



Support to Organisations Representative of Persons with Disabilities

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**HANDICAP
INTERNATIONAL**

About...

Handicap International

“Handicap International is an independent and impartial international aid organisation working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster.

Working alongside persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions and promoting respect for their dignity and their fundamental rights.”

www.handicap-international.org

About...

this policy brief

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This policy brief is an introduction to Handicap International’s 2011 Policy Paper “Support to Organisations Representative of Persons with Disabilities”, the full version of which can be downloaded at: http://www.hiproweb.org/uploads/tx_hidrtdocs/SupportToDPO.pdf



Key messages from the Policy Paper

People with disabilities constitute an estimated **15% of the global population**.

People with disabilities often experience **discrimination**; they are frequently excluded from social, economic and political processes; they have limited access to services; and their rights are frequently denied.

Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) are essential actors to improve the participation and the full enjoyment of all human rights by all people with disabilities. They play a special role in promoting inclusive development and have a responsibility to promote access to quality services for people with disabilities.

Handicap International’s policy is to **support DPOs** to:

- Prepare for action by developing internal capacities,
- Develop actions to change attitudes, practices and policies,
- Monitor the situation of people with disabilities and their human rights,
- Support the individual empowerment of people with disabilities.

This work is underpinned by the **Disability Creation Process**. This model asserts that people with disabilities are disadvantaged not solely because of their individual characteristics or health conditions but as a result of limitations imposed on them by external barriers. Disability is a result of how society is organised, as described within the social model of disability. Societal barriers can be found within attitudes, communication, institutions, and the environment.

Why is it important to work with DPOs?



What are DPOs?

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) include all associations, self help groups, federations and networks created and led by people with disabilities.

The role of DPOs includes:

- representing and mobilising people with disabilities;
- advocating for changes in policies and practices;
- monitoring human rights and empowering their members.

As relatively new organisations on the human rights scene, whose members often face discrimination, there have been limited opportunities to date for DPOs to develop capacities and resources.

Yet DPOs are essential actors to improve the participation of people with disabilities. They play a special role in promoting inclusive societies where people with disabilities' rights are fully realised. They also have a critical role in enhancing access to quality services for people with disabilities.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Handicap International has been implementing projects in many countries across the world with a specific focus on developing the capacities of Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs).

This work is based on the belief that people with disabilities themselves, as civil society representatives, must play a central role in ensuring that their human rights are translated into concrete measures that effectively improve their lives.

DPOs and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The experience of developing strong partnerships with DPOs, as well as working with national authorities and service providers, has enabled Handicap International and its partners to influence disability rights issues at the highest level, specifically by playing an active role in the development of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**.

The UNCRPD was adopted in 2006 with the purpose to "promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities". The UNCRPD entails a general obligation to closely consult with, and actively involve, people with disabilities in any decision concerning them.



Major changes brought by the UNCRPD

- The CRPD does not create new rights but recalls that existing human rights apply equally to all people with disabilities,
- It is legally binding for States,
- It represents a huge step forward for the promotion of access to services for people with disabilities in all contexts and environments,
- It clearly stipulates the role of DPOs as a driving force in the promotion and monitoring of these rights.

How does Handicap International work with DPOs?



Overview

Regarding the relationship between DPOs and Handicap International, it is essential that DPOs have meaningful participation in terms of planning, implementing and evaluating all projects.

There is a need for clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, partnership and funding arrangements, capacity and organisational development support and strategies.

Participatory Steering Committees are one way to help facilitate the whole project process.

Work can take place at different levels (local, national, regional and international) which helps to strengthen the disability movement and its connections to different stakeholders.

Each context is different and approaches are flexible to adapt to favourable or challenging political environments.

The methods of intervention responding to identified support needs have been divided into **four major components**.

➤ Component 1 - Develop the internal capacities of DPOs and strengthen their function as representative organisations

This can include organisational development; improving democratic and associative governance and representation and accountability to members; communication mechanisms and information sharing; cohesion and coordination amongst groups; and project management skills. Developing expertise in explaining different approaches to disability is an important part of strengthening DPOs as well as awareness-raising and advocacy capacities. **Learning by doing is an essential approach** to ensure that skills imparted through training do not remain theoretical but are enacted through concrete actions.

