

Interplast Australia & New Zealand

Disability Inclusion Policy

Policy Status:
Approved

Initial CEO Endorsement:	1 September 2006
Board Approval Date:	15 August 2025
Last Review Date:	21 July 2025
Future Review Date:	July 2027
Frequency of Review:	Every 2 years
Policy Owner:	Program Manager – Rehabilitation & Assistive Technology

Revisions to Policy

Significant Changes	Endorsed by CEO	Approved by Interplast Board
Initial creation	01 September 2006	September 2006
Annual review and updates (wording changes, changes to reflect compliance and legislative updates, process updates)	2007-2018	2007-2018
Review and update of policy (including policy in practice section) in line with recommendations from external disability inclusion review.	30 January 2019	5 February 2019
Updated to reflect new template and new definitions. Separated policy and procedure. Complete review.	03 November 2023	14 November 2023
Updated to reflect new processes and better recognise local leadership	21 July 2025	15 August 2025

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Section 1: Purpose

The purpose of the Disability Inclusion Policy is to outline Interplast Australia and New Zealand's (Interplast) commitment and central focus in the promotion of the inclusion of people with disabilities in its work.

This policy outlines Interplast's principles and practices to achieve disability inclusiveness and articulates Interplast's roles and responsibilities in promoting the rights of people with a disability in Australia and across the Asia Pacific region. This policy also reflects Interplast's integrated approach to activities which improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. The policy aligns with the organisation's development philosophy and DFAT's Development for All (2015- 2020) strategy.

This policy is intended to inform all Interplast policies.

- Specifically, this policy seeks to ensure that all Interplast representatives promote disability inclusion and uphold our commitment to promoting it throughout all our work.
- Promote an intersectional understanding of disability and recognise that inclusion intersects with other aspect of identity, such as gender, Indigeneity, poverty, age, place of residence, religion and sexual orientation, which overlap to create new forms of discrimination.
- Deliver programs that promote and address disability inclusion in response to local needs and tailored to local context.

Interplast's Disability Inclusion Policy forms part of Interplast's broader suite of policies and other documents. These are listed in Section 7 of this policy.

This Policy is closely linked to Interplast's Disability Inclusion Strategy (2021-26), which is operationalised through annual Disability Inclusion Operational Plans.

Section 2: Scope

The Disability Inclusion Policy applies to all Interplast personnel and observers accompanying any Interplast activity.

This policy is also applicable to relevant local partners in the countries in which Interplast works and is referenced in all documented partnership agreements. They must also abide by their own relevant policies, international declarations, conventions, agreements and domestic legal frameworks that relate to disability inclusion.

All Interplast personnel and observers are accountable for understanding and adhering to this policy at all times.

Section 3: Guiding Principles

Interplast acknowledges that disability inclusion is a core human rights issue and Interplast has a moral and ethical obligation to uphold and promote all human rights through its work.

The following principles shall guide Interplast activities in delivering disability inclusive practice:

- A rights-based approach: emphasise the rights of people with disabilities (including the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and within many countries' domestic laws) to access all life opportunities on an equal basis with others, and their role as active participants in their own development
- Participation – “Nothing about us without us”: ensure that programs targeting people with disabilities, or the communities in which they live, include people with disabilities as active participants throughout the program cycle as decision-makers, advisors, researchers, trainers, etc. Form partnerships with Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) or other representative groups of people with disabilities, where these exist, to support this participation
- Strengths-based approach: inclusive actions should seek to recognise the unique and important contributions that all people make to their communities, including people with disabilities. A strengths-based approach is important to challenging misconceptions about the capacities of people with disabilities and ensuring that communities and programs benefit from a full diversity of experiences and contributions
- Intersectionality: recognise that women, men, girls and boys with disabilities have a diversity of situations and perspectives; at any point in time, they may also experience multiple, intersecting forms of exclusion based on disability, gender, sexuality and sexual identity, age, ethnicity, HIV status, living remotely or membership of other marginalised groups, dependent on context
- Context: Tailor approaches to the context: consider different meanings attached to disability and the experiences of people with disabilities in different contexts.
- Awareness: people with disabilities are often invisible. This can be deliberate in some contexts where people are hidden away from society or unintentional. There is a need to raise awareness throughout society to foster respect for the rights and dignity of people with disabilities; to combat stereotypes, prejudices, and harmful practices; and to promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of people with disabilities, in the workplace, labour market and society.

Section 4: Policy

Interplast acknowledges that disability inclusion is an essential part of sustainable development that addresses the disproportionate impact of economic, health, social and environmental issues on people with disabilities in the Asia Pacific.

