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The cost of ignoring disability inclusion

Tags: Inclusion, Disability, Infrastructure, Evidence

One billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher in developing countries. This short paper examines the costs of ignoring disability inclusion in programme design and delivery, offering donor advisors useful evidence for use in business case design and VfM assessments.

The cost of ignoring Disability Inclusion

Infrastructure and cities have potential to drive sustainable and transformative economic development that promotes equality, empowerment and economic inclusion. However, the gains of economic growth do not automatically flow to the poorest, many of whom are PwDs, and requires a mindful and deliberate approach to ensure these groups benefit.

Understanding the consequences and opportunity costs of ignoring DI is important to avoid past mistakes and to build commitment and action for improved infrastructure and cities planning and management.

Missed opportunity for inclusive growth

In budget-stretched ministries, with weak capacity and competing priorities, integrating DI may seem expensive, unrealistic and over-complicated. However, the evidence shows that ignoring DI is a missed opportunity for economic growth. Investments in PwDs enhance national economic growth through increased productivity and well-being, reduced stigma and discrimination in the workplace and reduced welfare burden¹. Including PwDs in the labour market can increase a country's Gross Domestic Product by three to seven percent².

Expanding the workforce to include PwDs also expands the potential tax base. Excess unemployment among individuals with cleft lips and palates translated to between US\$8 million and US\$9.8 million in lost tax revenue in 2012 for the Philippines Government³. Investments in PwDs are also of economic importance at the household level. PwDs are enabled to access education and/ or employment, in turn contributing to household income. Studies from Pakistan found that supporting people who are blind to access mainstream economic activity led to an estimated US\$71.8 million of gross aggregate gains in household earning per year⁴. Caregivers also have more time for income generating activities, further strengthening household income.

Poor Value for Money

Ignoring DI within programme design and delivery represents poor value for money from an economy, efficiency, effectiveness *and* equity point of view and increases reputational risks for DFID-funded programmes. Such an approach runs counter to the UK commitment to UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which specifies a 'twin track' approach to disability where disability is considered in all programming as well as the focus of targeted programmes, and the Equalities Act which underpins the commitment to protecting and promoting the human rights of those with disabilities in all policies and programmes.

For further information, case studies and technical guidance on how to 'build in' disability inclusion consult ICED's [Disability Inclusive Infrastructure and Cities Briefing Note](#), contact the ICED team or visit the ICED website www.icedfacility.org

¹ Backup S., The price of exclusion: The economic consequences of excluding people with disabilities from the world of work, Employment Working Paper No. 43, (2009) International Labor Organization.

² International Labor Organization, Inclusion of people with disabilities in national employment policies (2015)

³ Muntz, H. R & Meier, J. (2013). The financial impact of unrepaired cleft lip and palate in the Philippines. International Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology, Volume 77, Issue12, pg1925-1928

⁴ Awan H, Malik SM, Khan NU. The economic burden of blindness in Pakistan: A socio-economic and policy imperative for poverty reduction strategies. Indian Journal of Ophthalmology. 2012;60(5):358-364. doi:10.4103/0301-4738.100527