



Global aid cuts trigger human rights crisis for persons with disabilities, new survey warns

Montreal, 11 August 2026 – A new global survey by Humanity & Inclusion of 177 Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) across more than 35 countries has revealed the devastating consequences of international aid cuts on persons with disabilities and the organisations that support them, with respondents warning of worsening exclusion, shrinking access to essential services and growing threats to their survival. The report describes it as "the sharpest aid contraction in modern history."

Summary of key findings

- 2025 saw the largest annual reduction in Official Development Assistance ever recorded, with global aid falling by 23.1% in real terms.
- 82% of OPDs surveyed reported a high or very high negative impact on the wellbeing of persons with disabilities in their communities directly linked to aid budget reductions.
- 79% of OPDs have experienced severe or very severe funding reductions over the past 18 months
- 72% of organisations have cancelled or suspended at least one programme or activity.
- Women, children, refugees and people in rural areas are among the hardest hit with 85% of children with disabilities particularly affected and 84% of women and girls with disabilities.

Humanity & Inclusion Canada is calling on the Canadian Government to protect disability-inclusive funding and ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind at a time when the need has never been greater.

The findings come as Canada reviews its development assistance budget and foreign policy priorities. Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA) declined by approximately 2.3% in 2025, and the federal government's 2026 budget outlined \$2.7 billion in foreign aid reductions over the following four years.

Global cuts are contributing to what respondents describe as a severe crisis for persons with disabilities and the organisations that represent and support them.

"These findings are stark. Behind every dollar reduced is a person losing access to education, healthcare or rehabilitation - the support they rely on to live with dignity."



For many people with disabilities, these aren't optional services; they're the difference between autonomy and exclusion." - Alan Quinn, Interim Executive Director of Humanity & Inclusion Canada

Aid cuts are having a severe impact on persons with disabilities

The report identifies 2025 as the year of the largest annual reduction in Official Development Assistance ever recorded, with global aid falling by 23.1% in real terms. For the first time on record, all five of the world's largest aid donors reduced their aid budgets in the same year.

The report warns that the current aid cuts risk pushing disability inclusion further to the margins of international cooperation. Approximately 1.3 billion people worldwide are persons with disabilities and almost 80% of whom live in low- and middle-income countries.

"Due to the cuts in aid, disabled people's organisations are telling us they're suspending programmes, cutting services and, in some cases, facing closure - and the consequences are falling hardest on disabled children, women and girls, refugees and people in rural communities. These are political choices - and the most vulnerable people should not be the ones paying for them. With the ongoing Foreign Policy Review and preparations for the fall 2026 budget, the Canadian Government has an opportunity to have a real impact on some of the most overlooked communities in international development aid." - Alan Quinn, Interim Executive Director, Humanity & Inclusion Canada

According to respondents, aid cuts are contributing to worsening inequalities, increased exclusion, and declining access to essential services and rights. More than eight in ten surveyed OPDs (82%) reported a high or very high negative impact on the wellbeing of persons with disabilities in their communities directly linked to aid budget reductions.

The report highlights significant disruptions in:

- Economic inclusion and employment programmes
- Assistive technology and rehabilitation services
- Healthcare
- Accessibility and adaptation support
- Humanitarian assistance
- Food assistance
- Education
- Care services and support for independent living



- Services for women and girls with disabilities

The report warns that these reductions are increasing the risk of long-term dependency, poverty and social exclusion for persons with disabilities.

As one national self-advocacy organisation in the Dominican Republic stated:

"Cuts in international aid deepen the exclusion of persons with disabilities by paralysing essential autonomy programs and technical services that the State does not cover. This lack of financing makes us socially invisible and condemns us to greater dependence, violating our fundamental right to a dignified and productive life." - An OPD leader from Dominican Republic

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities face an unprecedented funding crisis

The survey found that 79% of OPDs have experienced severe or very severe funding reductions over the past 18 months, affecting organisations across all regions and all organisational levels.

The consequences have been immediate:

- 72% of organisations have cancelled or suspended at least one programme or activity.
- 43% report weak or very weak capacity to sustain their mission.
- 14% say they risk permanent closure if current trends continue.

Funding reductions have affected all major funding channels, including bilateral and multilateral donors, international NGOs and foundations. 61% of surveyed organisations reported a decrease in funding from international NGOs, suggesting what the report describes as a "cascade effect" as aid reductions are passed down through the system.

"Funding for OPDs and disability intervention in general was already a very serious challenge. This cut is killing our organisations. We call on international community to save our organisations and save our community." - Representative of a national OPD from Sierra Leone

Women, children, refugees and people in rural areas are among the hardest hit

The report finds that aid cuts are disproportionately affecting persons with disabilities who already face multiple forms of exclusion.

Among surveyed organisations:

- 85% identified children with disabilities as particularly affected.
- 84% identified women and girls with disabilities as particularly affected.



- 83% identified older persons with disabilities as particularly affected.

Respondents reported increased risks for women and girls with disabilities, including reduced access to specialised support services and increased exposure to gender-based violence.

Children and young people with disabilities are reported to be experiencing disruptions to rehabilitation, nutrition, education and early intervention services, with some organisations documenting school dropouts, worsening malnutrition and irreversible developmental setbacks.

“One of our project beneficiaries is 9 years old and lives in a refugee camp. She has a hearing impairment and used to attend a small learning center supported by an aid organisation. There, she had a teacher trained in sign language and received a hearing device. Then the funding stopped. The teacher left. The center closed. Now Amina sits at home while other children go to school. Her mother tries to teach her, but without training or tools, lessons turn into silence. Amina begins to forget the signs she once knew. Her world shrinks – not because of her disability, but because the support disappeared.” - Representative of a regional organisation in Ethiopia

Refugees, internally displaced persons and persons with disabilities living in rural and remote areas were also identified as particularly vulnerable as services are scaled back or withdrawn.

“In Imvepi, Rhino Settlement, Kyaka II, Kyangwali and Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda, reduced food rations disproportionately impacted children with disabilities, leading to increased cases of malnutrition. This directly affected their rehabilitation progress, as adequate nutrition is essential for physical recovery and functional improvement.” - Representative of a local organisation including family members and/or relatives of persons with disabilities in Uganda

Call for urgent action

Humanity & Inclusion is urging the Canadian Government and other international donors to protect disability-inclusive funding, strengthen direct support to Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, and ensure that aid reductions do not disproportionately affect people who already face significant barriers to healthcare, education, livelihoods and social participation.

"The inclusion of persons with disabilities should never be a budgetary adjustment variable. Don't let these children become the invisible victims of your accounting



decisions." - Representative of a local association of parents of children with intellectual disabilities in Tunisia

Further information

Interviews:

- Alan Quinn, Interim Executive Director, Humanity & Inclusion Canada
- Interviews with Humanity and Inclusion representatives in any of the referenced countries available on request

Link to the report:

https://www.hi-canada.org/sn_uploads/document/factsheet_aid_cuts_impacts_on_disability_inclusion_1.pdf

Case studies available upon request.

Media visit possible to organise with people impacted by the aid cuts.