EMPOWERING ACTIVISTS.

A FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN NARRATIVE.
What is this document?
The document is designed throughout as a narrative – taking you through the problem, the main issues causing the problems, the solutions we deliver and the evidence we have that this makes change.

How to use this document?
We need to be consistently communicating the same values and messages across all our communications. This document has been designed so that you can copy and paste text, phrases and examples straight out of it, into your own communications.
OUR PROPOSITION.

Millions of disabled people in Africa and Asia are condemned to a life of poverty and exclusion.

Right now, organisations of disability activists are working to fight discrimination and ensure every disabled person gets a fighting chance at living their best life.

They urgently need support.
WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?

There’s a global disability crisis.

Disabled people living in poverty are among the most marginalised and stigmatised people on earth.

Often, they have no access to basic human rights, education, or the opportunity to earn a living.

The injustice disabled people face often includes:

Violence. Disabled people are disproportionately vulnerable to abuse, with children and women particularly affected.

Discrimination. Disabled people face stigma and discrimination in their families and communities, mostly because of misconceptions about disability.

Exclusion. Disabled people often live in isolation and are excluded from their communities, from the education system, from health care and other vital services. Sometimes, they’re even hidden away by their families.
1. DISABILITY STIGMA. A DEADLY ENEMY.

Disability inequality is a complex problem that requires urgent action on multiple fronts. Our work is one strand of focused action that tackles the following key barriers to inclusion.

Disability has its own stigma, pervasive in every society, but in parts of Africa and Asia discrimination towards disabled people can be particularly oppressive.

In areas where research and technology aren’t readily available people can’t access explanations for conditions.

This lack of understanding can cause misconceptions about disability to form, with devastating consequences.

Disabled people are often considered weak, worthless and in some cases subhuman by their societies.

Myths such as disabled children can’t learn; or having sex with a disabled woman can cure HIV; or a mental health episode is caused by evil spirits, can lead communities to affix deeply oppressive social stigma on to disabled people.

This stigma generates profound social barriers. Disabled people often live in isolation and are excluded from their communities, from the education system, from healthcare and other vital services. Sometimes, they’re even hidden away by their families.

Many disabled women and children face a heightened risk of domestic and sexual violence.

This stigma is often internalised by disabled people, stripping millions of their aspirations and agency.

Before I was deaf, I was loved. When I became deaf I became mistreated. My mother used witchcraft to cure me, my brothers said I was mentally retarded. And I’m not mad, I don’t feel it. Being disabled you are excluded. People tend to ignore you. They say, ‘You are mental, you are mad, you will cause problems. You will infect our children with your disabilities, go away.’ When people start stigmatising you, when everyone says you’re useless, you start to feel it.

Alan, Disability Activist, Uganda.
WHAT CAUSES THE PROBLEM?

Before joining ADD I was worried about my future. What shall I do? How will I employ myself? Will I be able work at all in my lifetime?

Kaddush, Disability Activist, Bangladesh.

2. THE CYCLE OF POVERTY AND DISABILITY.

Disability and poverty often fuel each other in a brutal cycle of hardship and deprivation that can be hard to escape.

Poverty can lead to disability. People living in poverty often go hungry and have limited access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation or healthcare services. They are more likely to live in dangerous environments with low quality housing, in areas prone to natural disaster, dangerous traffic and/or higher rates of conflict. All these conditions of poverty significantly increase someone's chances of being disabled by malnutrition, disease or injury.

Disability can lead to poverty. Disabled people are more likely to stay trapped in poverty as they face multiple barriers to securing a livelihood and fully participating in society. Discrimination limits education, training, employment and income generation opportunities. Even in a household that may live above the poverty line, stigma can keep disabled family members in a situation of poverty if they are denied an education or to participate in decision-making. Additionally, disabled people have a higher cost of living owing to medical care and adjustment costs. Unless these extra costs are recognised in poverty line calculations the true number of disabled people living in poverty will remain invisible.
The ‘leave no one behind’ agenda of the 2030 Global Goals demands action to reach those who are most marginalised – by disability and other factors - and to ensure that they are included and benefit from development interventions across all sectors.

