



Making Inclusion Work - Why Good Intentions are not Enough



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29 January 2025



Inclusion is not a Choice, but a Demographic and Economic Imperative



- Why Inclusion Can't Wait
- Is There a Way Forward?
- PMAC 2026 – going beyond problem identification and focusing on actionable solutions
 - What are inclusive and effective policies
 - Real-World Examples of Inclusive Policy in Action

The Message I Want to Leave You With

Why Inclusion Can't Wait



- Rapid demographic shifts—ageing, declining fertility, migration—are reshaping societies and labour markets
- DEI faces global pushback, often framed as political, costly, or non-essential
- Exclusion has hidden costs that far outweigh visible investments in inclusion
- Labour shortages and urbanization demand full participation of all population groups



Is There a Way Forward?



There is!

- Disability inclusion pays off for governments and companies through higher revenues and innovation
- Inclusive societies and businesses outperform in productivity, resilience, and growth
- Universal design and accessibility deliver system-wide efficiency gains
- Inclusive labour markets expand the workforce and mitigate demographic-driven labour shortages

PMAC 2026 – going beyond problem identification and focusing on actionable solutions

What Makes a Policy Truly Inclusive?

- Equity and non-discrimination,
- Accessibility,
- Participation (“Nothing about us without us”),
- Intersectionality,
- Rights-based approaches

WHO IS BEING LEFT BEHIND?



- Older persons, persons with disabilities (visible and non-visible), women and girls, marginalized youth, migrants, minorities, rural and poor populations, and gender minorities
- Overlapping vulnerabilities deepen inequalities, especially during demographic change
- Policies can worsen or reduce inequality
- Three persistent barriers drive exclusion: stigma and discrimination; inaccessible infrastructure and services; lack of accessible information
- These barriers are solvable

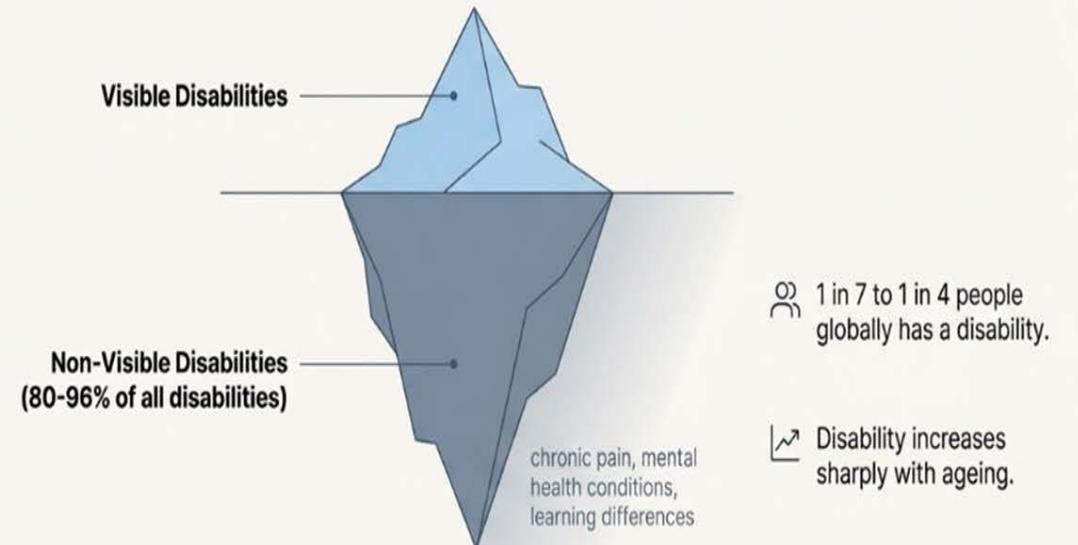


Let's Look at Data



- It is estimated that over 1.3 billion people (roughly 16% of the world's population) live with a disability.
- However, in many national surveys the data are 2-4 %, why?

Disability provides a clear lens on the universal challenge of exclusion.



Fun (?) Facts



- Disability is the only minority group that a person can join at any time in their life.
- If you are lucky enough to live long, you will face a disability (vision, mobility , hearing, mental)



Key Ingredients of Effective Policies



- A good policy is developed with, not just for, affected communities.
- It has a strong legal and policy grounding
- It uses data (disaggregated by sex, age, disability, location, income, etc.)
- It builds in physical, digital, informational, and attitudinal accessibility from the start
- There are adequate resources and capacity for the policy.
- There is political will and leadership

The Fiscal Squeeze: Rising Needs, Limited Resources

- Resources are shrinking while needs are rising
- Ageing, labour shortages, and declining fertility make sidelining people economically unsustainable
- Inclusive governments and businesses outperform in productivity, innovation, retention, service quality, and trust

A paradigm shift is needed



We are asking the wrong question



Reframing the Economic Question

~~How much will inclusion cost?~~

**How much does exclusion
already cost us?**

In an era of labor shortages and aging populations, businesses can no longer afford the unsustainable economic burden of exclusion. It drains productivity and stifles innovation.

EXAMPLES



The ROI of Inclusion: The OXO Good Grips Story



Traditional Design:
Standard metal peeler



Inclusive Design:
OXO Good Grips

The Problem: The founder's wife struggled with traditional peelers due to arthritis.

