



# Economic empowerment strategy

A bold vision of disability inclusion



Sightsavers

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Helen, a sorghum farmer in Migori, Kenya, travelling on a boda boda motorcycle to take her harvest to the collection hub.



# Contents

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Acronyms	4	Cross-cutting priorities	34
.....		.....	
Executive summary	6	Thematic links	40
.....		.....	
Context	8	References	42
.....			
Disability-inclusive economic empowerment and the SDGs	10		
.....			
Theory of change	13		
.....			
Goal 1: Employment and entrepreneurship	14		
.....			
Goal 2: Decent work and labour rights	20		
.....			
Goal 3: Inclusive social protection	26		
.....			
Goal 4: Inclusive community finance	30		

## Cover image

Prisca, an entrepreneur and paralympic athlete, training after work in Gulu, Uganda. Prisca aims to compete in the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympic Games in the 100 and 400 metre running events.

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# Acronyms

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<b>ADP</b>	African Disability Protocol
<b>BDNs</b>	Business and Disability Networks
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>IDA</b>	International Disability Alliance
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>NFIS</b>	National financial inclusion strategies
<b>NTDs</b>	Neglected tropical diseases
<b>OSH</b>	Occupational safety and health
<b>OPDs</b>	Organisations of people with disabilities
<b>SDGS</b>	Sustainable development goals
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and vocational education and training
<b>UNCRPD</b>	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>VSLAs</b>	Village Savings and Loans Associations
<b>VSR</b>	Voluntary stakeholder review
<b>WGQs</b>	Washington Group Questions

Kenyan farmer and  
businesswoman  
Linnet Lucy, who has a  
disability, supplements  
her income by selling  
farming products such as  
fertilisers and herbicides.



# Executive summary

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**This strategy focuses on systems strengthening for disability inclusion so that people with disabilities can achieve economic empowerment.**

Across the world, economic systems are currently failing people with disabilities. They face systemic exclusion, marginalisation and exploitation across labour markets, supply chains and financial systems. Globally, people with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed, underemployed or working in informal, poor and precarious conditions, with limited access to labour and social protections. Women with disabilities face even greater barriers, including heightened risks of violence, discrimination and economic insecurity. The climate crisis is compounding these challenges, reshaping livelihoods in ways that disproportionately affect people with disabilities.

Sightsavers' economic empowerment thematic strategy sets out a bold vision of disability inclusion – to strengthen economic systems so that people with disabilities are not only protected from exploitation and exclusion, but are recognised as central actors in building just, sustainable and inclusive economies. Our approach is grounded in a rights-based framework and aligned with international commitments – including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the African Disability Protocol and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The strategy is built around four interconnected themes to advance disability inclusion:

- **Employment and entrepreneurship**  
Expanding access to inclusive vocational training, decent employment and sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities for people with disabilities.
- **Decent work and labour rights**  
Facilitating disability-inclusive organising, bargaining and public policy influencing to improve working conditions and ensure decent work and labour rights for people with disabilities, including a disability-inclusive just transition.
- **Inclusive social protection**  
Supporting the development of universal, comprehensive and disability-inclusive social protection systems, including climate-adaptive mechanisms.
- **Inclusive community finance**  
Improving people with disabilities' financial literacy, consumer rights and access to inclusive community finance, while safeguarding against exploitative practices and adverse incorporation.

Crosscutting priorities – including gender equality, just transition and stigma reduction – are integrated throughout.



Youth disability advocate Sadah at a Sightsavers citizenship and political participation workshop in Sierra Leone.

We take an innovative, multi-stakeholder approach to disability-inclusive economic empowerment, working in partnership with organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), trade unions and worker organisations, employers, governments, and civil society allies to drive systems strengthening.

Our programming is designed to be scalable, sustainable and high-impact – contributing to long-term systems strengthening beyond the life of individual projects. This strategy will reach large numbers of people with disabilities across multiple countries, influencing policy and supporting inclusive economic systems strengthening.

Our work makes a substantial contribution to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) – especially goals 1, 5, 8, 10 and 13 on poverty, gender equality, decent work, inequality and climate action.

Through this strategy, Sightsavers is not only advancing disability inclusion – we are helping to strengthen economic systems that work for everyone.

# Context

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**Labour markets and supply chains are failing people with disabilities on a global level. This perpetuates exclusion, marginalisation and exploitation. Sightsavers is working to change this, through our focus on achieving disability inclusion in these areas.**

Levels of poverty among people with disabilities are higher than those without disabilities. People with disabilities are less likely to be economically active. When they are active, they are more likely to be unemployed and underemployed. The vast majority of those who are working are in the informal economy, with few to no labour and social protections.<sup>1</sup> Even when working in the formal economy, however, workers with disabilities face lower wages and poorer conditions than workers without disabilities. Globally, workers with disabilities earn 12 per cent less than workers without disabilities; in low and lower-middle-income countries, the gap is 26 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Achieving economic justice for people with disabilities, therefore, is essential for reducing inequality, resisting discrimination and securing disability inclusion.

Unlike traditional models, which focus more narrowly on vocational training and entrepreneurship, Sightsavers takes an innovative, multi-stakeholder approach to disability inclusion for economic empowerment and justice. We work with a variety of key stakeholders to combat exploitation and exclusion and, instead, achieve reduced inequality, decent work and sustainable inclusion for people with disabilities across labour markets and supply chains. Stakeholders include, primarily, organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), trade union and worker organisations, employer organisations, government departments and agencies, and a range of others such as women's organisations, farmers' associations,

producer and financial cooperatives, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) providers, climate coalitions and other civil society allies.

We also work to ensure that people with disabilities are meaningfully included in wider economic and social development efforts. We support disability-inclusive civil society coalitions, including OPDs and people with disabilities, to help achieve these broader goals.

Our approach is designed to be scalable, sustainable and high impact – driving long-term systems strengthening beyond the life of specific projects. To do this, our programming is anchored around four core themes:

- Employment and entrepreneurship
- Decent work and labour rights
- Inclusive social protection
- Inclusive community finance.

Gender and just transition<sup>3</sup> are crosscutting themes throughout. Women with disabilities face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and exploitation, which not only hinder their full and equal participation in labour markets and supply chains but also expose them to heightened risks of exclusion, exploitation and economic insecurity. Compared to men with disabilities, women with disabilities are less likely to be employed, earn lower wages and are more often pushed into

unpaid or precarious work.<sup>4</sup> They also face significant barriers to accessing technology, financial services and assistive devices.<sup>5</sup> Sightsavers is actively working to combat the discrimination, exclusion and exploitation of women with disabilities.

