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# Travelling together

**HOW TO INCLUDE DISABLED PEOPLE ON  
THE MAIN ROAD OF DEVELOPMENT**

Sue Coe and Lorraine Wapling

ONE WAY ONLY — NO RETURN — ONE WAY ONLY



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World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Motivated by our Christian faith, World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

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# Foreword

## Charles Badenoch

Vice President,  
Advocacy and  
Justice for Children,  
World Vision  
International



**I was at a school for deaf children in Burma. Yet I was alone. Everyone in the room was able to communicate with sign language – except me.**

It was a brief glimpse of what it's like to be the so-called 'disabled minority' in the so-called 'non-disabled majority'. But there was a key difference here. All the children wanted to include me. They wanted to teach me sign language.

That was one of my first trips with World Vision, the agency I serve. But it wasn't just experience that made me start to fight for the rights of disabled people. The facts and figures of injustice also convinced me. Here are a few:

- 98 per cent of disabled children in developing countries don't attend school;
- disabled children are more likely to experience violence from birth;
- the mortality ratio for disabled children may be as high as 80 per cent in countries where under five mortality for other children has fallen to 20 per cent;
- only two per cent of disabled people in developing countries have access to basic services.

I realised that in the wider development community, we couldn't be true to our vision if we didn't include all disabled people in all our work. That's where this course came in. Developed by World Vision UK during my tenure as Chief Executive, the programme aimed to equip staff through an accessible, interactive training day packed with practical activities.

Participants were encouraged to understand and identify their attitudes towards disability. This is critical for all of us who seek to include disabled people in our work across the board. The global disability movement has consistently identified negative attitudes as the main barrier to their inclusion in society. This course directly addresses that.

Since its first delivery in June 2006, the training has been delivered to more than 1,800 of our staff and partners in 21 countries across five continents. Our largest National Offices have requested and received training.

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Part or all of the course has also been delivered to more than 600 people in governments, NGOs and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). I was present on two of those occasions – at the BOND Disability and Development Group event in London, December 2007, when senior people from the UK development sector marked the International Day of Disabled People – and during the Disasters Emergency Committee Trustees meeting in Spring 2008, with the Chief Executives of all member agencies.

One common theme runs through feedback from each training day – IT WORKS – in every geographical context and at every operational level. Disabled people report transformation of how they perceive themselves. In Angola, two visually impaired people said, *“You mean we are not the problem?”*

**But don't just take my word for it, see the words from colleagues in India and Ethiopia...**



**Jayakumar Christian, National Director, World Vision India**

“Disability inclusion is an important issue for World Vision India. We see it as a reflection of World Vision India's commitment to serve the marginalised in our society. Many of our colleagues have approached disability issues in our communities with a charity or medical perspective, the social model has been mind-opening.

The training has been very helpful. We now understand disability according to the social model and rights-based approach. The biggest impact of the training is how we diagnose the issue – the problem is society's to include children and adults with disabilities rather than looking at the impairment of the person as the problem. The terminology used by our trained staff for people with disabilities with different types of impairments has also changed.

The training has brought about changes in our approaches to engaging disabled children and adults in our communities. Trained staff have been intentional in bringing disabled children to participate actively in project activities and mobilizing the communities to involve disabled people in the community decision-making process.”

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**Lydia Mesfin, Advocacy Manager, World Vision Ethiopia**

“In Ethiopia, disability issues have been invisible in economic, social and political agendas. This was also the case in World Vision Ethiopia. Disabled people are the poorest of the poor in the country and marginalised because of misconceptions about disability. World Vision Ethiopia is known for its developmental work through the country but until very recently it was not inclusive of disabled people, even though they account for significant numbers in the population. Excluding disabled people was not intentional on our part but this course helped bring the realisation to staff that we need to engage in disability issues.



The training involves a range of methods which were interactive and very engaging. The excitement of the participants during courses was visible. The commitment of the senior management team of World Vision Ethiopia to take up this issue was evident following their training course. The participation and commitment of trainees to attend all days was historical when you consider their busy schedules! The professionalism of the trainers was very impressive. Above all the simple techniques and uncomplicated messages were very impressive – it helped us understand disability inclusion and own it.

What we have learned most in World Vision Ethiopia from the feedback of all the training we have conducted is that all rests on our attitudes and the first step to inclusive development is to change our attitude towards disability. The training has forced us to look at ourselves and seek the solution within. It has also helped World Vision Ethiopia establish relationships and network with Disabled People's Organisations and Government sector offices on this important issue.”

We've not yet achieved full disability inclusion at World Vision. We've not yet got it right. But we're beginning to build foundations. We hope within the next few years we'll have mainstreamed disability throughout our organisation. This course is an essential tool towards that aim.

What we've come to realise is that this isn't about a sectoral priority. It's about inclusion. We cannot see 20 per cent of people living in every community we work in across the world as 'just another sector'. We must move beyond the 'viable poor' and include the poorest of the poor. It's

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a justice issue. It's also a fundamental issue of logic. We're never going to reach the bottom billion if we don't include disabled people.

So I'm delighted to be recommending the training course and other materials in this book. I hope you find them interesting. More importantly, I hope you'll use them to include disabled children and adults in your work.

Read, use and enjoy!



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Disabled children and adults are left behind when projects and programmes start their journeys. And that's despite the fact 80 per cent of them in developing countries live below the poverty line.

With the UN estimating around 650 million disabled children and adults worldwide, why do they continue to be excluded?

*Travelling together* guides international development workers through a simple process of radical change with –

- a unique one-day training course, tried and tested across cultural contexts with a track record of kick-starting change;
- the story of how one of the world's biggest NGOs World Vision is including disabled people in its work;
- a blend of the best resources and information available on disability inclusion.

Development and disability should mix. We encourage you to start your own journey towards transformation – and include disabled people in your work.

Your experience will become part of the bigger picture, encouraging others to go forward.

**Will you join us on the road?**

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