In 2018, the OECD-DAC agreed to adopt a policy marker on disability.^{xiv} Like the OECD-DAC's other policy markers, the disability marker uses a three-point scoring system to signify how far each project has sought to promote the "inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities" (Box 1).

Box 1: OECD-DAC disability marker scoring system^{xv}

OECD-DAC members using the disability marker give each project one of three scores:

- Projects that aim to promote the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities as their **principal** objective are given a score 2
- Projects that aim to promote the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities as a **significant** objective (but not the main reason for undertaking the project) are given a score 1
- Projects that do not aim to promote the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities in any significant way are given a score 0

The disability marker field can also be left blank, if an OECD-DAC member has not screened a given project against the marker criteria.

Source: This box draws on OECD-DAC, 2020, DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)48, "The OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities: handbook for data reporters and users," pp.13-14.

Marker results are publicly reported through the OECD-DAC’s Creditor Reporting System database.^{xvi} The data is available at project level, in a standardised format that also includes other project data such as the country where a project is delivered and its sectoral focus. This data is already becoming a widely used source in scrutiny and accountability work, including work by organisations of people with disabilities.^{xvii} To be sure, data from policy markers such as the OECD-DAC disability marker can only ever be one element in a wider assessment of the contribution that ODA spending is making to the rights and equity of people with disabilities. By their nature, markers only give information on the intentions of ODA spending, not on its outcomes. And markers only give information on the design of individual projects, not on the decision process that led ODA to be devoted to those projects in the first place.^{xviii} But provided that these limits are understood, OECD-DAC policy markers, if well-defined and implemented, have the potential to offer some important insights.

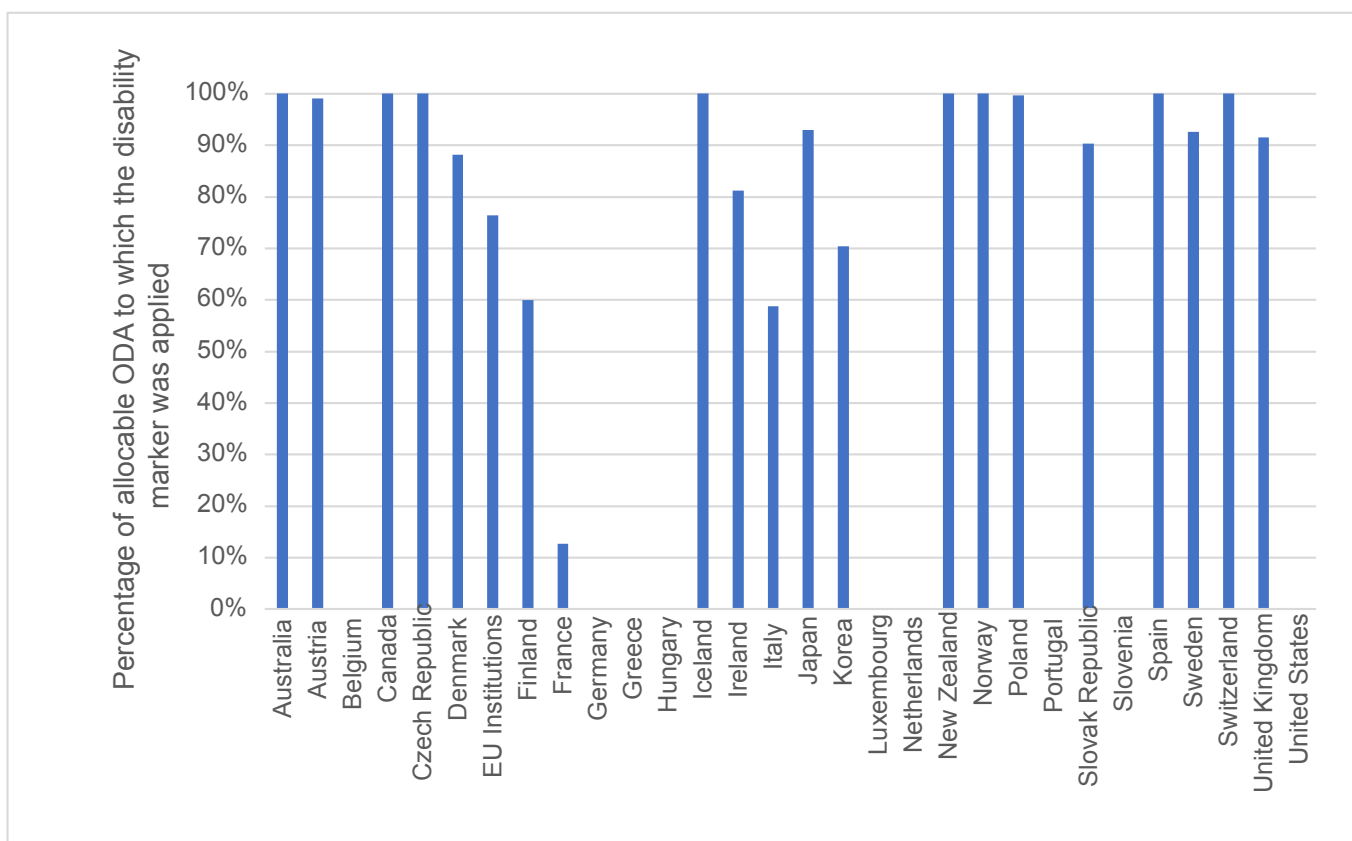
A.3 Australia’s headline results from the OECD-DAC disability marker

The analysis below considers two questions. The first question is how far DFAT has applied the OECD-DAC disability marker to its ODA spending, i.e., with any score, 0, 1 or 2. The second question is the extent to which DFAT has reported its projects as disability inclusive, i.e., an OECD-DAC disability inclusion marker score of 1 (significant objective) or 2 (principal objective). First, however, a caution is needed.

Important caution

Some caution is needed in interpreting the headline results in the following sections since as well as having distinctive strong points as a reporting and accountability tool, the OECD-DAC disability marker has some limitations, in particular because since OECD-DAC members are responsible for self-reporting, and may not all interpret the marker criteria in exactly the same way.

Chart 1: Disability marker uptake in 2021 by different OECD-DAC members



Source: Author’s analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System data on the 30 members of the OECD-DAC as at 2021. Data was downloaded in September 2023. Negative commitments were removed from the analysis. Analysis covers allocable ODA only, since the OECD-DAC only requires that markers be used for allocable ODA. Any score on the marker (including zero) is treated as the marker having been applied – as opposed to the marker field simply being left blank.

Both the strong points and limitations of the marker will be discussed in Sections A.4, B.1 and B.2 below. In short, **the data should not be taken as a definitive measure of international cooperation actors’ ambitions on the inclusion of people with disabilities. Rather, the data can be a particularly informative starting point for making further inquiries on different OECD-DAC members’ contrasting approaches to disability inclusion.**^{xix}