The climate emergency is reshaping economies, labour markets and livelihoods in ways that disproportionately affect people with disabilities, particularly in low and middle-income countries.<sup>6</sup> Climate-related events – such as flooding, heatwaves and droughts – are causing and exacerbating disabilities. These events also compound problems for people with disabilities, who face heightened risks of exclusion, precarity and poverty due to existing inequalities and a lack of inclusive systems.

As countries transition to green and low-carbon economies, however, there is a danger that people with disabilities will be even further marginalised – denied access to decent work, excluded from climate policy and overlooked in climate finance. Sightsavers is embedding just transition principles across all areas of our economic empowerment work, ensuring that people with disabilities are not only protected from climate shocks but are also active participants and leaders in developing inclusive, sustainable green economies. These themes are explored in greater depth in the final section of this strategy document.

Our work aligns with a number of international frameworks, including:

- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), especially: Article 6 on women with disabilities; Article 16 on freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse; Article 27 on work and employment, including labour and trade union rights; and Article 28 on adequate standard of living and social protection.<sup>7</sup>
- The African Disability Protocol (ADP), especially Article 19 on the right to decent work, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to exercise labour and trade union rights; and Article 20 on the right to an adequate standard of living, including social protection programmes.<sup>8</sup>
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which affirms the obligations and commitments that ILO member states must uphold regardless of workers' disabilities or other status. These include: the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining; the abolition of forced, compulsory and child labour; non-discrimination in employment; and a safe and healthy working environment.<sup>9</sup>

Through this strategy, Sightsavers is not only advancing disability inclusion – we are helping to strengthen economic systems to be more just, inclusive and sustainable. We are positioning people with disabilities as central actors in strengthening economies, not just as beneficiaries. Our work is grounded in a rights-based approach, driven by partnerships and guided by the leadership of people with disabilities themselves.

# Disability-inclusive economic empowerment and the SDGs

The areas of disability inclusion outlined in this strategy make a substantial contribution to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) – especially goals 1, 5, 8, 10 and 13 on poverty, gender equality, decent work, inequality and climate action.

In 2024, Sightsavers piloted a Voluntary Stakeholder Review (VSR) to report our contribution to the SDGs. These contributions include:

- **SDG Target 8.5 – Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and people with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.**

Improved reporting on indicators through engaging with the Bangladesh and Pakistan governments, and the ILO, to integrate the Washington Group Questions (WGQs) on disability into the national Labour Force Surveys.

- **SDG Target 8.6 – Substantially reduce the proportion of youths not in employment, education or training.**

Promoted the employment and entrepreneurship of young people with disabilities as part of Futuremakers projects in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

- **SDG Target 8.8 – Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.**

Supported informal workers with disabilities in Kenya to organise into trade unions and understand their labour rights.

- **SDG Target 10.2 – Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all – irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.**

Facilitated the Public Service Guidelines on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Zimbabwe and the Access to Work scheme in Nigeria.

- **SDG Target 13.3 – Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.**

Supported farmers with disabilities and their communities to understand and adopt climate resilient practices.

In particular, the VSR revealed the importance of working in partnership with government and civil society stakeholders to deliver the SDGs through a disability inclusion lens.



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A member of the IT Bridge Academy at her graduation ceremony in Nairobi, Kenya.

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Eunice, a widowed small-scale farmer in Homa Bay, Kenya, uses the profits from her farming sales to educate and provide for her children.





Abubakar, a country representative for the African Youth with Disabilities Network, at a Sightsavers citizenship and political participation workshop in Makeni, Sierra Leone.

## Theory of change

### Impact:

#### Men and women with disabilities experience:

- Reduced poverty and inequality.
- Improved economic agency and security.
- Greater access to decent work and social protection.
- Increased resilience to climate and economic shocks.
- Enhanced leadership and participation in shaping inclusive economic systems and policies.

Domains	Individual enabling	Society enabling	Labour market enabling	Government and policy	Skills and financial enabling
<b>Actors</b>	Men and women with disabilities, families and caregivers, community leaders, farmers with disabilities	OPDs, Trade unions, Worker organisations	Employer networks (including BDNs), employment service providers	Governments, regulators, social protection agencies	TVETs, VSLAs and financial cooperatives, business support
<b>Long term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved access to green &amp; decent work with living wages</li> <li>Improve access to universal, comprehensive social protection</li> <li>Reduced inequality and improved gender equality</li> <li>Reduced stigma and discrimination</li> <li>Actively engage and participate in decisions affecting lives and livelihoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systemic change in labour rights and workplace standards</li> <li>Lasting improvements in working conditions (including mitigating effects of climate change), protections and fair wages</li> <li>Stronger OPDs, unions and worker organisations</li> <li>Collective organising, bargaining and advocacy leads to reduced inequality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More disability-confident employers and inclusive workplaces</li> <li>Increased recruitment and retention of men and women with disabilities</li> <li>Sustained commitment to decent work and inclusion, including respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger, more inclusive policy frameworks and effective implementation</li> <li>Improved access to services and protections for people with disabilities</li> <li>Alignment with international commitments (UNCRPD, SDGs, etc.)</li> <li>Government policies and interventions lead to reduced inequality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved livelihoods and Autonomy for people with disabilities</li> <li>Inclusive community financing systems and enterprise ecosystems</li> <li>Reduced vulnerability to exploitation and adverse incorporation</li> <li>Increased skills and access to inclusive community financing leads to reduced inequality</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased access to decent work, markets and social protection</li> <li>Higher incomes, more secure work</li> <li>More sustainable agricultural practices</li> <li>Enhanced participation in household and community decision making and advocacy</li> <li>Increased active participation in OPDs, trade unions and worker organisations</li> <li>Safer, more inclusive workplaces, homes and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusive organising, collective bargaining and advocacy for decent work and inclusion</li> <li>OPDs and unions influence policy and workplace practices (including climate adaptation)</li> <li>Expanded partnerships with trade unions, employers, and governments</li> <li>Greater representation within unions and worker organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusive hiring, retention and career progression</li> <li>Secure jobs (incl. green jobs) with living wages and decent conditions</li> <li>Growth in membership and influence of BDNs</li> <li>Joint advocacy initiatives between BDNs, OPDs and unions</li> <li>Good faith collective bargaining, dialogue and negotiations with OPDs and worker organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enforcement of laws and policies supporting decent work and inclusion</li> <li>Improved implementation of policies</li> <li>Expansion of accessible, universal (incl. climate adaptive) social protection coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced financial literacy among people with disabilities</li> <li>Greater access to safe, regulated, and inclusive community financing</li> <li>Strengthened enterprises</li> </ul>
<b>Short term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased capacity to advocate for and access rights, opportunities and available support</li> <li>Improved vocational, entrepreneurial and financial literacy skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened OPD capacity</li> <li>Initial collaboration between OPDs, unions and advocacy groups</li> <li>Increased awareness of disability and gender inclusion in unions</li> <li>Increased awareness of labour rights in OPDs</li> <li>Increased awareness of just transition principles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers adopt inclusive policies</li> <li>BDNs facilitate peer learning</li> <li>Improved disability awareness</li> <li>Accessible workplaces and recruitment processes</li> <li>Workplace adjustment investments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened inclusive policies and social protection schemes</li> <li>OPDs, unions and civil society contribute to policy design</li> <li>Increased awareness among key stakeholders to apply inclusive policies and begin compliance processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased access to inclusive vocational, entrepreneurial training, and community financing groups</li> <li>Improved access to financial literacy programmes and products</li> </ul>