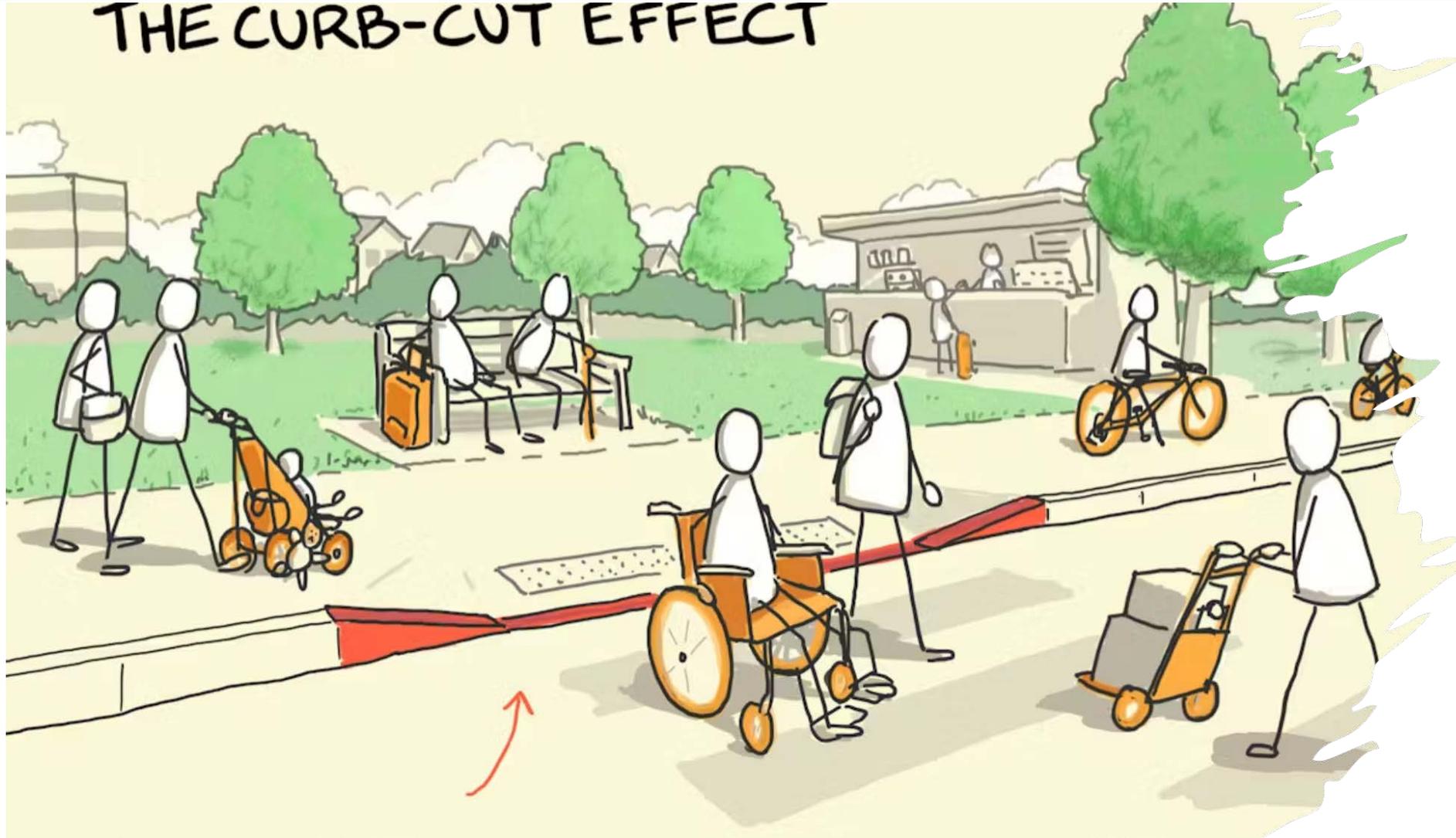
The Solution: An oversized, soft, non-slip handle requiring less gripping force and a swiveling blade.

The Result: A major commercial success. It became a mass-market icon, loved by everyone, not just those with arthritis.

Inclusive design creates products that are widely loved and highly profitable. It expands the market rather than shrinking it.



THE CURB-CUT EFFECT



Real-World Examples of Inclusive Policy in Action – Thailand's UHC



Thailand's Universal Health Coverage (UHC) ensures access to essential health services across the life course without financial hardship

Designed for an ageing population, with rehabilitation and mobility support included in the benefits package

Administered by the NHSO under the Universal Coverage Scheme (UCS) Free rehabilitation services provided through public and private clinics (e.g. post-stroke, hip fracture, brain and spinal injuries)

Supports independence, participation, and equity for older persons and persons with disabilities

Thailand's disability-inclusive ASRHR programming



UNFPA Thailand partners with local organizations on disability-inclusive ASRHR programming

Evidence-based research identified gaps, rights violations, and harmful practices

Policy recommendations strengthened SRHR knowledge and informed choice for youth with disabilities

Support to Public Service Centres for Persons with Disabilities to develop SRHR guidelines

Scale-up planned nationally through service provider networks within two years

The Message I Want to Leave You With



No matter how sound a policy may be, its effectiveness ultimately depends on whether people are convinced of its relevance and willing to put it into practice.

Let's advocate for a paradigm shift in social policy, moving away from viewing inclusion as a costly charitable endeavor toward recognizing it as a demographic and economic imperative.

The question is no longer how societies will adapt, but who they will choose to include.

Leaving no one behind is not just the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do.

Thank you