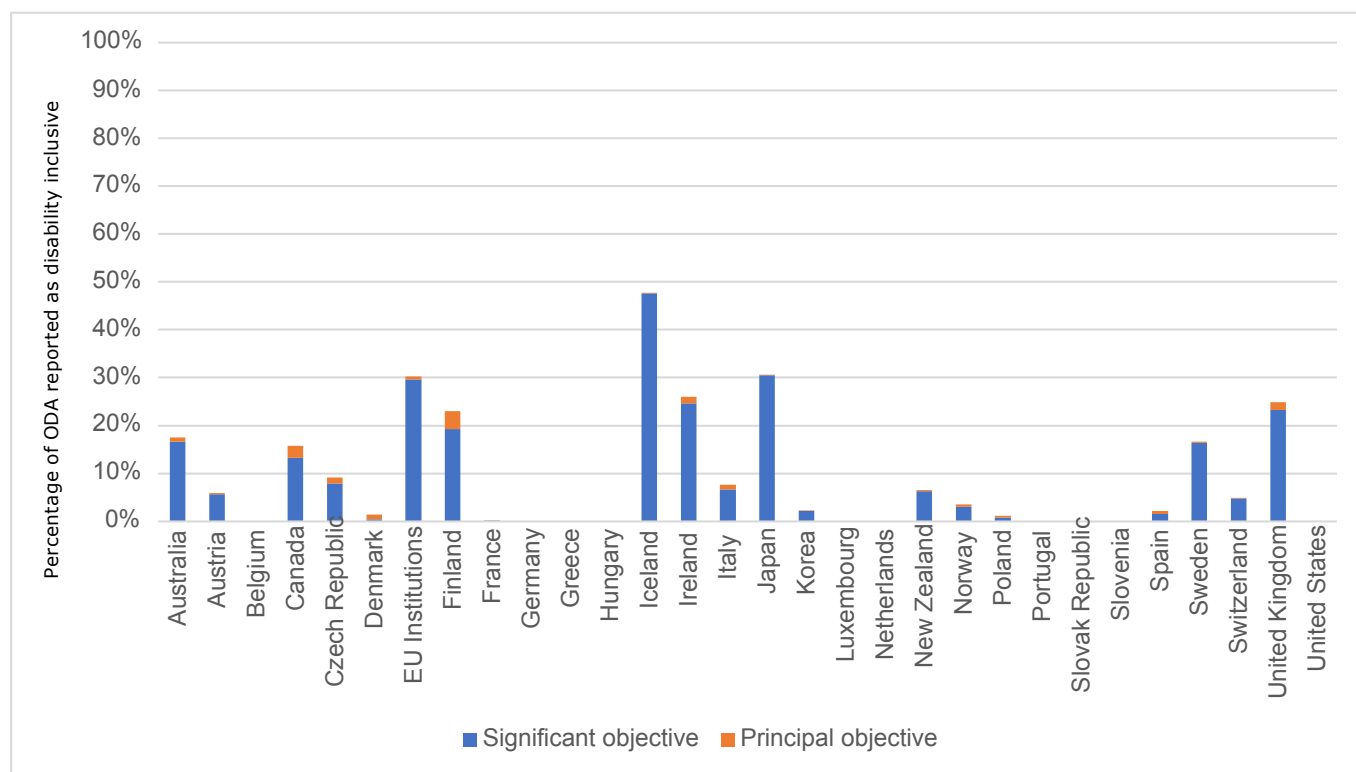
Use of the OECD-DAC disability marker

As at 2021, the most recent year with available data, Australia applied the OECD-DAC disability marker to 100% of its allocable^{xx} ODA (**Chart 1**). This follows a commitment made at the Global Disability Summit in 2018.^{xxi} Following a preparatory period, use of the marker was made mandatory in DFAT’s management information system, AidWorks, for the 2021 reporting round.^{xxii}

Share of projects reported as disability inclusive using the OECD-DAC disability marker

In 2021,^{xxiii} DFAT reported 18% of its total bilateral^{xxiv} ODA spending as disability inclusive (i.e., OECD-DAC disability marker score 1 or score 2).^{xxv} The vast majority of Australia’s reported disability-inclusive projects in 2021 had disability inclusion as a significant objective; only 12 (out of a total of 569) had disability inclusion as their principal objective.^{xxvi} **Chart 2** shows the disability marker results for all 30 members of the OECD-DAC in 2021.

Chart 2: Percentage of ODA reported as disability inclusive by the 30 OECD-DAC members in 2021



Source: Author’s analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System data downloaded in September 2023. Data was downloaded on a commitments basis. Negative commitments were removed from the analysis. Administrative costs were excluded from the analysis, and the dataset automatically excludes core contributions to multilateral organisations. All other types of ODA (allocable and non-allocable) were retained, for the most complete picture of total ODA spending. “Spending reported as disability-inclusive” means that the spending was given a score of either 1 (significant objective) or 2 (principal objective) on the disability marker.

A.4 How the OECD-DAC disability marker adds value to DFAT’s other statistical and performance assessment tools

DFAT’s other expenditure tracking tools

DFAT has a history as a leader in monitoring and reporting ODA spending for disability equity and rights. This section sets out three main ways in which DFAT has reported such spending, and summarises recent results.^{xxvii} Please note that the results do not directly match those reported against the OECD-DAC disability marker, because, as discussed below, DFAT’s tools and the OECD-DAC disability marker serve different and complementary purposes.

- **Annual estimates of the amount of Australian ODA that “provides some level of assistance to disabled persons”** – whether this was the principal focus of the activity or only a more minor focus.^{xxviii} The estimates seek to quantify the **approximate value of ODA spending that contributed directly to disability inclusion**: so in the case of projects where disability has been mainstreamed alongside other objectives, a percentage is taken.^{xxix} Impressively, Australia developed this estimation system almost two decades ago.^{xxx} Even today, DFAT remains one of the few providers of international public finance that attempts to quantify the percentage of spending devoted to disability inclusion in mainstream projects.^{xxxi} **Chart 3** summarises the total estimates since 2005-06, adjusted to take into account inflation. The time series needs to be treated with some caution, due to the estimates involved. But in broad terms, the chart shows that spending peaked during the period 2009-10 to 2014-15, before declining substantially. Based on the data available, it appears that current spending levels are almost 40% lower than they were at their peak.

Chart 3: Value of ODA that provided “some level of assistance to disabled persons”, 2005-06 to 2021-22, in real terms



Source: Author’s analysis of DFAT, Australia’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) standard time series, [Table 12 – disability inclusion](#), data on “total disability inclusion ODA”. (Further details on how this data was derived are given at the foot of Table 12, and also in DFAT, Australian Official Development Assistance statistical summary 2021-22, pp. 6, 34, 55-64).. DFAT cautions that, “due to the variation [across projects – from principal to minor focus on disability], including year to year, caution should be exercised when interpreting disability inclusion financial data”.^{xxxii} Values have been adjusted for inflation using the Reserve Bank of Australia’s [inflation calculator](#).^{xxxiii}

- **Annual data on Australia’s central disability allocation.** This allocation provides core resources for disability inclusion across the development program and funds a number of disability targeted programs and partnerships.^{xxxiv} In 2022-23, the central disability allocation was AUD 12.9 million. Overall from 2014-15 to 2022-23, the central disability allocation has reduced by almost 20% after adjusting for inflation.^{xxxv}
- **Periodic updates on the percentage of projects that “effectively address disability equity”, based on DFAT’s Investment Monitoring Report (IMR) rating system** (or its predecessor – the Aid Quality Check or AQC).^{xxxvi} The IMR section on disability represents a more qualitative approach to tracking Australia’s ODA for disability equity and rights. In the IMR, project management teams give each project of AUD 3 million or above a score between 1 and 6,^{xxxvii} based on whether people with disabilities/OPDs were consulted, and on whether they will benefit from the investment on an equal basis with others.^{xxxviii} It appears that projects are deemed to address disability equity effectively if they are given a score of 4 or higher.^{xxxix} Headline reporting on IMR results generally focuses on the number (rather than the value) of projects deemed to address disability equity effectively. The IMR process does not seek to calculate the percentage of spending that contributes directly to disability equity. In 2022-23, the IMR/AQC process deemed 46% of projects of AUD 3 million or above to effectively address... disability equity.^{xl}

How the OECD-DAC disability marker adds value

Given that DFAT already has such an established reporting system in place, a sceptic might ask why a further disability marker is needed. But in fact, the OECD-DAC disability marker and DFAT’s existing systems have complementary advantages. Some of the key advantages are summarised in **Table 1** and expanded further in **Annex 1**.

Image: Isireli (pictured left) from Tailevu South Disability Organisation is a powerful disability advocate within his community. © CBM Australia 2022



Table 1: Summary of some of the key advantages of the OECD-DAC disability marker and of DFAT’s other tools for reporting spending on disability equity and rights

Please see Annex 1 for a more detailed comparison and references.