# How we achieve our goals

## Goal 1: Employment and entrepreneurship

**Objective 1:** People with disabilities have access to vocational training, decent employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Focus areas:

- Vocational and skills training
- Inclusive employment
- Entrepreneurship opportunities

Unemployment and underemployment are major causes of global poverty for people with disabilities, many of whom are unemployed or not economically active at all. This is even more the case for those in rural or agricultural areas, with disability often limiting migration options. Supporting disability-inclusive training, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities is therefore a key part of poverty reduction and economic justice for people with disabilities.

Under this theme, Sightsavers pursues systems strengthening through deepening engagement with government authorities, training institutions and other labour market stakeholders to catalyse inclusive training, decent work and entrepreneurship opportunities for people with disabilities. We:

- Engage with government stakeholders to influence and improve disability-inclusive labour and employment policy implementation.
- Expand access to vocational and skills training opportunities.
- Empower decent employers to ensure accessible and inclusive workplaces, invest in workplace adjustments, and offer people with disabilities secure jobs with living wages and decent conditions.
- Assist nano and micro entrepreneurs with disabilities.
- Help farmers with disabilities to develop sustainable agricultural practices, diversify income sources and connect with sustainable supply chains.

Women with disabilities face extra barriers in accessing labour markets, training opportunities and entrepreneurship support. They face higher rates of exclusion, discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse. Women also often carry the burden of childcare and housework responsibilities – which can make accessing opportunities, such as training, difficult. Gender mainstreaming crosscuts throughout this theme, with our programmes paying special attention to ensuring equal participation of women.

We have a focus on just transition throughout the theme. We promote green skills development and access to green jobs for people with disabilities, promoting disability-inclusive training and employment in these industries. In rural areas, we support people with disabilities and communities to diversify income sources and adopt sustainable practices that enhance climate resilience, with a focus on community-led planning and decision-making. In agriculture, we support farmers with disabilities to adapt their practices and adopt sustainable and climate smart practices.



## **Women with disabilities** face extra barriers in accessing labour markets

## **Vocational and skills training**

Vocational and skills training opportunities can help provide people with disabilities with the soft and hard skills they need to enter labour markets and pursue entrepreneurship opportunities. Sightsavers' IT Bridge Academies, established in a number of countries, have successfully helped hundreds of young people with disabilities find gainful employment. Supporting the provision of online soft and hard skills training has allowed people with disabilities to access opportunities no matter where they are located. Training for farmers with disabilities has enabled them to diversify crops, increase yields and develop sustainable and climate smart agricultural practices.

Sightsavers will continue to expand access to vocational and skills training programmes, including both training in physical locations and online training opportunities, for people with disabilities. We will also support training providers to make training programmes inclusive and study locations accessible. This includes ensuring that institutes and centres have safeguarding standards, codes of conducts and reporting channels – including the extra resources and risk mitigation required for residential facilities – so they can be confident that any training is safe.

## Inclusive employment

In addition to stigma and discrimination, people with disabilities are often excluded from formal employment opportunities due to both a perception that they are less productive and concerns about the costs of providing reasonable accommodations. Challenging these assumptions is essential to enabling people with disabilities to find gainful and meaningful decent work and livelihood opportunities. This includes making it harder for employers to discriminate through using policy levers and labour inspection, supporting decent employers to hire workers with disabilities and adapt workplaces, and ensuring employers negotiate and bargain in good faith with trade unions on disability inclusion issues.

Sightsavers has supported the establishment of nine Business and Disability Networks (BDNs),<sup>10</sup> providing a space for employers who want to improve their disability practices to discuss issues, initiatives and ideas, advised by both Sightsavers and OPDs. BDNs also provide a platform to hold policy dialogues with worker organisations and government stakeholders. Sightsavers will continue to work with employers on disability-inclusive employment and workplaces, including through BDNs, advocating for them to embrace disability confidence and recruit more people with disabilities, and promoting access to green and decent jobs. We will also continue to explore innovative ways to challenge negative assumptions about disability in the workplace and we will strengthen our own inclusive workplace practices, including the accessibility of our resources.

## Entrepreneurship opportunities

Nano, micro and small enterprises generate a large amount of employment in the contexts in which we work. Well-designed interventions can develop resilient and sustainable enterprises, which are able to manage through economic and climate shocks.

Sightsavers will work with nano and micro entrepreneurs with disabilities, as well as farmers with disabilities, to connect them with business development support services and link them into local markets, supply chains and public sector procurement mechanisms in sustainable and beneficial ways. We will support enterprises to formalise as a way of strengthening resilience through improved access to further support and opportunities. We will especially support social enterprises tackling the climate crisis and other social challenges; for example, those developing renewable energy and sustainable production methods, or increasing access to assistive devices and technologies – the absence of which is a barrier to broader participation in societies and economies.



Sightsavers has supported the establishment of nine **Business and Disability Networks**



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Mary, a refugee from South Sudan, has a physical disability and lives with her eight children in a camp in Kenya where she owns and runs a retail shop.