Unfortunately, too many existing aid programs meant to eliminate poverty do not take into account the unique dangers and challenges faced by disabled people. Without specific attention, and stripped of agency, disabled people have been left behind by mainstream development programmes and remain disproportionately at risk to the life-limiting consequences of chronic poverty.

Of the 1 billion disabled people world, 80% live in the developing world where only 3-4% of disabled people are benefiting from development work.

Disabled people living in poverty – some of the poorest most marginalised people in the world – are often the last to benefit from the very programmes designed to reduce poverty and marginalisation.

The ‘leave no one behind’ agenda of the 2030 Global Goals demands action to reach those who are most marginalised – by disability and other factors - and to ensure that they are included and benefit from development interventions across all sectors.

We know that achieving this will only be possible through the empowerment and agency of persons with disabilities themselves. A strong disability movement is an essential channel for this empowerment process.

Unless consistent action is taken to strengthen disability activists and their organisations, empowering persons with disabilities to become active participants in development, the SDGs' pledge to 'leave no one behind' will prove an empty promise and the goals will be unmet.

Emma Cain, Head of Learning, ADD International
WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

Right now, organisations of disability activists are working to fight discrimination and ensure every disabled person gets a fighting chance at living their best life.

WHAT DO DISABILITY ACTIVISTS DO?

There is no set template for what disability activists do; their work is driven by creating change for disabled people by tackling poverty and exclusion. In different locations, the change needed and the means to achieve it, will differ.

Activities often include: Organising safe spaces to meet, offering shelter to those in danger, protesting sexual violence, creating jobs, teaching people about their rights, challenging attitudes in the community, campaigning for equality, advocating for policy change.

Examples:

• Organisations of disability activists in Eastern Uganda fighting to stop people with albinism being killed for their body parts.

• Organisations of disability activists in Uganda lobbying health clinics to make HIV services accessible.

• Organisations of disability activists in Tanzania ensuring schools offer an inclusive learning environment.

• Organisations of disability activists in Cambodia training village volunteers to protect women from sexual violence.
WHAT DOES ADD INTERNATIONAL DO?

ADD International is a disability rights organisation. We partner with organisations of disability activists and help them to access the tools, resources and support they need to build powerful movements for change.

In order for disabled people to have a fighting chance at living their best life, the stigma and discrimination that oppresses them must be confronted and uprooted.

Shifting deeply entrenched social stigma does not happen overnight. It is lengthy and relentless work which requires a strong team of courageous people with a bold vision for change. That's why the movement for disability equality, like all significant movements for social progress, is powered by the passion, vision and courage of activists – ordinary people taking action to create social change.

Often disabled themselves, they have the passion to fight for change. It’s their lives, and their communities, at stake. What they often need is support in how to run and build their organisations. That’s where ADD International steps in. We help disability activists access the tools, skills and resources they need to turn their vision into powerful organisations that lead powerful movements for change.
1. **Talk.** Capacity building begins as a conversation between ADD International and disability activists. They tell us the change they want to make and what they need to make it happen.

We are not representatives of disabled people from developing countries. We are an ally to that group of people. It’s very dangerous to ever say that we understand what those groups want. Our role is to enable them to articulate what they want and to help them achieve it. Clare McKeown, Director of Funding & Partnerships.

2. **Tailored support.** From this conversation comes a plan for action and the capacity building support required to deliver it. Different organisations will have different needs depending on several factors: whether they are new or established, working at the local or national level, what they are trying to achieve in the short and long term. So our capacity building will look slightly different from one organisation to another but core components include:

- **Accompaniment.** One of the most effective ways capacity is built is through ‘learning by doing’. We provide our partners with advice and coaching at key points throughout the project cycle.