Advantages of the OECD-DAC disability marker	Advantages of DFAT’s other tools
<p>1. Comparability: allows comparisons across OECD-DAC members</p> <p>2. Granularity: data is published at project level</p> <p><i>And specifically when compared with the IMR:</i></p> <p>3. Policy snapshot: marker measures intentions when commitments are made, so gives a snapshot of the prevailing policy environment (compare IMR #3 – current programme snapshot)</p> <p>4. Higher threshold? Early results suggest the threshold for a ‘disability-inclusive’ project may be more stringent under the OECD-DAC marker than under IMR/AQC – but further investigation would be needed to confirm this.</p>	<p><i>Advantages of the annual ODA estimate:</i></p> <p>1. History: data goes back to 2005-06</p> <p>2. Precision: estimate of the share of spending that directly contributes to disability inclusion</p> <p><i>Advantages of the IMR:</i></p> <p>3. Current programme snapshot: IMR gives annual assessment on all live programmes >AUD 3 million, so gives a snapshot of the current state of disability inclusion across the ODA programme (compare OECD-DAC #3 – policy snapshot)</p> <p>4. Scope: The scope of the IMR assessment is wider, encompassing issues of participation, and of expected equal benefits for people with disabilities.</p>

Source: Author’s analysis, drawing on the OECD-DAC [Creditor Reporting System](#) database; OECD-DAC, 2020, DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)48, ‘The OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities: handbook for data reporters and users’, pp.10-11 and 13-14; OECD-DAC, 2016, [Handbook on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker](#), p.8; DFAT, [Annual Report 2021-22](#), p.66; DFAT, ‘[Australia’s Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) standard time series](#)’, Table 12: Australian Official Development Assistance, disability inclusion; DFAT Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all : evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), p.21; DFAT, 2023, [Performance and delivery framework](#), p.4; and DFAT, 2023, [Investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix](#), pp.19-20.

The most fundamental benefit of the OECD-DAC disability marker is that it **allows comparisons to be made** between Australia and other members of the OECD-DAC (e.g. Chart 2). Such comparisons need caution, as data is self-reported by the different OECD-DAC members, who may not all interpret the marker criteria in exactly the same way. Still, OECD-DAC disability marker results can give a very valuable first indication of which OECD-DAC members have higher ambitions on disability inclusion, and where there may be good practices to learn from. As DFAT seeks to re-establish itself as a leader on disability inclusion, this kind of comparative information will be particularly important. On the other hand, if DFAT stopped using the OECD-DAC disability marker, there is a risk its efforts would be overlooked when comparisons are made.

A second key benefit is that data on the OECD-DAC disability marker is **available in much more granular detail**. As mentioned in the introduction, the OECD-DAC’s Creditor Reporting System database includes an entry for every single ODA project. Such entries include not only the value of spending and the score on the disability marker, but also a wide range of other information such as the country where a project is implemented, the sector

of focus, a range of other thematic policy markers (covering for example gender equality and climate change adaptation), and a brief description of the project's rationale. This detail is crucial for accountability work by external researchers, including OPDs, as it allows them to focus on particular countries or sectors of interest, and then to get more detailed insights into the kinds of projects that are being reported as disability inclusive (see **Box 2** for some recent examples).

Box 2: Examples of recent civil society accountability work using the OECD-DAC disability marker

- CBM Nepal used the OECD-DAC disability marker to compare the extent to which different OECD-DAC members' ODA in Nepal was reported to be disability inclusive.^{xii}
- A researcher from the Nigerian disability movement used the OECD-DAC disability marker to analyse reported levels of disability inclusion in five OECD-DAC members' health- and education-focused ODA in Nigeria.^{xlii}
- CBM Switzerland used the OECD-DAC disability marker to analyse the geographic distribution of Swiss ODA projects reported as disability inclusive.^{xliii}
- Disabled People's Organisations Denmark (DPOD) used the OECD-DAC disability marker to explore overlaps between projects reported to be disability inclusive, and other OECD-DAC policy markers, such as on gender equality and climate change adaptation.^{xliv}

The complementary advantages of the OECD-DAC disability marker and DFAT's other tools mean that there is a strong case for continuing to use both systems, as DFAT does currently. In fact it is not unusual for OECD-DAC members to maintain their own complementary reporting systems whilst also using OECD-DAC policy markers: for instance, both Belgium and France have taken this approach for gender.^{xlv} There may, though, be some limited opportunities for DFAT to streamline its approach through increased harmonisation between DFAT's existing reporting tools and the OECD-DAC disability marker, as discussed further in Section B.1 below.

B. How DFAT can get the most from the marker

B.1 Opportunities for DFAT as a data reporter

This section sets out five immediate opportunities for DFAT to build on its track record as a leader in reporting disability spending data, and as an early adopter of the OECD-DAC marker. It also identifies two more ambitious and innovative but feasible steps that could really set DFAT apart.

Immediate opportunities to get more from the OECD-DAC disability marker

Data quality

The first opportunity relates to data quality. To the author's knowledge, no research on the quality of DFAT's reported OECD-DAC disability marker scores has yet been undertaken. However, studies on OECD-DAC disability marker data reported by other OECD-DAC members have raised questions as to the quality of reported marker data.^{xlvi} Previous analysis of DFAT's AQC process [the predecessor to the IMR] suggests there is some risk of disability inclusion being over-reported, although the extent of over-reporting is a matter of debate.^{xlvii} A particularly problematic area appears to have been projects that may not be performing well in the absolute, but are perceived by reporters to have satisfactory standards once operational "constraints" have been taken into account.^{xlviii}

DFAT has taken a number of steps aimed at driving up the quality of its IMR/AQC data on disability, such as asking reporters to give a brief justification for their scores,^{xlix} and moderating a sample of scores (in addition, final year scores are externally validated).^l It should consider further developing these approaches to enhance its quality assurance of OECD-DAC disability marker data. Care should be taken to ensure that perceived operational constraints do not lead to a dilution of the standards associated with 'disability-inclusive' scores.

DFAT should also consider adapting other good practices that have previously been used to drive up the quality of marker data in other contexts (including gender marker data). Examples include ensuring that training in marker use extends to a wide range of staff and implementing partners;^{li} refreshing training on a regular basis;^{lii} providing very detailed training materials, including context-specific examples;^{liii} and involving other teams in peer review of scores.^{liv}

As well as ensuring that marker scores of 1 and 2 are assigned correctly, quality assurance should also extend to scores of 0. Although not formally specified in the OECD-DAC's guidance on the disability marker (see below), a good practice adapted from the OECD-DAC's gender equality marker would be to make sure all projects scored 0 have at a minimum been confirmed to do no harm.^{lv}

Transparency

The second opportunity for DFAT relates to transparency. DFAT's new performance and delivery framework says DFAT seeks to "foster... a strong, performance-based culture that generates robust data on performance, drives improvement in the quality and effectiveness of investments, and promotes accountability".^{lvi} In line with these objectives, DFAT should ensure that the OECD-DAC disability marker is fully integrated (alongside DFAT's other performance assessment tools on disability) into core reporting processes including the Annual Report, the Performance of Australian Development Cooperation report, and the planned new online data portal.^{lvii}

As well as making OECD-DAC disability marker data more visible, DFAT should also ensure the transparency of data that underpins OECD-DAC disability marker scores.^{lviii} If key supporting evidence, such as project plans, is publicly available through repositories such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative,^{lix} this makes it easier for outside stakeholders such as OPDs to explore the rationale behind projects' scores on the OECD-DAC disability marker, and to make recommendations on how projects' approach to disability inclusion could be further improved.

Intersectionality

The third opportunity for DFAT relates to intersectionality. DFAT has made strong commitments on the need to consider the intersection between disability and other identities and characteristics.^{lxi} However, it is currently challenging to track the amount of spending that takes an intersectional approach. Some insights on ODA addressing the intersections between gender and disability can be gleaned by looking at OECD-DAC disability marker data in combination with OECD-DAC gender equality marker data.^{lxii} But coverage of other identities and characteristics in DFAT's expenditure tracking data appears to be limited (although access to DFAT's full IMR criteria would be needed to confirm this).^{lxiii} If tools for tracking expenditure on disability are in place but do not take into account intersectionality, they risk having the unintended consequence of distracting attention from intersecting forms of discrimination. DFAT should explore how to improve the tracking of spending on the intersection of disability and a wide diversity of other identities and characteristics. Approaches might include introducing additional markers for DFAT's internal use,^{lxiv} and introducing additional criteria to the IMR process.^{lxv}

Efficiency

The fourth opportunity for DFAT relates to efficiency. While both the OECD-DAC disability marker and DFAT's other tools for reporting spending on disability equity and rights have important complementary roles to play (section A.4 above), there are nonetheless some overlaps between them. DFAT is looking into ways to cross-fertilise between the different tools for greater efficiency, and it is recommended that it continue these enquiries.