## Goal 2: Decent work and labour rights

**Objective 2:** Formal and informal workers with disabilities achieve decent work and strengthen their labour rights through collective organising, bargaining and policy influencing.

Focus areas:

- Building relationships between disability movements and labour movements.
- Inclusive just transition.
- Disability and child labour, forced labour and trafficking.

While reducing unemployment and underemployment through access to formal job opportunities is essential, it is unfortunately not sufficient. Most economically active people with disabilities, especially in low and middle-income countries, are in the informal economy – including both informal self-employment and informal wage employment.<sup>11</sup> This work is largely unprotected and extremely precarious, with few to no labour protections. In addition, however, even workers with disabilities who are in formal employment often have precarious and insecure jobs – with low wages, long hours, poor conditions and little trade union representation or collective bargaining. This leads to high rates of in-work poverty.

Globally, there is a significant disability wage gap – workers with disabilities tend to earn less than workers without disabilities.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the barriers and exclusions faced by people with

disabilities can make them more vulnerable to exploitation as, knowing how hard it is to find work, they may put up with poor, unsafe conditions and inappropriate behaviour. This includes vulnerability to some of the worst forms of labour exploitation – such as forced and compulsory labour,<sup>13</sup> trafficked labour<sup>14</sup> and child labour.<sup>15</sup>

Women with disabilities are especially marginalised and excluded from decent work opportunities. They face even more workplace discrimination, tend to earn less than their male counterparts and are subjected to higher levels of gender-based violence and harassment.<sup>16</sup>

Under this theme, Sightsavers facilitates inclusive organising, bargaining and influencing for decent work and labour rights for formal and informal workers with disabilities, and those who provide support such as care workers. This includes, but is not limited to, living wages, secure jobs, decent conditions, reasonable adjustments, freedom from violence and harassment, trade union representation and collective bargaining. We do this through fostering collaboration between OPDs and worker organisations to work together to promote decent work and combat the worst forms of labour exploitation. Through disability-inclusive collective organising, bargaining and policy influencing, workers with disabilities, alongside other workers, both improve conditions at workplaces and achieve stronger policy regulations and enforcement.

Climate and gender are crosscutting priorities. We are committed to gender mainstreaming, ensuring that we support women workers with disabilities to address the exploitations and exclusions they face. Workers are on the frontline of the climate emergency, acutely feeling its impacts, such as heat stress and flooding, which have direct ramifications on health and earnings.<sup>17</sup> This is even more acute for workers with disabilities. We promote a disability-inclusive just transition

across the world of work – to ensure that the health and financial costs of the climate crisis do not fall on workers with disabilities, alongside other workers. This involves both measures to adapt to, and blunt, the worst impacts of climate change on workers with disabilities now – such as agreements around heat stress and flooding (in both indoor and outdoor workplaces), as well as bargaining and negotiations to ensure decent work opportunities for all as industries transition.

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Ussy Khamas Debe, Executive Secretary for the National Council of Persons with Disabilities in Zanzibar, Tanzania, being interviewed by journalists during the second Tanzania African Disability Protocol campaign workshop.

## Building relationships between disability movements and labour movements

Trade unions and worker organisations are essential for achieving economic justice through collective organising, bargaining and influencing. They play a crucial role in the inclusion of people with disabilities.<sup>18</sup> Given that workers with disabilities often work in low paid, poor quality and insecure jobs, strong relations between OPDs and trade unions can help improve wages and conditions, reduce employment discrimination, increase disability inclusion and help to secure a just climate transition.<sup>19</sup>

This is not limited to the formal economy. A significant majority of workers with disabilities are informal workers, working in unregistered and unprotected jobs as both wage workers and self-employed workers.<sup>20</sup> Worker organisations representing informal workers, with fair gender representation, are therefore essential stakeholders for improving the rights and conditions of these workers.<sup>21</sup> Our work in Kenya, supporting informal vendors and farmers with disabilities to join trade unions, has helped build the collective power of informal workers as well as strengthened relations between OPDs and trade unions.

Article 27 of the UNCRPD commits to prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of disability, and to ensuring that people with disabilities can exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others. Similarly, article 19 of the African Disability Protocol provides that every person with a disability has the right to decent work, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to exercise labour and trade union rights. Sightsavers will therefore work to support and strengthen relationships between OPDs and worker organisations to improve inclusive organising, bargaining and representation – including equal gender representation to ensure that the voices of women workers with disabilities are heard. This will help to achieve decent work and labour rights for workers with disabilities, alongside other workers, in both the formal and informal economy.



Tungii Mwanjala, who is deaf, is Vice Chairperson of the Tanzania Federation of Disabled People's Organizations, SHIVYAWATA. She is an entrepreneur, a farmer and a tailor.

## Inclusive just transition

All workers – both formal and informal, with and without disabilities – are acutely affected by the climate crisis. They face immediate threats to their health from extreme weather, such as workplace heat stress, and to their incomes when, for example, flooding prevents them from reaching work. These impacts are especially severe for workers with disabilities, who are more likely to be employed in informal, precarious jobs with limited labour protections. Some disabilities may heighten vulnerability to climate-related hazards. For example, people with physical impairments may be more susceptible to heat stress due to reduced thermoregulation,<sup>22</sup> while those with mobility impairments may face greater risks during floods.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the development of green, low carbon industries will be inclusive and just, threatening to further exclude and marginalise workers with disabilities.



Sightsavers will work to strengthen relationships between OPDs and worker organisations to **improve inclusive organising, bargaining and representation**

Pregnant women with disabilities may be particularly affected by extreme heat,<sup>24</sup> which can increase susceptibility to heat stress and related health complications, especially in physically demanding or poorly ventilated work environments.<sup>25</sup> Climate change has also been linked with increased levels of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.<sup>26</sup> Gender-sensitive workplace policies, however, can help mitigate these risks.

Sightsavers will work to ensure that the transition to green economies is inclusive and equitable for workers with disabilities. We will support adaptation measures to protect workers now – such as workplace agreements addressing heat stress and flooding – and support disability-inclusive collective bargaining and negotiations to ensure decent work opportunities for all as industries transition. We will push for inclusive decent work opportunities in emerging green sectors, ensuring that people with disabilities are not excluded or adversely incorporated. Our goal is to ensure that workers with disabilities can both withstand current climate shocks and benefit from the transition to sustainable, resilient economies.