➤ Component 2 - Promoting actions to change attitudes, practices and policies

This includes strengthening capacities to efficiently represent and advocate for meaningful results for people with disabilities. A central and strategic element of this concerns **DPOs building alliances with other civil society actors**. Advocacy is adapted to the context with a well defined strategic plan, expected results and the use of appropriate methods and tools. Actions seek to influence decision making mechanisms; raise awareness to change practices; mobilise different stakeholders with regard to their roles and responsibilities; engage in the review of national policies and legislation, and national and local development plans; and enhance participation and consultation mechanisms such as sector working groups and consultative committees. This constructive advocacy is done through negotiation; alliance building and networking; and making complex information accessible to a wider audience. For this purpose, Handicap International promotes the Making It Work methodology: www.makingitwork-crpd.org. **Making it Work** is a multi-stakeholder approach for reinforcing advocacy to advance the rights of people with disabilities. It is based on the concept of identifying existing good practices and then using this evidence to propose constructive, practical recommendations about how they can be replicated or scaled-up.

In all advocacy work by DPOs, the UNCRPD is a major reference and guiding tool towards an inclusive society.

➤ Component 3 - Monitoring the situation of people with disabilities and their human rights

DPOs play a strategic role in monitoring the situation of people with disabilities and their human rights. Human rights monitoring covers a range of methods and mechanisms such as developing a comparative review of the national legislation against the standards of the UNCRPD, or producing civil society alternative reports for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva. Monitoring the implementation of the UNCRPD and national law and policy development and enforcement reflects the changes and impact on the real life situations of people with disabilities. Monitoring helps gather evidence for stronger, more credible and more legitimate advocacy. It can inform future planning and budgeting.



Useful online resources

- Making It Work:
www.makingitwork-crpd.org
- Source:
www.asksource.info
- UNCRPD Enable:
www.un.org/disabilities
- International Disability Alliance (IDA):
www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org
- International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC):
www.iddcconsortium.net
- Make Development Inclusive:
www.make-development-inclusive.org

Handicap International proposes a twin track approach to monitor both disability specific issues and also how disability issues are included in all policies and programmes. This combines with specific actions taken to support people with disabilities, including capacity development and empowerment.

– Component 4 - Support the individual empowerment of people with disabilities

It is important to build confidence, capacity and self esteem in order for people with disabilities to be able to participate, take decisions, speak out, understand and claim rights and responsibilities. This can include empowerment of members of a DPO as well as people with disabilities within the general population. One method is individual support whereby individuals benefit from their membership through increased access to opportunities such as training, or mobilising people into self help groups. The impact of having the space to discuss and share experiences can not be underestimated.

DPOs can: become centres of referral and information for individuals who approach them for support; develop directories for access to services; offer citizenship services such as support with registrations or voter cards; or provide a directory on the rights of people with disabilities. There are some situations where there is a distinct added value in service provision such as developing sign language and relevant trainings. In general, there is some debate regarding DPOs engaging in service provision, and thus for Handicap International, the Policy Paper only focuses on their role as representative advocates.

Linkages with other areas of Handicap International's work

Actions to strengthen DPOs can reinforce our work in other thematic areas, for example:

- Reinforcing Inclusive Local Development (ILD) projects, by working with local authorities and influencing the inclusion of disability issues in local development priorities, plans and budgets,
- Improving the relevance and quality of services by including a user's perspective,
- Developing strong advocacy skills of DPOs to improve access for persons with disabilities to both specific and mainstream services,
- Preparing DPOs to actively participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of Community Based Rehabilitation strategies,
- Providing a critical step in lobbying for, and inputting to, Inclusive Policies both at national and international cooperation levels,
- Facilitating adequate responses to people with disabilities in emergency interventions,
- Preparing DPOs to engage in advocacy and awareness-raising in the Mine Action sector.



Perspectives for 2011-2015

- Finalise and disseminate Handicap International positioning on support to DPOs,
- Review field practices for strengthening disability movements and explore new project opportunities,
- Better define and create closer links between Support to DPOs and an Access to Services approach,
- Pool existing tools and create reference toolkits on advocacy and human rights monitoring,
- Develop methodological guides on strengthening DPOs' associative governance and autonomy,
- Engage in measuring the impact of projects strengthening the disability movement,
- Develop Making it Work internally and externally as a methodology aimed at promoting bottom-up, evidenced-base advocacy to realise the UNCRPD,
- Sustain and develop new networks and alliances both internationally and regionally for improved participation of DPOs in development processes.