Global progress towards disability inclusion has been made, however it is important to note that a truly accessible future must be inclusive and equitable. Interplast's commitment to progressing disability inclusion in its international programming work and within and across the organisation aims to benefit the individuals and communities with whom Interplast works to achieve its vision and mission.

Interplast's understanding is that disability is the interaction between an impairment and barriers in an environment - that is, that it is barriers (physical, attitudinal, systemic, or environmental) which may limit those with an impairment from being fully included in society.

One billion, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher in developing countries; one fifth of this estimated global total experience significant disabilities¹. The interplay of complex and multidimensional relationships between poverty and disability, result in social and economic marginalisation and limit the livelihood opportunities of people with disabilities². Studies have shown that individuals with disabilities are more likely than people without disabilities to report poorer overall health, less access to adequate healthcare, and smoking and physical inactivity³.

Interplast's two major stakeholders and beneficiaries of Interplast programs are local clinicians (including surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses and allied health professionals), and patients who receive Interplast services. Delivering activities with a focus on disability inclusion, targeting these two stakeholder groups is where Interplast can have the most influence on improving disability inclusion, through improving equitable access to and use of quality healthcare for people with disabilities, and Interplast and its local partners actively committing to progressing disability inclusion in the healthcare setting.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (Article 25) enshrines the right of people with disabilities to access health services without discrimination. It recognises disability as an evolving concept, stating that people with disabilities are those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Disability inclusion addresses issues of dignity, human rights, poverty and vulnerability. People with disabilities have the right to fully, equally and meaningfully participate in and benefit from humanitarian assistance and development processes in their communities. Interplast is committed to ensuring the equitable inclusion of people with disabilities across all aspects of the organisation and its work.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability>

² https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SDD_PUB_Disability-Livelihood.pdf

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/relatedconditions.html>

Section 5: Summary of Disability Inclusion Practices

Interplast has a range of practices in place across the organisation and embedded into its international programming which promote disability inclusion. These relate to:

- Recruitment and Training
- Operationalising the 5-Year Disability Inclusion Strategy
- International program Activity Procedures.

This section provides a summary of Interplast's practices on these areas.

5.1: Recruitment and training

- Interplast is a safe environment and supports disability-inclusive work practices that enable people with disabilities to participate fully in Interplast's work – both as employees and volunteers.
- All personnel are required to confirm their commitment to this policy as part of their induction processes.
- Interplast delivers regular training and capacity development opportunities for employees, Board Directors, volunteer and partners – both on induction and periodically, in the area of disability inclusion to ensure increased awareness and capacity to improve practice.
- Information on its activities reflects Interplast's commitment to disability inclusion, and where possible, influences changing attitudes and practices that reinforce discrimination of people with disabilities.

5.2: Operationalising the 5-Year Disability Inclusion Strategy

- Interplast will systematically measure and report against its 5-year Disability Inclusion Strategy (2021-2026) to strengthen disability programming and improve disability inclusion across the organisation.
- Interplast will embed disability-sensitive indicators and outcomes within annual Operational Plans and annual Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plans to improve mainstreaming of disability inclusion practices across all projects.
- Interplast will ensure regular focus on disability inclusive targets through discussion at staff meetings, targeted programming indicators and ongoing communication with local partners to embed disability inclusion considerations into activities.

5.3: International program activity procedures

Interplast will:

- actively work to ensure that access to Interplast's program activities (for both clinical treatment and for training opportunities) is not limited by disability

- recognise the local experience and expertise within the countries it works. This includes recognising where local organisations or peoples with disabilities are best placed to be engaged to provide advice, deliver or evaluate program activities and ensuring appropriate remuneration for services
- where possible, identify the different needs and priorities of people with disabilities when planning and implementing its program activities
- ensure the relevant Disability Inclusion Analysis Tools are embedded into the program life cycle to measure the relevance of disability related to every project and to identify specific considerations to support inclusion during planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation
- ensure that data regarding program beneficiaries (patients and clinicians) are reported with disaggregation for sex, age and disability status where possible and appropriate
- continue to build networks with NGOs working in disability, including local disabled people's organisations
- ensure the recognising, respecting and promoting rights of all people, building understanding of diversity and sharing the impact of disability inclusive development through telling the story of Interplast's work in relation to disability inclusion.

Section 6: Monitoring and Review of this Policy

This policy will be monitored and reviewed at intervals as indicated in this policy and following the process outlined in Interplast's Policy Framework.