Sorghum farmer Helen from Migori County, Kenya, carefully winnows her sorghum to separate the grain from the chaff. With precision and skill, she prepares her harvest for the collection hub.

## Disability and child labour, forced labour and trafficking

There are well-documented, myriad connections between disability and child labour, forced and compulsory labour, and trafficking. The correlations between child labour and disability consist of children with a disability who work, children who acquire a disability through their work, and children who are in families of adults with disabilities and who work to contribute to the household income.<sup>27</sup> The links between forced and compulsory labour and disability are numerous, including various forms of modern slavery<sup>28</sup> and types of disability segregated employment.<sup>29</sup> People with disabilities, especially women, also have a higher risk and prevalence of human trafficking.<sup>30</sup> Forced and trafficked labour of people with disabilities can exacerbate disabilities, heightening vulnerability to further exploitation.<sup>31</sup>

Article 27(2) of the UNCRPD and articles 10 and 19 of the African Disability Protocol affirm that protection from forced and compulsory labour is a right of people with disabilities. Abolition of forced and compulsory labour is also a key feature of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights and Work. In line with this, Sightsavers will undertake evidence-based work to identify where people with disabilities suffer from these forms of labour exploitation and help to address them through working with governments, OPDs, worker organisations and other allies.

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Salma Haji Saadat is the Chairperson of Zanzibar's National Cabinet for People with Disabilities and leads the Union of Women with Disabilities. A long-time activist, she works to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities in Tanzania and advises government institutions on disability inclusion.



## Goal 3: Inclusive social protection

**Objective 3:** People with disabilities have access to universal, comprehensive and inclusive social protection schemes.

Focus areas:

- Inclusive mainstream schemes.
- Adequate disability-specific schemes.
- Climate adaptive social protection for an inclusive just transition.

Social protection aims to protect people from poverty and vulnerability by ensuring a minimum acceptable level of access to goods and services across the life cycle. Inclusive social protection systems are essential for achieving economic justice for people with disabilities – providing a basic floor to alleviate poverty, vulnerability and exclusion.<sup>32</sup> When working effectively, social protection systems can help provide income security, healthcare, social care such as childcare and elderly care, pensions and disability benefits.

Social protection systems are especially important to people with disabilities, who are more exposed to risks due to higher rates of poverty, unemployment, informal and precarious work with few in-work protections or benefits, and lower incomes (as noted in themes 1 and 2). In addition, the majority of people with disabilities are older and the likelihood of disability increases strongly with age. Age-related social protection schemes must also, therefore, be inclusive of people with disabilities or they cannot be effective.

People with disabilities also face the extra costs of living with a disability, such as assistive technology and equipment. Comprehensive, universal and inclusive social protection systems can help mitigate the risks of poverty due to these extra costs.

Social protection systems are particularly necessary for women with disabilities, who face higher levels of unemployment and more risks of violence and harassment. In addition, women tend to have greater childcare responsibilities. They can also lack access to maternity services and benefits. A universal and comprehensive social protection floor can help mitigate and alleviate these risks.

SDG target 1.3 aims to achieve social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. Article 28 of the UNCRPD also recognises the right of people with disabilities to social protection and the importance of it in ensuring an adequate standard of living. Despite progress with the development of social protection systems and policies, many people remain unprotected, especially in low and middle-income countries, and many more lack adequate protection. People with disabilities are especially at risk of being excluded from social protection systems, with only one third of people with disabilities globally currently receiving at least one social protection benefit, largely in high-income countries.

Sightsavers works to influence public policy and help develop comprehensive and universal social protection systems which are inclusive of people with disabilities. We take a twin-track approach – aiming to improve the accessibility, inclusivity and effectiveness of both mainstream social protection schemes<sup>33</sup> and, when needed, of disability-specific schemes.

In addition, we recognise the importance of climate adaptive social protection systems for ensuring a just climate transition, especially as people with disabilities are more exposed to climate risks, through both helping to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change now and providing security as economies transition. We work to ensure that such systems are comprehensive and inclusive, providing security for people with disabilities in the face of the climate crisis. We implement our inclusive social protection work through supporting OPDs, governments and other stakeholders to work together on strengthening and improving social protection systems, helping to ensure they are truly universal, comprehensive and disability inclusive.



Sightsavers will work to support the development of **universal, comprehensive social protection** for all

## Inclusive mainstream schemes

Social protection schemes rarely actively exclude people with disabilities, but in practice can often inadvertently do so. This can be due to the absence of reasonable accommodations, offices and facilities lacking physical accessibility, information not being available in accessible formats, or conditionalities which people with disabilities find difficult to fulfil<sup>34</sup>.

Sightsavers will work to support the development of universal, comprehensive social protection for all, ensuring that systems and policies are inclusive of, and accessible to, people with disabilities, adequately responding to the needs and risks they face. We will work with governments, policymakers and OPDs to make sure people with disabilities are consulted during, and have input into, the development, design, implementation and monitoring of social protection systems and policies. We will also engage with multilateral entities and support local, national and global civil society coalitions and campaigns for more universal and comprehensive social protection system to be inclusive of people with disabilities and their organisations.



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Jannatul, who has had a physical disability since birth, lives in Gaibandha District, Bangladesh. Inadequate transport is a key issue for Jannatul.

## **Adequate disability-specific schemes**

For some people with disabilities, mainstream social protection schemes may adequately provide for their needs. Others may also require disability-specific schemes adapted to their specific needs, due to the extra costs of having a disability, which provide the required support and benefits when these are not adequately met through mainstream social protection schemes. Disability-specific social protection schemes should complement broader schemes to prevent poverty and promote the effective participation of people with disabilities in society.

Sightsavers will work to support the development and implementation of disability-specific social protection schemes. Making sure that disability-specific social protection adequately responds to the needs of people with disabilities also entails ensuring that governments and policymakers consult OPDs as core stakeholders during the development and implementation of such programmes. It also involves ensuring that disability assessments to determine eligibility are fair and do not create exclusion errors which deny social protection to people with disabilities who need it. We will also support awareness raising of such schemes among people with disabilities and their organisations so they know the benefits to which they are entitled, as well as training and capacity building for government officials administering the schemes at a local level to help ensure effective implementation.