- **Training.** We help disability activists build the knowledge and skills they need to take their organisations forward. This can include providing training on disability rights, leadership training, basic law, gender awareness training and financial management.

- **Strategic Resources.** We sometimes provide strategic funding to cover core costs such as rent, transport and staff costs. Money is provided for a limited period while the organisation develops strategies for meeting these costs in a sustainable way.

- **Brokering Links.** We help disability activists build links with powerholders who can help them to achieve their objectives.

3. **Long term relationships.** We understand that capacity building is not a linear process, that you can’t just tick a box, or deliver interventions in fixed, rigid time frames. So, we build long term relationships with organisations of disability activists to make sure skills and learning are deeply embedded.

4. **Independence.** The ultimate aim of our capacity building work is to make ourselves redundant, and leave in our wake organisations of disability activists leading powerful movements for change.

Maybe one day ADD will not be here anymore but it will not take away its teachings and those teaching will help us throughout our lives. Arefa Parvin, Disability Activist, Bangladesh.
1. **It works.** We've been doing it for 30 years.

2. **It's driven by lived experience.** Nobody understands better the needs of disabled people and the barriers blocking potential, than disabled people themselves. That's why all of our actions are agreed and driven by disability activists and their organisations.

3. **It's about empowerment.** Disabled people are a community chronically discriminated against. Doing things for them, or to them, is not going to end exclusion - disabled people will remain dependent and marginalised. Through our capacity building approach, disabled people are empowered to make change for themselves.

   ADD's approach is to make disabled people believe that they are human beings, that they have rights and are entitled to dignity. Arefa Parvin, Disability Activist, Bangladesh.

4. **It gives value for money.** Empowering activists is excellent value for money. Once you've done something for yourself once, you can go on and do it again and again and again. Helping people access the tools to defend themselves, and claim their rights, embeds change and empowers individuals who can then go on and empower others.

5. **It has impact from the grassroots to the corridors of power.** Disability exclusion can permeate all areas of society, from the family home to policy rooms. In order to tackle it, the disability movement needs to build connections and collaborations from the local to the global level. That's why our capacity building approach has impact at three different levels - individuals, organisations and movements.

   - **Individuals.** The work of disability activists and their organisations often begins in the villages of the most remote communities. Organisations of disability activists go house to house to find disabled people and bring them out of their homes. These initial steps are transformative. For the first time, people who have been treated as subhuman realize they are not alone and that they have rights - such as the right to protection from violence - and that these rights are their legal and moral entitlements. For the first time disabled people begin to find community, confidence and a collective voice.

   - **Organisations.** ADD International’s main point of entry is organisational capacity. We provide tailored support to empower disability activists to build powerful organisations. Often these organisations work to tackle expressions of poverty and exclusion in their communities, creating positive change for disabled people.

   - **Movements.** No single disability activist can transform society alone and that’s why we work with organisations of disability activists to make their voices heard by decision makers and people with the power to make real change. We broker links and connect organisations together. We push national movements to be inclusive of all disabilities, those in hard to reach communities and those most excluded such as people with albinism or disabled women. We push for the sharing of evidence and learning from experience. Together we engage governments and international bodies to stop chronically excluding disabled people.

6. **It's a partnership.** Discrimination is endemic in the countries where we work. That's why we are in it for the long haul. We are there for organisations in ways that go beyond giving money. We provide moral support, we nurture talent, we stick with organisations through uncertain times, we share best practice, we learn from our mistakes, we grow together as partners for equality and we champion disability activism at a global level.
ACTIVISTS IN ACTION.

We give disability activists the tools to challenge the stigma of the community and reform the laws of the power holders.

1. **Mental Health.** Mental health is under-financed the world over, but in Bangladesh the situation is particularly critical. Bangladesh has a population of 160 million people and only 50 clinical psychologists and 200 psychiatrists. There is very little mental health infrastructure, and only a handful of clinics or services to access for support, most of which are based in urban centres. In contrast, what there are in abundance, are myths. Myths about evil spirits; about people with mental illness being possessed by the devil. There are lots of faith healers too, offering ‘cures’ for these ‘problems’. Last year ADD International Bangladesh started a pioneering partnership with local disability activists to start tackling mental health stigma.