The Chief Executive Officer is ultimately accountable to the Board for managing and maintaining this policy and is responsible for the implementation of this policy. The Board is responsible for adopting this policy.

The Director-International Programs, with support of the Disability Focal Point, is accountable to the Chief Executive Officer for ensuring the currency of this policy and all supporting procedures and relevant manuals and has responsibility for operationalising the policy.

Where compliance issues are identified, they will be addressed promptly. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for taking any recommended amendments to this policy to the Interplast Board for its approval.

Section 7: Related Documents and Legislation

Interplast is committed to:

- human rights and anti-discrimination in employment; and
- promoting an environment that values diversity and equality of opportunities.

As a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, Interplast is committed to meeting the following standards within that Code:

- producing equitable outcomes between men and women and people with a
- disability, in all activities of the organisation (Quality Principle 1: Rights,
- Protection and Inclusion, Commitment 1.1 and 1.2; Quality Principle 2:
- Participation, Empowerment and Local Ownership);
- including and addressing the needs and rights of vulnerable and marginalised
- people (Quality Principle 1: Rights, Protection and Inclusion); and
- ensuring an appropriate focus is given to the rights of people with a disability
- and (addressing these in our activities) (Quality Principle 1: Rights, Protection
- and Inclusion, Commitment 2.4).

Name of document/legislation	Location/hyperlink
ACFID Code of Conduct	https://acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)	https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd
Federal anti-discrimination laws such as: ○ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 ○ Disability Discrimination Act 1992;	https://www.legislation.gov.au/ ○ https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2004A03366 ○ https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125
2013-2022 Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific;	https://www.unescap.org/resources/incheon-strategy-make-right-real-persons-disabilities-asia-and-pacific-and-beijing
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)’s: Australia’s International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy: Advancing equity to transform lives	https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/publications/australias-international-disability-equity-and-rights-strategy-advancing-equity-transform-lives
Safeguarding Procedures Guide	Interplast Key Documents

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Child Protection Code of Conduct	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Case Study and Photography Policy	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Case Study and Photography Procedures	Interplast Key Documents
Ethical Fundraising Policy	Policies and Guidelines Interplast Australia
Equal Employment Opportunity & Anti-Discrimination Policy	Interplast Key Documents

Section 8: Definitions

Word / Phrase	Definition
Personnel	Personnel includes all employees, consultants, volunteers, Board Directors, Committee members, Working Group members and Ambassadors that are engaged by Interplast to perform the work of Interplast. Volunteers include both professional (e.g. administrative roles) and medical volunteers (e.g. surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses or allied therapists), students, interns, or any other person who has entered into a volunteer arrangement or agreement with Interplast.
Observer	Observers are individuals accompanying an Interplast program, delivered by volunteers in a partner country (e.g. representing a donor organisation or students on an observational placement). Observers do not have a clinical role but may assist the clinical team by completing tasks related to program delivery.
Partner	Partner includes organisations that work with Interplast to implement a joint project with mutually agreed outcomes, and/or with whom Interplast has a signed partnership agreement and/or memorandum of understanding. Partner organisations may or may not be recipients of funds through Interplast.

Beneficiary	Beneficiary 1) a patient receiving treatment through an Interplast activity (this may include a consult only, surgery, allied health treatment or other clinical care, and could be provided by an Interplast volunteer, or a local partner clinician during an Interplast activity), or 2) local partner personnel participating in training delivered by Interplast.
Stakeholder	Stakeholders include all personnel, observers, partners, beneficiaries and supporters, community members in the country where we work, funders, international development peers and organisations, or any other individuals or organisations that connect with Interplast.
Disabilities	Recognising the complexities of disability, Interplast has adopted the following World Health Organisation (WHO) definition: Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions: • an impairment is a problem in body function or structure • an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; and • participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.
Disability Inclusive Development	Disability-inclusive development promotes effective development by recognising that, like all members of a population, people with disabilities are both beneficiaries and agents of development. An inclusive approach seeks to identify and address barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating in and benefiting from development. The explicit inclusion of people with disabilities as active participants in development processes leads to broader benefits for families and communities, reduces the impacts of poverty, and positively contributes to a country's economic growth.
Impairment	Impairments may limit an individual's personal or social functioning in comparison with those who do not share the same impairment (characteristic or condition, such as hearing and/or vision impairment, developmental delay or physical impairment). The full inclusion of people with impairments in society can be inhibited by attitudinal and/or societal barriers (such as stigma), physical and/or environmental barriers (such as stairs), and policy and/or systemic barriers, which can create a disabling effect.