## **Climate adaptive social protection for an inclusive just transition**

Comprehensive and universal climate adaptive social protection schemes are essential for securing an inclusive just transition. They can help to protect against the worst impacts of climate change now – including health impacts from extreme weather such as heat, drought and flooding, and the financial impacts from lost incomes, crop failures and destruction of homes and other assets. Social protection schemes can also provide a safety net as economies transition into low carbon production, supporting workers who need to transition into new industries. For example, during periods of unemployment and reskilling, and farmers who need to adopt more environmentally friendly practices.

Many countries, however, still lack the social protection systems needed to adequately respond to the climate crisis, with people with disabilities also at risk of being further excluded from such systems. Sightsavers will work with governments, OPDs and other stakeholders to support the development of universal, comprehensive and inclusive climate adaptive social protection systems. This includes ensuring that these are inclusive of people with disabilities to ensure a just and sustainable green transition. We will also work with key global stakeholders, such as those implementing the Action Mechanism on Just Transition<sup>35</sup>, to ensure that efforts to fund, develop and support adaptive social protection schemes are inclusive of people with disabilities.

## Goal 4: Inclusive community finance

**Objective 4:** People with disabilities have access to inclusive, sustainable and fair forms of finance.

Focus areas:

- Financial education and literacy.
- Financial inclusion policy and consumer protection.
- Community-based inclusive finance.

Inclusive finance – including access, usage and quality of finance – is fundamental to achieving economic justice. Many people with disabilities, however, are excluded from regulated and sustainable financial services – lacking bank accounts, not having access to online financial services, microcredit, insurance, and even being excluded from community financing such as cooperatives and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) due to a perceived lack of creditworthiness. Exclusion from regulated and sustainable financial services drives people with disabilities into unregulated, often exploitative and predatory, financing, which can lead to debt traps and other adverse outcomes. Exclusion of women with disabilities often means that the monetisation of their work is taken out of their control and put into the hands of others.

Generating evidence is fundamental to how we design interventions that address the needs of the people and communities we work with. Our research in Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria and elsewhere<sup>36</sup> has found several challenges. These include:

- Inconsistency between governments' national disability legislations and national financial inclusion strategies.
- Inaccessibility of physical and digital financial platforms.
- Non-inclusive digital identity systems.
- Weak financial literacy skills among people with disabilities.
- Incoherent disability-disaggregated data collection mechanisms used by financial service providers.

When done well, financial inclusion of people with disabilities can be transformative and contribute to inclusive economic growth – strengthening autonomy and control over income, particularly for women with disabilities. Financial inclusion also facilitates participation in collective economic models such as cooperatives and VSLAs, helping build social capital and resilience. By enabling access to credit, insurance and savings, inclusive financial systems contribute to greater economic security, reduce vulnerability to shocks and support long-term empowerment.

There is also, however, a risk of adverse incorporation, in which people with disabilities become 'included' in financial markets but in exploitative and unsustainable ways – which can lead to debt traps and other unfavourable outcomes. To avoid this, our inclusive community finance work focuses on strengthening financial education and literacy of people with disabilities, enabling informed decision-making and reducing vulnerability to predatory financial practices.

In addition, we help improve disability-inclusive financial policies and regulations, promoting transparent and fair lending practices. We also support people with disabilities to both establish and join community financing mechanisms – to ensure they are included in such collective financing and can participate safely and equitably. We implement our inclusive community finance work through supporting OPDs to work with governments, regulators such as central banks, financial cooperatives, VSLAs and other stakeholders to improve the inclusivity, accessibility and quality of finance for people with disabilities.

Financing, and the transformation of financial systems, is also needed to achieve a disability-inclusive just transition. We support the inclusion of people with disabilities in just transition financing initiatives. We will also help facilitate access to green financing for entrepreneurs with disabilities who are working to address climate issues.

## Financial education and literacy

Financial education and literacy is essential for economic justice. It helps people with disabilities to avoid debt traps and exploitative financing arrangements, and to understand how to access and use fair and sustainable forms of financing. Many people with disabilities have not received such education, however, and are consequently vulnerable to loan sharks and misleading advertisements.

Sightsavers will undertake work to improve financial education and literacy for a wide range of people with disabilities, building on the work we have done with young people wishing to start their own businesses. This work will be expanded to other groups, including older people and those in agricultural and rural areas. Financial education and literacy sessions will cover a wide range of topics depending on the participants. These include:

- Personal finance.
- How to open bank accounts.
- How to avoid unregulated and exploitative financing.
- Understanding the basics of interest.
- Financial inclusion policy.
- Financial services for entrepreneurship.
- Green financing options.

## Financial inclusion policy and consumer protection

Sightsavers will support OPD partners to advocate and work with governments and authorities around financial inclusion policy and implementation, to improve inclusivity and accessibility. This will include influencing central banks to improve their National Financial Inclusion Strategies (NFIS), and improving the access, use and quality of existing government schemes, for both individuals and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). We will also work to ensure that local, national and global just transition financing initiatives are inclusive of people with disabilities. Throughout, we aim to ensure that people with disabilities are consulted and involved in policymaking and implementation.

We will partner and influence regional and global financial inclusion coordinating bodies to influence their actions, resources and toolkits to reflect disability inclusion, including in the data they collect.

We will also advocate for strong consumer protection measures within financial systems. This includes ensuring that financial products and services are accessible, transparent and fair for people with disabilities. Where possible, we will broker relationships between OPDs and consumer protection agencies, ensuring they collaboratively review their policies and processes to be disability-inclusive. Also, that they enforce the law – particularly when the consumer rights of people with disabilities are infringed. We will work with OPDs to push for disability-inclusive financial regulations,

including protections against predatory lending, fraud and exploitative fees. We will also promote the development of accessible grievance and redress mechanisms, so that people with disabilities can report violations and seek remedies.

## Community-based inclusive finance

Sightsavers will support OPDs and other allies to facilitate access to sustainable and fair forms of community finance for small farmers, as well as nano and micro-entrepreneurs with disabilities. In Côte d'Ivoire and Malawi, Sightsavers has supported small farmers with disabilities to form and join VSLAs. Building on this work, we will focus on facilitating access to, and the establishment of, VSLAs, financial cooperatives and other forms of community financing. We prioritise community-based financing models to avoid the risks of adverse incorporation often inherent in commercial finance systems, which can perpetuate exclusion rather than alleviate it. Community-based financing can also help contribute to overall community development.

