

Handout 6

A GUIDE TO DISABILITY ORGANISATIONS

HOW TO USE THIS HANDOUT

Use this handout with the following activities:

- **Reality check**
- **Excuses excuses**

A QUICK TOUR

Disabled people have been excluded from most decision-making processes. Families, communities – and development organisations – have tended to decide on their behalf, even when it directly affects their lives. That could be about undertaking physical therapy, having surgery or being sent away to a ‘special needs’ school.

As a result, they’re rarely consulted or involved in development planning. Few have the opportunity to take up leadership positions. In response, a Disability Movement has been growing around the world. Its aim is to represent the voice of disabled people and lobby for greater inclusion. Conditions vary from country to country. But often there are national organisations for many of the main impairment groups – with branches or committees in towns and villages. If the movement has been established for a while, there may also be a federation or union representing all disabled people in national level policy-making.

Each organisation has a part to play, to ensure disabled people benefit from development. All can be important resources for meeting the needs in your region. However, contacts for consultation about inclusion must be with disabled people themselves – through self-help groups, DPOs or national and international bodies.

DISABLED PEOPLE’S ORGANISATIONS (DPOs)

- are organisations **OF** disabled people
- many represent people with a particular impairment
- in countries where the disability movement isn’t strong, there may only be two or three impairment groups represented
- some national level DPOs are known for their lobbying, such as the National Union of Disabled People Uganda (NUDIPU), and Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA)
- some are represented at regional and international level, like the Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) and Disabled People’s International (DPI)
- many are small, relatively weak in capacity and focus on meeting the immediate needs of their members

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- the most important aspect of DPOs is their ability to understand the needs in their locality and to mobilise disabled people
- with support, DPOs can be effective partners in community development programmes for mainstream initiatives.

SELF-HELP GROUPS

- **are groups of disabled people not yet registered as DPOs**
- tend to be more common in rural or semi-urban contexts where DPOs have yet to reach, or for groups who lack the resources to formally apply for registration
- play an important role at local level in connecting disabled people with each other
- often offer social support and can be mobilised to provide economic assistance in emergencies
- can be an important link between disabled people and community development programmes, and should be sought when carrying out assessment activities.

DISABILITY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs)

- **are organisations working FOR disabled people**
- include large international NGOs like SightSavers, Leonard Cheshire Disability, CBM, Sense International, Sue Ryder Care, Handicap International and Action on Disability and Development
- some specialise in particular impairments, some are more focused on building the capacity of disabled people and their representative organisations
- numerous national NGOs target disabled people specifically, e.g. Uganda Foundation for the Blind, and Association for People with Leprosy in Angola
- include faith-based charities supporting special needs schools or vocational training centres or working to help produce artificial limbs
- in many cases medical/rehabilitation needs may be primary support focus
- many are moving to rights-based approaches.