

Press release: UK Government to host its first ever Global Disability Summit

In her first speech as International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt today announced she will bring together global leaders and technology companies next year to tackle the barriers that prevent people living with disabilities in the world's poorest countries from reaching their full potential.

During a speech at Microsoft's head office in London, Ms Mordaunt will set out that the UK will co-host the Global Disability Summit in 2018.

Speaking ahead of her speech, the International Development Secretary said:

For too long many people living with disabilities in the world's poorest countries have not been able to fulfil their potential due to stigma or a lack of practical support. They are, for example, missing out on school and the chance to work.

Discrimination is unacceptable in today's society. I want us all to act now and break down the barriers people with all disabilities face in their everyday lives, so they are not short-changed on opportunities to use their entrepreneurial spirit to help their countries prosper.

That's why I am bringing technology companies, governments and charities together at the UK Government's first-ever Global Disability Summit in London in July 2018, to show our commitment to transform the lives of people living with disabilities.

People with disabilities have a much lower employment rate in both developed and developing countries. In Bangladesh, this means that \$54 million are lost every year, because people with disabilities do not have the right support. Overcoming these barriers would boost global prosperity.

DFID wants to shine a spotlight on the role that innovation and technology can play to help people with disabilities. For example, UK aid-supported D-Rev, is a small business which developed a low-cost prosthetic knee for young adults in rural Africa and Asia, to make sure it could reach the poorest people.

Innovation and expertise from world-leading private sector businesses, including Microsoft, will be vital for DFID to learn how to successfully support people with disabilities in the developing world.

Hugh Milward, Senior Director Corporate and External Legal Affairs at

Microsoft said:

Microsoft believes that technology can play a critical role in removing barriers and empowering people with disabilities. At this moment, the world is at the dawn of a data and technology driven fourth industrial revolution, and these technologies enable governments and organisations to change the way they deliver services to their communities, customers and colleagues.

DFID has already started to put disability at the heart of its development agenda, with programmes funded through UK Aid Match and the Amplify challenge, showing first-hand how the lives of people with disabilities can be improved.

Notes to editors

The Global Disability Summit will be co-hosted with the International Disability Alliance (IDA).

One study in Bangladesh found that, 'reductions in wage earnings attributed to lower levels of education among people with disabilities and their child caregivers were estimated to cost the economy USD 54 million per year'.

UK aid will support programmes which are proven to improve the lives of people with disabilities, including quality education, jobs and healthcare.

For every £1 donated to a UK Aid Match charity appeal, the government will also contribute £1 of UK aid, to help these projects go further in changing and saving lives.

Amplify is a DFID programme in partnership with IDEO.org. which sources early stage ideas to tackle emerging development challenges, including disability. Through the Amplify challenge, DFID has experience of what programmes can help deliver for disabled people globally:

- UK aid funded the Action on Disability and Development International project in Bangladesh to provide skills training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the garment industry and in small businesses.
- British charity Motivation UK broke down the barriers for children with disabilities in Uganda to participate in school by providing training and facilities. Thanks to this work, the attendance rates of children with disabilities in the supported schools almost doubled.