Our approach will include both helping to ensure that existing community financing mechanisms are inclusive of people with disabilities and supporting people with disabilities to establish and lead such mechanisms themselves. We will work closely with OPDs and local partners to build capacity, strengthen governance and ensure sustainability. Lessons from our current programmes will inform future work and contribute to a broader evidence base on inclusive community finance.

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Entrepreneur and youth disability advocate Mohamed, from Karene District in Sierra Leone, has a family and runs his own money management business.



# Cross-cutting priorities

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## Climate and just transition

Due to the climate emergency, many communities, especially in low and middle-income countries, are experiencing extreme and increasingly regular flooding, heat, drought and other climatic events. This leads to loss of life, significant health impacts – including causing and exacerbating disabilities – and adverse financial ramifications, including loss of incomes, crops and housing. Knock-on social impacts include increased and riskier forced migration, heightened risks of violence and abuse, a rise in precarity of livelihoods and pressure on government financing and public sector budgets. All of these are exacerbated for people with disabilities, who are disproportionately affected by climate risks.<sup>37</sup>

As economies transition into green and low carbon industries, and countries move towards net zero production, there are risks that people with disabilities could be further marginalised and excluded, denied decent work and livelihood opportunities, and not consulted around climate policy. A just transition,<sup>38</sup> however – one definition of which is ‘greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind’<sup>39</sup> – offers huge opportunities to build a net zero future in a way which is inclusive and sustainable for all. A just and inclusive green transition can help people with disabilities better adapt to climate change impacts now, as well as ensuring inclusive and sustainable work and livelihood opportunities in the green economy.

Sightsavers recognises that a just transition, encompassing both climate adaptation and mitigation, is fundamental to achieving economic justice for people with disabilities. As the climate crisis reshapes economies, labour markets and livelihoods, we are committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are not left behind. Our approach integrates just transition principles across all thematic areas, from employment and decent work to social protection and inclusive community finance. We aim to ensure that people with disabilities are not only protected from the adverse impacts of climate change but are also active participants and leaders in building a greener, fairer, socially just future.

Our commitments:

- **Promote access to green and decent work.**  
We will support access to decent, green jobs for people with disabilities and advocate for disability-inclusive workplaces across climate-resilient and low carbon sectors – including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and infrastructure.
- **Support inclusive green bargaining and negotiations.**  
We will support the participation of workers with disabilities in collective bargaining and negotiations led by trade unions to ensure that both climate adaptation measures – such as workplace agreements on heat stress and flooding – and transitions in industries and economies are inclusive, equitable, and result in decent work for all.



Holo, a 70-year-old farmer from the Singida region of Tanzania, had cataract surgery after a mobile clinic visited her village.

- **Enable sustainable rural livelihoods and community development.**

We will work with people with disabilities and their communities in rural areas to diversify income sources and adopt sustainable practices that enhance climate resilience, with a focus on community-led planning and decision making.

- **Advance inclusive, climate-adaptive, social protection.**

We will work with governments, OPDs and other stakeholders to support the development of universal and comprehensive climate-adaptive social protection systems – ensuring that these are inclusive of people with disabilities in all their diversity and can protect against climate shocks and provide a safety net as economies transition.

- **Champion inclusive climate finance.**

We will work to ensure that people with disabilities are included and consulted in national and global just transition financing initiatives. This is achieved through engagement with governments and multilateral agencies, so that climate finance supports the social spending required for an inclusive transition. We will also help facilitate access to green finance for nano and micro enterprises led by people with disabilities, especially those addressing climate and social challenges.



Ovambe Benjamin Salvador, President of the Association of People with Disabilities in Nkoteng, Cameroon, chairing a session.

## Gender

Women and girls with disabilities face multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination and exploitation due to their gender, disability, class and other characteristics. Unequal power dynamics – rooted in patriarchy, ableism and other structures – not only hinder full and equal participation of women with disabilities in labour markets and supply chains, but also increase the risk of exploitation in these contexts.

While all people with disabilities face significant barriers to securing decent work, the barriers faced by women are even greater. Women with disabilities are more likely to be self-employed, work fewer hours of paid work, have lower earnings, be more at risk of job losses, and are less likely to work in managerial positions<sup>40</sup>. Women with disabilities are less likely to have jobs than men with disabilities<sup>41</sup> and are more often pushed into unpaid work<sup>42</sup>. As noted earlier, there is a significant disability wage gap between people with and without disabilities. The situation is worse for women with disabilities as the wage gap

between men and women with disabilities who are employed is around five to six per cent<sup>43</sup>.

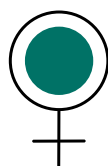
Women with disabilities also face obstacles accessing technology and financial services. Only 26 per cent of women with disabilities use the internet, compared to 30 per cent of men with disabilities. Just 63 per cent of women with disabilities own a mobile phone, compared to 70 per cent of men<sup>44</sup>. 64 per cent of women with disabilities do not have access to the assistive technology they need<sup>45</sup>. Only 15 per cent of women with disabilities (20 per cent of men with disabilities) conduct financial transactions with a mobile phone<sup>46</sup>.

It is therefore crucial that our programming reflects the multi-faceted layers of experiences of women with disabilities and is grounded in addressing the systemic barriers that prevent the full and equal participation of women with disabilities in employment and expose them to greater risks of exploitation in labour markets and supply chains.

Our commitments:

- **Address marginalisation.**  
We will seek to understand and address the exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination and exploitation faced by women with disabilities in diverse labour market and supply chain contexts – aligning our work with global conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- **Promote meaningful participation.**  
We aim to promote meaningful participation of women with disabilities. We will partner with women-led organisations and involve them in programme design, development, implementation and learning. We will learn from and develop the capacities of women-led OPDs and allied organisations to advocate for the economic justice of women with disabilities and deliver gender transformative interventions.
- **Understand programming impact.**  
We will systematically seek to understand the impact our programming is having on women with disabilities and their communities and leverage the learnings to inform the design and delivery of gender transformative interventions.

- **Challenge stereotypes.**  
We will challenge harmful stereotypes and gender norms that undermine the economic development of women with disabilities. To do this, we will engage a diverse range of community actors – including women and men with disabilities, parent networks, local leaders and community gatekeepers – as well as key players in economic systems such as trade unions and worker organisations, farmer associations, worker and producer cooperatives, government institutions, employer federations, and others, to advance the elimination of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities.
- **Do no harm.**  
We will consider the specific layers of vulnerabilities that women with disabilities face and design and deliver programmes that do not cause further harm, prioritising safeguarding measures.