2. **Gender based violence.** Poverty. Disability. Violence. Any of these would be difficult to live with. For millions of women throughout Africa and Asia all three are a daily reality. Disabled women and girls are more likely to suffer sexual and physical abuse and yet too often their unique needs are not considered in aid programmes designed to protect women from violence. Without specific attention and solutions, these disabled women are left behind and at risk. ADD International supports disability activists who are working to protect disabled women and girls from violence.

3. **People with Albinism.** People with albinism have been hidden away, hunted and even killed for their body parts in areas of eastern Uganda. With no access to information about the condition, communities can believe in myths, such as that a person with albinism is a demon, that their body parts can make you rich, or that unprotected sex with a woman or girl with albinism will cure HIV. ADD International supports disability activists with albinism who are campaigning for their rights, reaching out to vulnerable people and educating their communities.

4. **Inclusive Education.** Over 57 million children are out of school around the world, with disabled children disproportionately represented among them. The situation is particularly grim in countries of extreme poverty, where it is often believed that children with impairments ‘can't learn’. If you're a girl and you're disabled, chances are you'll never see a classroom. ADD International partners with organisations of local disability activists to reach out to disabled children and their families, helping parents see that their child has the potential to learn and flourish, and enrolling kids into local schools.
In Bangladesh to be disabled and a woman is a vicious combination. Women are like the broom in the house; the cheapest household appliance.

I became disabled when I was six months old and fell ill with Polio. In our village people thought disability was a curse incurred by an earlier generation’s wrongdoing. I believed them. I used to think that maybe my grandpa must have done something wrong. I kept myself in a shell. The question of my rights was a far cry away.

Through ADD International I received training to build my confidence and skills. ADD International is a milepost in fighting for the rights of disabled people in Bangladesh. Maybe one day it won’t be here anymore but it will not take away its teachings and those teachings will help us throughout our lives.

I am now a disability activist and President of my district’s Women’s Council. Last year, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs awarded me a prize for my work. But I still see injustice happening every day.

Recently a disabled woman was raped. The villagers tried to cover it up and the girl was forced out of her home. I took the girl in and we filed a report against the perpetrator.

Before we formed our Women’s Council, disabled people weren’t allowed in the police station. Now, thanks to our work, they give us chairs to sit on.

When we see a disabled woman in danger, we feel that we ourselves are in danger. It could also happen to me. If we do not act to solve our problems then the negative propaganda in our society about disabled women will remain intact.

I dream of a society where there will be no word like ‘disabled.’ Our work will be successful when all disabled people have the identity of a human being.
Peter Ogiik. Disability Activist, Uganda.

There are a lot of myths towards people with albinism in Uganda.

People believe that it’s a punishment from God, or that if you get the body part of someone with albinism, such as a tooth, nails, the umbilical cord or tongue, it will bring you wealth.

I was told by my parents that when I was born, many of their friends distanced themselves. They thought I was cursed.

People with albinism are surrounded by fear.

We have been hidden away for a long time; ashamed and scared to speak in public because of these misconceptions.

I got together with a few other people with albinism, we wanted to try and change things but we didn’t have any idea of what we could do.

We connected with ADD International who helped us to build our capacity, understand our rights and what we need to do to change society.

I have received many different trainings, such as how to lobby effectively and how to influence policy makers to create policies that will protect people with albinism.

I am now the first person living with albinism to be the Chair of the National Youth with Disability forum in Uganda.

We recently launched a campaign to get the government to waive taxes on sun protection cream for people with albinism. Sun cream is very expensive and our skins make us very susceptible to cancer.

Through ADD International we are helping thousands of people living with albinism in Uganda.
KADDESH MOLLA.
DISABILITY ACTIVIST,
BANGLADESH.