For example, one approach to streamlining the different tools could be to explore how far multiple reporting outputs could be addressed in a single flowchart. Further details on DFAT's reporting systems would be needed to suggest exactly what such a flowchart could look like, but by way of a simplified illustration, DFAT could for instance start by asking whether a project met the criteria for an OECD-DAC disability marker score 1 or 2 (to be used for OECD-DAC reporting). Only if yes, it could then prompt project managers to enter further data on the estimated percentage of spending directly contributing to disability inclusion, and whether this spending sits within the central disability allocation (to be used for DFAT's own reporting).

Inclusion, equity and rights

The fifth opportunity relates not to the reporting process, but to how DFAT uses the data that is recorded and reported. In 2021, **over 80%** of Australian ODA did not have any significant objective on the inclusion of people with disabilities,^{lxvi} despite the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' requirement that people with disabilities should be consistently included.^{lxvii} The fifth, obvious, opportunity is therefore for DFAT quickly to **increase the share of its ODA that seeks to be inclusive of people with disabilities**. To that end, CBM Australia and our partners are calling for a significant uplift in ambition, accountability and resourcing on disability equity across Australian ODA. Specifically, CBM Australia is calling for:

- A 2030 target of 10 per cent of ODA being allocated to initiatives with disability equity^{lxviii} as a principal objective, according to the OECD-DAC disability marker;
- A requirement that all in-country programs over AUD 3 million have a disability objective;
- A target that 80 per cent of programs effectively address disability equity (to be measured through the IMR process); and
- An increase the central disability allocation to AUD 20 million per annum with annual increases thereafter in line with overall budget increases.

Image: Suprihatin leads a self-help group for people with psychosocial disabilities in Indonesia.
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Box 3: Summary of immediate recommendations for DFAT's reporting

DFAT should:

- Drive up data quality, including by:
 - Ensuring that a wide range of staff and implementing partners are trained in use of the marker
 - Refreshing training on a regular (e.g. annual) basis
 - Providing very detailed training materials, including context-specific examples
 - Asking reporters to give a brief justification for their scores
 - Moderating scores, including both specialist review and peer review.

As well as considering projects scored 2 or 1 on the OECD-DAC disability marker, quality assurance should make sure that projects scored 0 have at a minimum been confirmed to do no harm.

- Increase transparency, including by:
 - Incorporating the OECD-DAC disability marker into all core reporting processes, including the new online data portal
 - Making project documentation publicly available to help outside stakeholders understand the rationale for given OECD-DAC disability marker scores.
 - Develop stronger data on spending that addresses intersectionalities.
 - Continue to explore how to exploit overlaps between different tools for greater efficiency.
- Rapidly increase the share of ODA that seeks to support inclusion, equity and rights of people with disabilities, through:
 - A 2030 target of 10 per cent of ODA being allocated to initiatives with disability inclusion as a principal objective;
 - A requirement that all in-country programs over AUD 3 million have a disability objective;
 - A target that 80 per cent of programs effectively address disability equity; and
 - An increase the central disability allocation to AUD 20 million per annum with annual increases thereafter in line with overall budget increases.

More ambitious and innovative opportunities to build on the OECD-DAC disability marker

Despite the complementary strengths of the OECD-DAC disability marker and DFAT's other tools for tracking spending on disability equity and rights, these tools still leave some questions unanswered (or only partially answered). For instance:

- Most tools for measuring spending on disability incorporate any spending that seeks to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities. Such tools do not distinguish whether spending works with the grain of existing inequalities between people with and without disabilities, or whether it **seeks more disruptive, transformative change**. The most striking exception to this rule occurs in an evaluation that was, in fact, commissioned by DFAT. This evaluation uses a tool adapted from the NGO CARE's gender marker, and does explicitly distinguish between projects that are sensitive or responsive to disability on the one hand, and those that are "transformative" on the other.^{lxix} This is a very promising, innovative approach, and DFAT should look for opportunities to replicate it in other

research where it is seeking a more in-depth assessment of steps taken to promote disability equity and rights, beyond the more simplified categorisation offered by other tools.

- As noted above, DFAT has been a leader in seeking to track the **amount of spending that contributes to disability inclusion directly**. This is already a pioneering step, but the methodology relies on estimates, and in principle there seems to be a risk that the reliability of such estimates may vary depending on project implementers' understanding of disability equity and rights, and the quality of their data systems.^{lxx} An alternative approach, which could help produce a more precise estimate, would be to explore introducing disability tags to DFAT's financial reporting systems, whereby individual items of expenditure could be tagged when they were first input, based on how far they contribute to disability rights and equity. A total of these individual expenditure items could then be calculated. Such an approach would, of course, require staff to receive specialised training and would be relatively labour intensive – so it is not suggested for organisation-wide roll-out in the short term. However, trialling an expenditure tagging approach in a small sample of projects (and publishing the results) could already make an important contribution to wider knowledge on the costs of supporting disability equity and rights in different sectors, and could also be a useful benchmark against which to sense-check the realism of DFAT's global spending estimate.

Box 4: Summary of more ambitious recommendations for DFAT's reporting

DFAT should:

- Selectively use tools that assess whether spending seeks to be transformative for people with disabilities, as a complement to other simpler tools.
- Trial expenditure tagging as an approach in a small sample of projects to develop more precise estimates of spending that contributes directly to disability equity and rights, and publish the results.

B.2 Opportunities for DFAT as an influential OECD-DAC member

DFAT's International Development policy sets out that Australia plans to "continue our strong work with multilateral partners across the United Nations system and with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development".^{lxxi} Given Australia's track record as one of the leaders in gathering data on ODA spending for disability inclusion, it is naturally positioned to work with the OECD-DAC and others to strengthen the disability policy marker further.

It is now just over five years since the OECD-DAC disability marker was introduced, so a reassessment of opportunities to reinforce the marker seems timely. Several other OECD-DAC members have shown a strong interest in making the most of the marker,^{lxxii} so if Australia was to advance this issue at the OECD-DAC, it is unlikely that it would find itself without allies.

Three opportunities to strengthen the use and content of the marker seem particularly compelling.