We will partner with **women-led organisations** and involve them in programme design, development, implementation and learning

## Disability inclusion and OPD engagement

People with disabilities and their representative organisations are at the core of all our economic empowerment work. Projects are co-created with them to ensure ownership and relevance.

We are committed to working with OPDs because they have a mandate to represent people with disabilities and are well positioned to sustain long-term advocacy within their communities. OPDs are key civil society stakeholders at local, national, regional and global levels – building collective power to ensure voices are heard in policymaking and hold duty bearers accountable.

Sightsavers partners with OPDs:

- Through strategic alliances with disability movement organisations such as the International Disability Alliance (IDA).
- As programmatic and implementing partners.
- As collaborators promoting diversity and non-discrimination, including gender equality and the inclusion of marginalised groups.
- As a central stakeholder in civil society coalitions for economic justice.

We aim for our partnerships to foster mutual growth and enable capacity sharing and reciprocal learning.

We are cognisant of the fact that OPDs are not a homogenous group and we take time to understand the membership of different groups – whether based on disability category, size, who they represent and how they function. Whilst a national umbrella organisation is likely to have very different power relations to an unregistered community-based group, both have much to offer. We seek out diverse representation within local communities and challenge the under-representation of women in management and leadership roles within organisations.

Building civil society coalitions is central. Our approach prioritises coalitions that bring OPDs together with worker organisations and other civil society actors to push for economic justice in labour markets and supply chains. These alliances enable OPDs to positively influence employment, workplace and supply chain practices.

This ensures people with disabilities become central actors in developing just, inclusive and sustainable economies.



**People with disabilities and their representative organisations** are at the core of all our economic empowerment work.

## Stigma reduction and social norms

Social norms are the informal, unwritten, rules that define acceptable and appropriate actions within a given group or community. People follow these rules to know what is considered acceptable behaviour, and how to act and interact. Social norms can bind communities and groups together by fostering cooperation, trust, boundaries and social cohesion. However, they can also serve as significant barriers because they affect individual choices and can lead to stigma, exclusion and harmful behaviours.

Social and gender norms, stigma, negative stereotypes and discrimination can all form barriers to enjoying a person's rights. This is especially true for many people with disabilities and can impact their ability to fully participate in society – affecting individual choices, decisions and actions related to health and inclusion, and the use of services and systems that Sightsavers supports.

Social and gender norms can be hard to address and slow to change but it is important to understand them as part of programme planning in order to support an enabling environment for women, girls, men and boys to be able to choose inclusive and healthy behaviours and equitably access health, education, and economic and political services and systems. Reducing stigma, negative stereotypes and discrimination is critical to ensuring greater inclusion and sustainable positive change for people with disabilities in all their diversity.

At Sightsavers, our aim is that social norms support the inclusion of people with disabilities and enable people, in all their diversity, to use the services and systems that Sightsavers supports.

We commit to:

- **Recognise stigma, discrimination and social and gender norms** as potential barriers within our work for employment, decent work and labour rights, social protection and inclusive community finance.
- Systematically **gather evidence and understand** stigma, social and gender norms in the contexts we work, to inform decisions on activities we prioritise. This might be through using social and behavioural science to help define those priorities.
- Use Sightsavers' **social and behaviour change and stigma reduction guidance** to test approaches to reduce stigma in a variety of settings and to influence, complement or challenge social and gender norms.
- Seek to **strengthen the agency of vulnerable and marginalised communities**, especially women and girls with disabilities, to have choice and equity to choose inclusive and healthy behaviours and equitably access health, education, economic and political services and systems.
- **Engage** not only our primary target audience, which includes people and children with disabilities in all their diversity, but also their **families, communities and wider influencers** who drive and reinforce social and gender norms.
- Select and support **diverse local partners, including OPDs and coalitions of civil society allies**, to challenge structural barriers which perpetuate stigma and discrimination in labour markets and supply chains. Local partners and leaders can also reflect the social norms and stigma of that context.

# Thematic links

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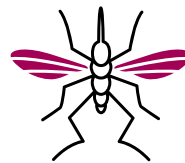
Through strengthening the links between our work in economic empowerment and our work in inclusive education, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), social inclusion, and vision and eye care, Sightsavers will encourage the sharing of resources, joined-up services across government and the development of strong and broad-based civil society coalitions for economic, environmental and social justice.



## Inclusive education

We will collaborate with the inclusive education team on:

- Supporting the transition of young people with disabilities from school to TVET, where appropriate.
- Co-developing training materials for economic empowerment programmes, leveraging the inclusive education team's expertise in creating resources for tutors and trainers.
- Promoting education-focused social protection to enable children and young people with disabilities, and those from households with disabilities, to access and remain in school.
- Advancing the trade union and labour rights of teachers with disabilities, including freedom of association and collective bargaining.



## Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)

We will collaborate with the NTD team on:

- Promoting universal and disability-inclusive social protection that tackles income insecurity and health-related poverty linked to NTDs, while ensuring access to essential services for prevention and care.



## Inclusive citizenship and inclusive health

We will collaborate with the inclusive citizenship and inclusive health team on:

- Building coalitions of OPDs, worker organisations and other CSOs to promote inclusive citizenship and protect civic space.
- Promoting comprehensive, universal and disability-inclusive social protection – including social health protection and supporting local government in implementing such schemes.
- Supporting disability-inclusive governance and participatory budgeting to ensure OPDs influence local economic development plans.
- Advancing inclusive citizenship through community and cooperative financing.
- Ensuring OPDs are meaningfully involved in governance and decision-making for an inclusive and just transition at both industry and government level, including shaping policies on climate adaptation and mitigation, influencing green jobs strategies and participating in negotiations on how industries transition – so that economic shifts are fair and disability-inclusive.



## Vision and eye care

We will collaborate with the vision and eye care team on:

- Supporting employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for people with disabilities within the vision and eye care sector.
- Promoting inclusive and universal social health protection which includes access to vision and eye care services.
- Advancing eye health in the world of work through promoting tripartite approaches that emphasise the roles of worker organisations, employers and governments in ensuring eye health as an occupational safety and health (OSH) priority, consistent with global recommended best practices.<sup>47</sup>

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Essy is a project officer for the Kenya Female Advisory Organisation, who work to promote and protect the rights of women and girls.



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