What has ADD International done for me? ADD International brought the message of freedom, the message of rights for disabled people.

They brought me out of my home. They helped me learn how to exercise and achieve my rights. They provided every support, from financial to technical, so that we can now run our organization.

Before joining ADD International I was worried about my future. What shall I do? How will I employ myself? Will I be able work at all in my lifetime? I can now say I am President of this disability federation. Now I know I have the right to live in this world.

Commitment and courage are important. Unity brings courage. Today I went to the police station to discuss one of our filed abuse cases. I was firm in how the police should perform the enquiry. We are not going to give them bribes. I can play my role of assertion because of my strength. What strength? My group contains nearly 4,000 members.

It’s a long journey, this is a movement and we travel one step forward but there are still many things that are needed to be done.

Today I have a voice, I can assert myself. If ADD International were not here I would not have such a voice.

The community’s attitude towards the disabled used to be that we put forward our palms for alms. But now they know we are stretching our hands forward to say, ‘hold my hand, I want to cross the road by myself, I just need some help from you.’

That’s why we have written a slogan ‘Not Charity, But Rights’. We don’t want your mercy, we want our rights.
WHAT’S THE URGENCY?

There has been a chronic neglect of disability as a development issue and it is profoundly out of kilter with the reality many disabled people face.

Millions of disabled people in Africa and Asia are still condemned to a life of poverty and exclusion. We have to act now to end this.

The world is full of complex crises which cannot be resolved overnight. For the causes we care about, and are committed to, it will be a life-long, multi-generational journey for change. But change can, and does, come. We see disability activists make it every day. But they urgently need money to expand their work.

IN THE WORDS OF ACTIVISTS.

My job is to defend the rights of disabled men, women and children.

We have the will, we have the desire, we have the spirit but we don't have the resources.

The disabled people here are poor. They live below the poverty line, we are talking abject poverty. And they crawl on their hands to come here looking for justice and we don't have the resources to help them.

It's painful. Our biggest challenge is our ability to reach everyone that needs our help. And it is not funding, we are not talking about money, we are talking of means to help people get their basic needs, their basic rights..

Alan, Disability Activist, Uganda.

Every day I receive something like 5 phone calls requesting help. ‘Please Peter my son is sick can you help?’

I feel sorry for them but I don't have the money to help. I sometimes feel I'm limited. It becomes very difficult for me to do what I need to do. I lack the resources. People with albinism are scattered in different places, different districts. We have to reach them but sometimes we don't have transport, so it's a big challenge. I have to reach them.

Every single penny we use to the maximum.

Peter Ogik, Disability Activist, Uganda.
WHAT’S THE ASK?

Disability activists aren’t asking for charity; they’re asking for their rights. You can help them claim them.

Activist Champions are a global community giving vital year-round support. They allow disability activists to tackle barriers to disability inclusion in ways that don’t just win individual changes, but build movements with unstoppable momentum.

We believe everyone should be able to make the best of the life they are born into. That’s why we are a proud and unswerving ally to disability activists. Their courage and determination deserves the world’s attention and resources. If the campaign for global disability equality inspires and moves you, then we hope you will join us.

Be with us for the journey.
Activism is hard work; it can be unpredictable, challenging and dangerous. Our disability activists are fighting entrenched and insidious levels of stigma which cannot be transformed overnight. It will take time, patience, hard work and the financial backing of people committed to the journey of social transformation. Discrimination, poverty and exclusion don’t stop in their work to rob disabled people of dignity, independence and equality. We cannot rest either.

For 30 years we’ve seen what human beings, united by a common desire to overcome an injustice, can achieve in collaboration.

Empowering disability activists and their organizations, is an incredibly cost effective way of working. You’re not handing out services, you’re not handing out food or medical care. You are helping to figure out ways to ensure that disabled people have all those things as rights, not handouts.