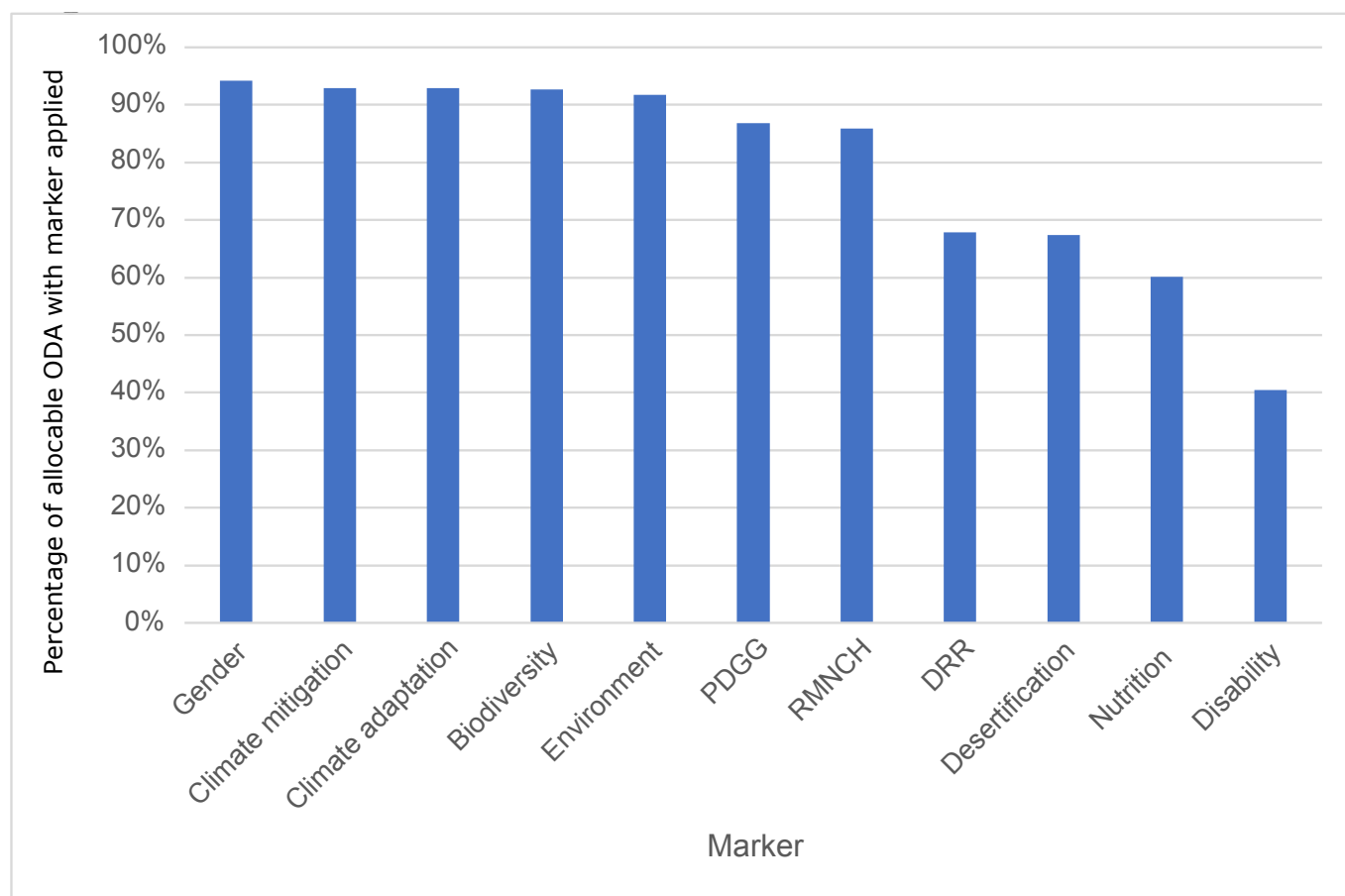
Accessibility

A first, fundamental, opportunity relates to **accessibility** of the Creditor Reporting System database through which OECD-DAC disability marker data is reported. The current database is not accessible to screen reader users: so for some persons with disabilities, there is simply no way to access the detailed data, unless they rely on another person to download the data on their behalf.^{lxxiii} At the end of 2023, the data is due to migrate to a new platform – OECD data explorer. The author of this briefing contacted the OECD-DAC secretariat for information on any new accessibility features incorporated in OECD data explorer, but has not yet received a response. As yet, there is therefore no reassurance that screen reader users will be able to access the data in the new platform any more than they were able to do so using the old one. Australia could advocate through the OECD-DAC to make sure that ODA data accessed through OECD data explorer is available in accessible formats for screen reader users, and could also consider providing funding to support this.

Uptake

Second, Australia could press for **greater uptake of the marker**, to make the comparative dataset on different ODA providers' performance as extensive as possible. At the moment, the OECD-DAC disability policy marker is voluntary rather than mandatory – in contrast to the large majority of the OECD-DAC's 11 other policy markers.^{lxxiv} The marker's voluntary status correlates with lower levels of marker uptake than any of the OECD-DAC's other markers (**Chart 4**).

Chart 4: Uptake of the different OECD-DAC policy markers in 2021



Source: Author's analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System data on the 30 members of the OECD-DAC as at 2021. Data was downloaded in September 2023. Negative commitments were removed from the analysis. Analysis covers allocable ODA only, since the OECD-DAC only requires that markers be used for allocable ODA. Any score on the marker (including zero) is treated as the marker having been applied – as opposed to the marker field simply being left blank. (PDGG = participatory development and good governance; RMNCH = reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health; DRR = disaster risk reduction).

In 2020, the OECD-DAC secretariat carried out a review on the system of policy markers. It found that two characteristics of more valuable markers were: (i) the extent to which external stakeholders make use of the marker; and (ii) links between markers and issues of policy interest, such as monitoring international agreements. The disability marker appears to perform well against both criteria.^{lxxv} Five years after the disability marker was introduced, now seems an appropriate time to reappraise the case for elevating the marker from voluntary to mandatory status. DFAT should consider raising this proposal at the OECD-DAC.

What is more, use of the OECD-DAC disability marker is currently confined largely to bilateral government ODA providers. As at 2021, no multilateral^{lxxvi} organisations used the OECD-DAC disability marker,^{lxxvii} although some such organisations have developed their own parallel marker systems.^{lxxviii} DFAT should consider using its strong relationships with UN agencies and multilateral development banks to urge them to report data using the OECD-DAC disability marker, for clearer comparisons.

Design

A third opportunity for Australia would be to call for the **design of the OECD-DAC disability policy marker to be made more rigorous**, by aligning more closely with CRPD standards and with the design of the OECD-DAC's existing gender equality policy marker. In particular:

- As highlighted above, the OECD-DAC disability marker does not currently require that projects reported as disability inclusive must closely consult with and actively involve people with disabilities and their representative organisations, at all stages of the project cycle (ex ante as well as ex post). This issue has long been highlighted by OPD advocates and other civil society organisations.^{lxxix} Since Australia does have experience of tracking the involvement of OPDs through the IMR/AQC process,^{lxxx} Australia could be particularly well placed to champion this at the OECD-DAC.
- Unlike the OECD-DAC's gender equality policy marker, the disability marker does not contain a minimum requirement that all projects – even those reported as not targeting the inclusion of people with disabilities – should as a minimum do no harm.^{lxxxi} There seems a clear opportunity for more rigorous minimum do no harm criteria to be introduced for the disability marker.
- Other aspects of the disability marker design could also be brought into line with that of the gender equality policy marker, for example, around disability analysis and around monitoring and evaluation.^{lxxxii} Disability analysis, i.e., identifying barriers to inclusion and considering how they can be addressed, has long been an element of DFAT's quality assessment processes such as the AQC and IMR,^{lxxxiii} so here again DFAT seems well placed to be a champion.

Box 5: Summary of recommendations for DFAT advocacy on the OECD-DAC disability policy marker

- Advocate for the OECD-DAC to elevate the marker to mandatory status. Also advocate for multilateral partners to report using the OECD-DAC disability marker.
- Advocate for the design of the OECD-DAC disability marker to be tightened, including through a requirement on participation of persons with disabilities; through a criterion on "do no harm"; and through greater alignment with the OECD-DAC gender equality marker.

Annex 1: Some of the key advantages of the OECD-DAC disability marker and of DFAT's other tools for reporting spending on disability equity and rights

This Annex presents a more detailed version of the analysis summarised in Table 1 above.

Some key advantages of the OECD-DAC disability marker

- **Comparability:** As set out in Section A.4 above, the OECD-DAC disability marker allows comparisons to be made between Australia and other members of the OECD-DAC: chart 2 is an example. Such comparisons need some caution, as data is self-reported by the different OECD-DAC members who may not all interpret the OECD-DAC's guidance in exactly the same way. Still OECD-DAC disability marker results can give a very valuable first indication of which OECD-DAC members have higher ambitions on disability inclusion, and where there may be good practices to learn from, which can then be triangulated against other more detailed sources of evidence.
- **Granularity:** As discussed in Section A.4 above, OECD-DAC disability marker data is published at a project level, through the OECD-DAC's Creditor Reporting System database.^{lxxxiv} This makes it possible for external researchers, including OPDs, to gain more detailed insights into the kinds of projects that are being reported as disability inclusive.^{lxxxv} The possibility for more detailed analysis is further enhanced by the wide range of other data that the Creditor Reporting System captures alongside the disability marker – for example, data on the country where a project is implemented, on the sector of focus, and on other policy markers, as well as a brief description of the project's rationale. While it appears that DFAT does not yet report disability spending data to this degree of granularity, it should explore future opportunities to do so, for example, by publishing the results of individual projects' IMRs through its planned new online data portal.^{lxxxvi}

Two further advantages apply specifically when comparing the OECD-DAC disability marker against DFAT's IMR:

