



# Research impact summary

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## Disability in the developing world: tackling marginalisation

Studies by the Centre for Research on Economic Development and International Trade (CREDIT) have provided governments in the developing world with valuable insights into the wider benefits of improving the lives of people with disabilities – from the economic gains to the broader impact on individuals, their families and the communities in which they live.

It has been estimated that Africa is home to up to 80 million adults with disabilities. This equates to more than 10% of the disabled population globally, as reported by the World Health Organisation in 2011. In many African nations a significant proportion of these individuals are severely marginalised and live below the poverty line.

“The sad reality is that disability isn’t a priority expenditure for many countries,” says Dr Trudy Owens, a Lecturer in Economics. “Yet there are numerous reasons, both social and economic, for tackling longstanding stigma and enabling people with disabilities to participate in the African economy.”

Some of the centre’s most important research in this field stemmed from a chance encounter between Dr Owens and an orthotist at Nottingham’s Queen’s Medical Centre. The meeting led to the launch of a campaign to collect and recycle unwanted NHS orthotic equipment – crutches, specialist shoes, knee-ankle-foot orthoses and other orthopaedic devices – and send it to Uganda.

In 2012 and 2013, working with a team of economists and orthotists, Dr Owens led a project to assess, fit and survey hundreds of Ugandans with disabilities. The research measured the immediate and longer-term impact of orthotics on individuals, their families and communities – including not just mobility and wellbeing but employment, income and integration.

“Our work has given the Ugandan government a cost-free evaluation and hard evidence of the gains that can result from improving the lives of people with disabilities,” says Dr Owens. “Our hope now is that over time this successful template will be continually scaled up by the government and NGOs, that other governments will appreciate the investment required and that orthotic manufacturing will be encouraged across Africa.”

**CREDIT’s research in Uganda has highlighted the “spillover” effects of providing orthotic equipment in developing, low-income countries. These “non-market” outcomes were uncovered by surveying not just study participants but their families. One finding to emerge was that the children of women who received treatment increased the amount of time devoted to school activities by more than three hours a day within a year. In short, the evidence suggests entire households can benefit from these interventions.**

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## Trudy Owens

Lecturer in Economics

"You've probably read that there are more than a billion poor people in the world. As defined by the World Bank, these are people who live on less than \$1.25 a day. I study the countries where they live and try to understand how the economies function and what can be done to solve their problems. Much of my work focuses on Africa, where many of the world's poor are concentrated, and by collecting primary data there I hope to add to the debate on how to alleviate poverty."

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### World-leading research

The research carried out at the School of Economics is regularly acknowledged as among the most significant of its kind in the world. It is also among the most influential.

Research can help boost economic competitiveness, improve the effectiveness of public services and policy and enhance quality of life. We have made important contributions in all of these areas through the work of our research centres.

- Centre for Decision Research and Experimental Economics
- Centre for Finance, Credit and Macroeconomics
- Centre for Research in Economic Development and International Trade
- Nottingham Centre for Research on Globalisation and Economic Policy
- Granger Centre for Time Series Econometrics
- Network for Integrated Behavioural Science
- Nottingham Interdisciplinary Centre for Economic and Political Research