Clare McKeown, Director of Funding & Partnerships, UK.
Our work is...
• A partnership. ADD International works in collaboration with organisations of disability activists, we do not do things to them, we work with activists as equal partners. For example: We do not say, ‘We show parents that their disabled child can learn’ as this phrasing puts us in the expert role. Instead we say, ‘We help parents see that, with the right support...’
• Driven by disabled people’s agency. Our work helps to unleash disabled people’s agency to take control of their own lives and gain independence.
• A long-term process. The struggle for disability liberation is a life-long, multi-generational journey for change, with perhaps only small, incremental progresses secured in our lifetimes. We are in it for the long haul.
• A dynamic process. Activism is hard work; it can be unpredictable, challenging and dangerous. The disability activists we support are fighting entrenched and insidious levels of stigma which cannot be transformed overnight or in a linear fashion. It will take time, patience, hard work and the financial backing of people committed to the journey of social transformation.
• Part of the solution, not the complete fix. Our work is part of a package of support that will contribute to securing disability equality. It is one strand of focused action within a complex and broad system of other actions and actors who are all making valuable contributions to tackling inequality. We recognise and honour those contributions.
• A political process. Local, regional, national and global power holders must be held accountable for implementing inclusive policies.
• A historically anchored process. Disability stigma and exclusion has evolved from a complex web of global history and is present in every society. It is not a ‘third world problem’ but prevalent everywhere.
• A culturally sensitive process. Local leaders with local solutions to local problems will lead the fight to end disability exclusion in their locations. We will not.

ADD International is...
• A visitor. We do not share the history of disability activists, we do not share their culture, we do not vote in their elections, we have not ended disability stigma in our own country, we are only engaged for short durations of time.
• Not the hero. We facilitate change, we do not lead it. Sustainable solutions to disability exclusion are driven from the bottom-up. It is disabled people who bear the risk of rising up to challenge the stigma of their communities and holding their powerholders to account. Facilitating their efforts is not heroic on our part.
In our communications we will:

• **Do no harm.** We will always review our communications to root out stereotypes, generalisations, victimisation and implicit judgments. We will seek to problematise the context not the people and show that we are being understanding and not judgemental and that we are rooting our work in the empowerment and leadership of disability activists.

• **Examine our language:** We will rigorously examine our language to ensure that the words we use reflect the frames we intend.

• **Be honest & accurate.** We won’t exaggerate the effect a donation can have; we will be open about complex or hard hitting issues; we will strive for accuracy in story details and clearly communicate where money is going and the need for long term investment.

• **Tell thematic stories.** We will contextualise our communications and focus on the causes of stigma and poverty not the symptoms. We will talk to supporters as partners in our work and portray disabled people as having futures beyond our interaction with them.

• **Foreground the organisation.** We will foreground the value of ADD International as an organisation and own our operational costs and processes as integral and essential. We will articulate how we: design effective projects, find resources to fund the work, evaluate effectiveness, shape policy dialogue and reflect on what we’ve learnt to improve our practise. We will bring supporters into the heart of our long term journey to deliver our mission.

Don’t give to a charity... Instead, give a donation through charity. In changing one word, we put a charity in its rightful place – a conduit, a catalyst, a bridge between the giver and beneficiary.

• **Talk about values.** BOND have done extensive research via the ‘Narrative Project’ to see what values are most effective in moving forward people’s thinking on development work. Based on their findings our communications will emphasise the following values:

  • **Independence.** Development programs help people in the world’s poorest places become independent and stand on their own two feet.

  • **Shared Values.** People born in the world's poorest places, deserve the chance to achieve their full potential, because every human life is valuable.

  • **Partnership:** Development programs work because people from across countries and communities join forces to share knowledge, resources and responsibility.

  • **Progress:** Development programs work. We’ve beaten smallpox, nearly defeated polio and helped millions of people get education and training. The theme that development programs are effective supports the other ideas in the narrative by educating the public on what has been achieved—but was shown not to be persuasive on its own or as a lead theme.