- **The OECD-DAC disability marker gives a snapshot of the prevailing policy environment:** OECD-DAC policy marker scores, including scores on the disability marker, are reported at the point when ODA spending commitments are made.^{lxxxvii} This means that for data users looking to understand the prevailing policy environment at a certain point in time, the OECD-DAC disability marker is a particularly useful tool (see below for the comparative advantages of the IMR).^{lxxxviii}
- **The OECD-DAC disability marker may have a higher threshold for disability inclusion – but more investigation would be needed to confirm this.** In 2021, 18% of Australia's ODA commitments were reported as disability inclusive using the OECD-DAC disability marker.^{lxxxix} In contrast, in 2022-23, the IMR/AQC process deemed 46% of projects of AUD 3 million or above to effectively address... disability equity.^{xc} There could be several factors contributing to this difference – for example, timing differences, differences in the precise scope of projects covered, or simply the fact that DFAT staff had less familiarity with the OECD-DAC disability marker. More in-depth research on specific projects would be needed to fully understand the reasons. Nevertheless, at first sight, the large difference between the results suggests that the threshold for a project to be deemed "disability inclusive" using the OECD-DAC disability marker is higher than that using IMR/AQC scores. In the author's view, while lower thresholds may potentially be useful for internal learning, higher thresholds are generally to be preferred for the purposes of external reporting and accountability since they create an incentive for projects to be more ambitious in their approach to disability inclusion.^{xci}

Some key advantages of DFAT's other tools

Advantages that apply when comparing the annual ODA estimate against the OECD-DAC disability marker:

- **History:** Whereas OECD-DAC disability marker data is only available from 2018 onwards, DFAT's data on disability inclusion within ODA spending goes back as far as 2005-06.^{xcii}
- **Precision:** As set out in Section A.4 above, DFAT's annual estimate of the amount of Australian ODA that "provides some level of assistance to disabled persons" is based on project-level estimates of the percentage of spending that directly contributes to disability inclusion.^{xciii} So in the case of a project where disability has been mainstreamed alongside other objectives, whereas the OECD-DAC marker would report the whole project as disability inclusive (score 1: significant objective), DFAT's annual estimate would seek to calculate the percentage of project spending that was directly inclusion-related. Both types of information can be useful, but this more precise spending data is missing if the OECD-DAC marker is used in isolation, so DFAT's annual estimate has an important complementary role to play.

Advantages that apply when comparing the IMR against the OECD-DAC disability marker:

- **IMR results give a snapshot of the current state of disability inclusion in the ODA programme:** IMR scores are reassessed annually,^{xciv} and DFAT's headline reporting reflects the latest scores across all live (or newly completed) projects over AUD 3 million, even those initiated several years ago.^{xcv} This means that the IMR is a particularly helpful tool for data users seeking to get a snapshot of the current state of disability inclusion across the ODA programme (see comparative advantages of the OECD-DAC disability marker, above).
- **Scope:** Despite the caution above about the threshold used to interpret IMR/AQC scores, the underlying design of the IMR question on disability is in some ways^{xcvi} more ambitious than the design of the OECD-DAC disability marker.
 - First, IMRs consider whether people with disabilities are expected to benefit equally from the 'investment'.^{xcvii} These elements are not so explicit in the criteria for the OECD-DAC disability marker.^{xcviii}
 - Second, IMRs consider whether people with disabilities and/or OPDs have been consulted in the programming process.^{xcix} In contrast, the OECD-DAC disability marker does not directly require that people with disabilities and OPDs must participate in order for projects to be given positive marker scores.^c

Notes

- i DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), 2023, [Australia's international development policy: for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific](#), p.15.
- ii DFAT, [Australian Official Development Assistance: statistical summary 2021-22](#), p.34.
- iii Please see endnotes to the main body of the briefing for full information on how this number was calculated and for an explanation of "allocable" ODA.
- iv Please see endnotes to the main body of the briefing for full information on how this number was calculated and for an explanation of what is included within "total" ODA.
- v DFAT, 2023, [Australia's international development policy: for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific](#), p.15.
- vi See Dodds/ADDC and CBM Australia, 2022, [Leaving no-one behind: Rebuilding disability inclusion in Australia's international development program](#), section on 'Disability inclusive development – rebuilding a Labor legacy', pp. 3-4.
- vii WHO (World Health Organisation), 2022, [Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities](#), p.24. See also methodological information on pp. 285-288. Please note the report suggests that the 12.8% estimate might be higher if more people in Low-Income Countries had access to diagnoses and opportunities to report conditions that lead to disability.
- viii For example, Braithwaite and Mont, 2009, [Disability and poverty: a survey of World Bank Poverty Assessments and implications](#), pp. 229-230; and Mitra et al, 2017, [Extra costs of living with a disability: a review and agenda for research](#), p.480.
- ix See for example UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021, A/76/146, [Report on the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict](#), paragraphs 29-36.
- x See for example Castres, '[Climate policy and activism need to make more space for disabled people](#)', BMJ 2022;379:o2387; CBM Global, [Missing in climate action: stories of persons with disabilities from the Global South](#), pp.9-13.
- xi OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), [Development Assistance Committee](#).
- xii OECD-DAC, [The Development Assistance Committee's mandate](#).
- xiii See OECD-DAC, [DAC and CRS code list](#), tab within the spreadsheet titled "markers".
- xiv See OECD-DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics, 2018, DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)39/REV1, [Proposal to introduce a policy marker in the CRS to track development finance that promotes the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities](#).
- xv For more detail on the scoring criteria, please see OECD-DAC, 2020, DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)48, 'The OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities: handbook for data reporters and users', pp.10-11 and 13-14.
- xvi OECD-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System](#).
- xvii Examples of recent publications using the marker include: European Disability Forum, 2022, [Annual report – EC spending on disability inclusion in global actions 2018-2020: Analysis of data from the OECD-DAC disability policy marker](#); Baumgarten/CBM Switzerland, 2023, [Factsheet: OECD DAC disability policy marker and its application in Switzerland's ODA reporting](#); and analyses produced by CBM Nepal, an independent researcher from the

Nigerian disability movement, the European Network on Independent Living, and Disabled People's Organisations Denmark, in a report by CBM Global, forthcoming.

xviii For more discussion on this point, see Meeks/Center for Inclusive Policy, 2020, [Getting the data: how much does aid money support the inclusion of persons with disabilities?](#), p.14; and Meeks, 2020, [Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Disability's inquiry on disability-inclusive international cooperation](#), pp.1-2.

xix Umehara, 2021, The OECD-DAC's disability inclusion marker: an evaluation of its ability to accurately measure disability inclusive ODA, arrives at a similar conclusion, p.13.

xx Allocable ODA is a category of ODA that is perceived to be more readily within OECD-DAC members' direct control. For instance, allocable ODA includes 'project type interventions' and technical assistance. In contrast, support for refugees in 'donor' countries or debt relief would not be considered allocable. In general, it is debatable how far the policy markers should only be confined to allocable ODA as opposed to all ODA types. However, for the purposes of this particular analysis on marker uptake, it was considered best to stick to allocable ODA only, to align with the OECD-DAC's own guidance on proper adoption of the markers.

xxi Source: Global Disability Summit [list of commitments](#) for 2018.

xxii Source: Author's understanding from discussion with DFAT.

xxiii Some marker data is available for earlier years too, but DFAT has advised that these are not comprehensive enough to allow meaningful analysis, since the marker had not yet been introduced systematically. Even in 2021, some caution should be used, since this was the first year of full reporting, so staff were in a learning process.

xxiv Including all types of ODA (not just allocable ODA), with the exception of administrative costs and core contributions to multilateral organisations. This approach was chosen to get the most complete picture of Australian ODA spending.

xxv Source: Author's analysis of data from the author's analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System. Data downloaded in September 2023. Data was downloaded on a commitments basis, in constant 2021 prices. Negative commitments were removed from the analysis. As noted above, this analysis on marker scores includes all types of ODA (not just allocable ODA), with the exception of administrative costs and core contributions to multilateral organisations. 'Spending reported as disability-inclusive' means that the spending was given a score of either 1 (significant objective) or 2 (principal objective) on the disability marker.

xxvi Source: Author's analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System data downloaded in September 2023. Data was downloaded on a commitments basis. Negative commitments were removed from the analysis. Administrative costs were excluded from the analysis, and the dataset excludes core contributions to multilateral organisations automatically. All other types of ODA (allocable and non-allocable) were retained, for the most complete picture of total ODA spending.

xxvii Please note this section focuses on tools that focus on inputs (budgets) or processes (programme quality) rather than outputs and outcomes for people with disabilities. So for example this section does not consider tools that could be used to track outputs and/or outcomes, such as disability-disaggregated data, surveys of the experiences of people with disabilities from under-represented groups, or disability-specific output and outcome indicators.

xxviii DFAT, [Australian Official Development Assistance: Statistical summary 2021-22](#), p.34.

xxix Source: Author's understanding from discussions with DFAT.

- xxx DFAT, '[Australia's Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) standard time series](#)', Table 12: Australian Official Development Assistance, disability inclusion.
- xxxix Other agencies that attempt to do this, using a variety of approaches, include the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland; the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (not reported publicly); the Italian Agency for Development and Cooperation – AICS; and UNICEF. (Sources: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2018, [Development Policy Results Report](#), p.108; Lloyd/FCDO, 2021, [The implementation of the disability policy marker in FCDO](#), slide 3; AICS, 2018, [Disability and international cooperation: participation and inclusion – the experience of Italian cooperation](#), p.23; Berman-Bieler and Takona/UNICEF, 2021, [Connecting expenditure to results for children with disabilities through PIDB codes and the disability tag](#), slide 7).
- xxxii DFAT, [Australian Official Development Assistance: statistical summary 2021-22](#), p.58.
- xxxiii This was the best available tool to calculate the impact of inflation on values denominated in AUD on an Australian financial year basis – however, since the tool is based on inflation within Australia, it is not a perfect measure of changes in the value of ODA in countries where Australian ODA projects are implemented.
- xxxiv The data is published at DFAT, '[Australia's assistance for disability-inclusive development](#)'.
- xxxv If the central disability allocation of 12.9 million AUD in 2014-15 was adjusted for inflation, it would come to AUD 15.9 million in 2022-23. (Source: CBM Australia, 2023: [A critical year for Australian leadership on disability inclusive development](#), Table 1; and Reserve Bank of Australia's [inflation calculator](#)).
- xxxvi See e.g., DFAT, DFAT, [Annual Report 2022-23](#), p.89. Data is generally available for projects of AUD 3 million or above.
- xxxvii Scores of 'not applicable' are also possible.
- xxxviii The precise structure and wording of AQC/IMR questions has evolved over time, and based on internet searches done for this briefing, the current version does not seem to be readily available. However, a close equivalent can be found in DFAT's investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix (this tool is used at an earlier stage in the project cycle than the IMR, but similarly uses a six-point scoring system on disability inclusion): see DFAT, 2023, [Investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix](#), pp.19-20.
- xxxix Inferred from DFAT, 2023, [Australia's international development performance and delivery framework](#), p.9 and DFAT Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all: evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), p.21.
- xl DFAT, [Annual Report 2022-23](#), p.89.
- xli See Marasini (CBM Nepal), 2023, 'Official Development Assistance for disability inclusion in Nepal: a first look at the data', in CBM Global and allies, forthcoming
- xlii Dr Adebukola Adebayo, 2023, 'OECD-DAC disability marker analysis of ODA in Nigeria (2019-2021)', in CBM Global and allies, forthcoming
- xliii Baumgarten/CBM Switzerland, 2023, [Factsheet: OECD DAC disability policy marker and its application in Switzerland's ODA reporting](#), p.4.
- xliv Hagen Herskind (Disabled People's Organisations Denmark) and Meeks, 2023, 'How far do OECD-DAC members consider the overlap between disability inclusion and other

cross-cutting priorities?’, in CBM Global and allies, forthcoming

xliv OECD-DAC, 2016, [Handbook on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker](#), pp.19-22.

xlvi See for example Larsen and Nilsson/NIDS, 2021, [Mapping of Norwegian efforts to include persons with disabilities in development assistance, 2010-2019](#), p.12 and section 2.4.2 on pp.13-14; Meeks/Atlas Alliance, 2023, [Tracking disability inclusive development: making the most of the OECD-DAC disability inclusion policy marker to promote equality and inclusion in international development and humanitarian assistance](#), pp.16-18; European Disability Forum (EDF) submission to the public consultation: European Commission financing instruments for external action, pp.8-9 (available from the European Commission’s compilation of submissions annexed to the consultation questionnaire, on the [consultation webpage](#)). Further indicative evidence comes from Development Initiatives, 2020, [Disability-inclusive ODA: Aid data on donors, channels, recipients](#), section titled ‘Findings from the DAC marker’. See also Umehara, 2021, The OECD-DAC’s disability inclusion marker: an evaluation of its ability to accurately measure disability inclusive ODA, pp.9-10.

xlvii DFAT Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all: evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), p.21-22. As noted briefly in Section B.1, the author of this briefing does not agree with the Office of Development Effectiveness’ view that scores should be adjusted to allow for “operational constraints”, since this could imply tolerance of exclusionary practices.

xlviii DFAT Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all: evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), p.22.

xlix DFAT Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all: evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), point 5 on p.24.

l DFAT Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all: evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), p.21; DFAT, 2023, [Australia’s international development performance and delivery framework](#), p.9.

li See for example United Nations System Chief Executives’ Board for Coordination: Finance and Budget Network, 2018, [Quality assurance of gender equality markers: improving accuracy and consistency](#), p.5; United Nations Development Group, 2013, [Gender equality marker guidance note](#), principle 3 on p.2.

lii See for example Hyde Townsend/Ford Foundation, 2021, [Progress towards equity: disability inclusion coding](#), slide 5.

liii See for example Inter-Agency Standing Committee, [2011: gender marker in CAPs and pooled funds](#), paragraph on “managing local context into the GM tip sheets”, p.33.

liv See for example United Nations Development Group, 2013, [Gender equality marker guidance note](#), standard 8, p.3; United Nations System Chief Executives’ Board for Coordination : Finance and Budget Network, 2018, [Quality assurance of gender equality markers: improving accuracy and consistency](#), p.7.

lv See OECD-DAC, 2016, [Handbook on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker](#), p.6.

lvi DFAT, 2023, [Australia’s international development policy: for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific](#), p.47.

lvii See DFAT, 2023, [Australia’s international development performance and delivery framework](#), p.13.

lviii This should include data on projects scored 0, so that stakeholders can check the project has at least avoided the risk of potential adverse impacts on people with disabilities.

lix [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#)

lx For further discussion of such an approach, see Angelova-Mladenova (European Network on Independent Living) and Meeks, 'What kinds of projects are reported as disability-inclusive? Towards a methodology for scrutinising project data'; and Hagen Herskind (Disabled People's Organisations Denmark), 'Disability-inclusive ODA projects reported by Denmark: review of quantitative and qualitative data', both in CBM Global and allies, forthcoming

lxi For example, at the 2022 Global Disability Summit, DFAT committed that its new disability policy would "consider intersectionality, exploring the opportunities and challenges that arise from an intersection of identities, including gender and age". (Source: Global Disability Summit 2022 [commitments page](#)).

lxii For an illustration of how this can work in practice, see European Disability Forum, 2022, [Annual report – EC spending on disability inclusion in global actions 2018-2020: analysis of data from the OECD-DAC disability policy marker](#), p.10.

lxiii It appears that the assessment system makes some broad references to 'social inclusion', but it is not clear that it breaks down in more detail the different groups who must be included. (Source: DFAT, 2023, [Investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix](#), pp.19-20).

lxiv This approach has already been trialled by New Zealand, for example, which has an internal marker on child and youth wellbeing (source: author's correspondence).

lxv For instance, previous versions of the IMR/AQC involved questions on indigenous peoples, but based on the limited information that was found on the current IMR process, it does not appear that this element has been retained. (Sources: DFAT, 2017, [How to rate indigenous issues in Aid Quality Checks: short note](#); DFAT, 2023, [Australia's international development performance and delivery framework](#), p.9).

lxvi See methodology notes in Section A.3 above.

lxvii [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), for example Article 32, paragraph 1 (a).

lxviii The OECD-DAC disability marker in its current form is set up to monitor disability inclusion more specifically, as opposed to disability equity - which requires, inter alia, much deeper and more fundamental engagement, participation and leadership by people with disabilities. However, at this time, it is the best available proxy for examining whether ODA projects support disability equity and rights.

lxix Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018, [A synthesis of Australian Aid investment in gender equality and disability inclusion in Lao PDR](#), p.47.

lxx Experience from some of the few other OECD-DAC members that have attempted to produce similar estimates suggests that accuracy can be a challenge (source: attendance at webinars on disability marker use).

lxxi DFAT, 2023, [Australia's international development policy: for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific](#), p.34.

lxxii Of course, it is not possible to predict with certainty OECD-DAC members' negotiating positions, and views may vary depending on which of the specific issues in this section – marker uptake or marker design – is at stake. But members with track records of support

for the OECD-DAC disability marker include the EU (which applies the marker across 100% of European Commission projects and has developed its own guidance on how to apply the marker); Finland (which like Australia had developed its own marker system in advance of the OECD-DAC); Norway (which applies the marker across 100% of its ODA and has taken part in webinars on marker use); and the UK (which developed the initial proposal for the marker). (Sources: author's analysis of OECD-DAC [Creditor Reporting System](#) data; European Commission, [Guidance note: leaving no one behind – disability inclusion in EU external action](#), pp.39-43; Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2018, [Development Policy Results Report](#), p.108; Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network, 2021, [GLAD learning series: the OECD-DAC marker for the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities](#); Atlas Alliance, 2023, [seminar on the OECD-DAC disability marker](#); OECD-DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics, 2018, DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)39/REV1, [Proposal to introduce a policy marker in the CRS to track development finance that promotes the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities](#), paragraph 4).

lxxiii For more discussion on this point, see CBM Global and allies, forthcoming

lxxiv OECD-DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics, 2020, DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)27, [Assessing the policy objectives of development co-operation activities: review of the reporting status, use and relevance of Rio and policy markers: conclusions and recommendations](#), paragraph 9. See also Umehara, 2021, The OECD-DAC's disability inclusion marker: an evaluation of its ability to accurately measure disability inclusive ODA, p.8.

lxxv This paragraph draws closely on Meeks/Atlas Alliance, 2023, [Tracking disability inclusive development: making the most of the OECD-DAC disability inclusion policy marker to promote equality and inclusion in international development and humanitarian assistance](#), p.10. See also OECD-DAC, 2020, [Assessing the policy objectives of development co-operation activities: review of the reporting status, use and relevance of Rio and policy markers – conclusions and recommendations](#), paragraph 41, and implied by first bullet of recommendation 4 on p.21. Re: use in monitoring international agreements, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has recommended that the disability marker should be used for monitoring CRPD Article 32 and has listed the OECD-DAC database as a data source in its monitoring guidance (source: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Article 32: illustrative indicators on international cooperation](#), indicators 32.11 and 32.14; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Data sources for outcome indicators on Article 32: international cooperation](#), indicators 32.11 and 32.14).

lxxvi Except the European Union, which counts as a bilateral institution for most OECD-DAC purposes.

lxxvii Source: Author's analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System database data for 2021, on a commitments basis. Data was downloaded in February 2023.

lxxviii See for example Berman-Bieler and Takona/UNICEF, 2021, [Connecting expenditure to results for children with disabilities through PIDB codes and the disability tag](#), slide 5 ; United Nations Secretary General, [Disability inclusion in the United Nations system: 2021 programme year](#), p.35 ; Asian Development Bank, [Strengthening disability-inclusive development: 2021-2025 roadmap](#), pp.39-40. (Please note that it is beyond the scope of this briefing to assess the respective strengths and weaknesses of these different marker systems, compared with the OECD-DAC disability marker).

lxxix See for example International Disability Alliance, European Disability Forum, International Disability and Development Consortium, Global Action on Disability Network, 2019, [Call to action – implementation of the disability inclusion marker](#).

lxxx DFAT, 2023, [Investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix](#), pp.19-20.

- lxxxi OECD-DAC, 2016, [Handbook on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker](#), p.10. See also Umehara, 2021, The OECD-DAC's disability inclusion marker: an evaluation of its ability to accurately measure disability inclusive ODA, p.9.
- lxxxii OECD-DAC, 2016, [Handbook on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker](#), pp.10-11.
- lxxxiii See e.g., DFAT, 2023, [Investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix](#), pp.19-20; and also (for questions previously used in the AQC) DFAT, [Aid Quality Check template](#), p. 4.
- lxxxiv OECD-DAC, [Creditor Reporting System](#). Please note the database will be replaced with a new platform, 'OECD data explorer', from 2024.
- lxxxv For a recent example, in which a review of project-level data from the Creditor Reporting System database was used as the starting point for research involving other qualitative data sources, see Hagen Herskind (Disabled People's Organisations Denmark), 2023, 'Disability-inclusive ODA projects reported by Denmark, a review of quantitative and qualitative data', in CBM Global and allies, forthcoming
- lxxxvi DFAT, 2023, [Australia's international development performance and delivery framework](#), p.13.
- lxxxvii See OECD-DAC, 2016, [Handbook on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker](#), p.8.
- lxxxviii There is some nuance to this, as sometimes commitments can span several years after a project is designed, but still overall OECD-DAC disability marker data gives a good indication of the current policy environment.
- lxxxix Author's analysis of data from the author's analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System. Data downloaded in September 2023. Data was downloaded on a commitments basis, in constant 2021 prices. Negative commitments were removed from the analysis. All types of ODA are included in the analysis, except administrative costs and core contributions to multilateral organisations. 'Spending reported as disability-inclusive' means that the spending was given a score of either 1 (significant objective) or 2 (principal objective) on the disability marker.
- xc DFAT, [Annual Report 2022-23](#), p.89.
- xcii For further discussion on these issues, see Meeks/Atlas Alliance, 2023, [Tracking disability inclusive development: making the most of the OECD-DAC disability inclusion policy marker to promote equality and inclusion in international development and humanitarian assistance](#), pp.27-30.
- xciii Time series data from 2005-06 onwards are available: see DFAT, '[Australia's Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) standard time series](#)', Table 12: Australian Official Development Assistance, disability inclusion.
- xciv Source: Author's understanding from discussions with DFAT. See also Umehara, 2021, The OECD-DAC's disability inclusion marker: an evaluation of its ability to accurately measure disability inclusive ODA, p.8. See also Umehara, 2021, The OECD-DAC's disability inclusion marker: an evaluation of its ability to accurately measure disability inclusive ODA, p.11.
- xcv DFAT Office of Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all: evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), p.21.
- xcvi Author's interpretation of DFAT, [Annual Report 2022-23](#), p.89 and DFAT Office of

Development Effectiveness, 2018, [Development for all: evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid](#), point 1 on p.24.

xcvi It is not possible to undertake a full comparison on the relative ambition of the two systems without referring to more detailed guidance on the IMR process, which does not appear to be available in the public domain. Nevertheless, in the author's judgement, the features of the IMR highlighted here are so important that it is implausible any more detailed comparison would affect the overall conclusion that the IMR is, on balance, more ambitious. The UK's Independent Commission on Aid Impact reached a similar conclusion when comparing Australia's system with the UK marker (which subsequently became the basis for the OECD-DAC marker): see Independent Commission on Aid Impact, 2018, [DfID's approach to disability in development](#), paragraph 4.14.

xcvii As noted above, the precise structure and wording of AQC/IMR questions has evolved over time, and based on internet searches done for this briefing, the current version does not seem to be readily available. However, a close equivalent can be found in DFAT's investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix (this tool is used at an earlier stage in the project cycle than the IMR, but similarly uses a six-point scoring system on disability inclusion): see DFAT, 2023, [Investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix](#), pp.19-20. Reference has also been made to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, [Aid Quality Check template](#), p.4.

xcviii For more detail on the OECD-DAC disability marker scoring system, see OECD-DAC, 2020, DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)48, 'The OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities: handbook for data reporters and users', pp.10-11 and 13-14.

xcix Based on DFAT, 2023, [Investment design quality assessment tool and scoring matrix](#), pp.19-20; and DFAT, n.d., [Aid Quality Check template](#), p.4.

c Consultation with OPDs is simply recommended as a good programming practice, separate from the scoring criteria. (Source: OECD-DAC, 2020, 'The OECD-DAC policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities: handbook for data reporters and users', pp.15 and 21).

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