



Inclusive Local Development: How to implement a disability approach at local level

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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.

It works alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, taking action and bearing witness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.”

www.handicap-international.org

About... this brief

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This policy brief is an introduction to Handicap International's 2009 policy paper on inclusive local development. It provides an overview of Handicap International's activities in this sector. We would encourage you to read the full version of the policy paper available at:

English version: http://www.hiproweb.org/uploads/tx_hidrtdocs/DLIGbBd.pdf

French version: http://www.hiproweb.org/uploads/tx_hidrtdocs/DLIFrBd.pdf



Key messages

- Inclusive Local Development (ILD) projects are built around **local-level dialogue, consultation and decision-making** with key stakeholders, including:
 - local authorities (local governments and their technical services, deconcentrated state services, religious and traditional leaders)
 - civil society, especially Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and representatives of other vulnerable groups
 - development partners (service providers from the public and private sectors, NGOs, opinion leaders, etc.).
- The overall objective of inclusive local development projects is to **encourage greater participation by the people with disabilities in a given territory**. These projects promote a comprehensive approach to the needs and rights of people with disabilities, and encourage the inclusion of disability issues in policies, development strategies, projects, services and initiatives.
- ILD is part of a **decentralisation process in which the state transfers competence to local authorities empowering them to take action** in key areas of society such as civil status, education, health, employment and access to water.
- ILD projects work very closely with local authorities to help them take ownership of these issues, and with local development actors to promote social change and the inclusion of disability in community development initiatives.
- ILD projects focus essentially on two key areas:
 - **Territorial facilitation** to ensure that all the different disability organisations speak with one voice and develop joint actions, and also that local actors work together not only during the diagnostic phase, but also during the design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions
 - **Capacity building**, by delivering training, coaching and consultancy to strengthen the capacity of local actors.

Why Handicap International works in the field of Inclusive Local Development



Definitions

- **Inclusive development** is a development model that promotes equality and the widest possible social participation at grassroots level.
- **Inclusive local development** focuses on the local community level, i.e. a coherent geographical space or population catchment area with which actors can identify and which often corresponds to an administrative territory.
- **Decentralisation** concerns the transfer of competence and resources from the state to local authorities. As part of this process, specific laws and regulations give local authorities autonomy in decision-making and managing their own budgets.
- In the case of **deconcentration**, the state does not transfer its competence, but provides means at grassroots level. Deconcentration allows the state to bring the administration closer to the citizens. Good decentralisation often goes hand in hand with a deconcentration of government services.
- **Being a citizen** means having the possibility to influence the life of the community.
- **Local citizen participation** can be understood at two levels: at the **collective level**, where the citizen participation of people with disabilities requires the community to be organised so as to effectively take disability rights into account; at the **individual level**, where citizen participation refers to a personal aspiration to be a citizen in one's own right.

Importance and context

Adopting an inclusive local development approach enables **disability issues to be included in a cross-cutting way in a given territory/community**. Disability is thus automatically integrated into the planning and implementation of development actions at local level - which can be more difficult to achieve on a broader scale. Working at a local level means a wide range of stakeholders (schools, hospitals, elected representatives, public and private services, etc.) can be called upon to contribute to development that really does take people with disabilities into account at all levels and in all fields (accessibility of the physical environment, access to health care, education, employment, etc.), while still ensuring a coordinated response.

The local level of the intervention means that **the demands and needs of people with disabilities are really heard**. Those in charge of the development of their territory are able to apprehend the needs of a large proportion of the vulnerable population, including people with disabilities, and so can determine the most appropriate actions for addressing their difficulties. These expectations, demands and needs can be even more clearly known and identified if a diagnosis of the local disability situation is considered, either before writing the project or as the project's first activity.

In view of the clear international tendency towards the decentralisation of competence, it is clear that **local authorities** (town councils, village groups, districts, etc.) are becoming **key players in many developing countries, often with a strong and direct impact on the daily lives of people with disabilities**.

The involvement of local authorities is encouraged on all ILD projects to guarantee the **sustainability of actions**.

Three main stakeholders and beneficiaries of inclusive local development projects

- Organisations that represent people with disabilities (Disabled People's Organisations and self-help groups), and others civil society representatives
- Representatives of local authorities, elected representatives (decentralisation), appointed representatives (deconcentration) or people recognised by the community (traditional, moral or religious authorities)
- Service providers (public or private), and other local development stakeholders.

How Handicap International works in the field of Inclusive Local Development



Links with the Convention

ILD projects ensure a cross-cutting approach to meeting the needs expressed by people with disabilities or their representatives and enforcing the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

- participation in decision making (Article 4.3)
- awareness-raising (Article 8)
- accessibility (Article 9)
- living independently and being included in the community (Article 19)
- education (Article 24)
- health (Article 25)
- work and employment (Article 27)
- participation in political and public life (Article 29)
- participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (Article 30).



Possible levels of participation

- **Co-decision** or co-management, involving a clear sharing of the powers of local authorities with civil society
- **Participation**, with the concept of joint construction, mutual listening, with the public interest taking precedence over the interests of parties or individuals
- **Consultation** of communities on local priorities
- **Information** from local authorities on the local policies planned and implemented.

- **Component 1 - Developing the capacities of Disabled People's Organisations to improve their participation in local development**

This is the first level of action required to help local-level Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) to **become credible actors in the eyes of local authorities**.

Strengthening the capacities of DPOs should give people with disabilities the means and skills to **advocate effectively**.

- **Component 2 - Promoting the networking of local Disabled People's Organisations**

Networking between local Disabled People Organisations (DPOs) helps **DPOs to speak with one voice. This leads to greater recognition and improved dialogue and advocacy with local authorities**. ILD projects are designed to improve relations between DPOs by encouraging mutual recognition, the development of exchanges and synergies and the emergence of a common vision or message.

- **Component 3 - Promoting a participatory local diagnosis of the social participation of people with disabilities**

A multi-stakeholder diagnosis of the local situation for people with disabilities leads to an improved understanding of the context and the potential for intervention. This diagnosis may be carried out either before or at the start of an ILD project. It is qualitative and based mainly on individual interviews and the organisation of focus groups.

A local participatory diagnosis on the situation of people with disabilities should help with:

- Understanding the broader context
- Understanding or learning more about local Disabled People's Organisations
- Identifying people who are involved or may be involved with disability issues and the strategies and needs of these stakeholders
- Assessing major barriers in the environment
- Studying potential activities for addressing address the specific needs of people with disabilities.

- **Component 4 - Promoting consultation between Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and local authorities and supporting the inclusive local development actions resulting from this consultation**

It is essential to **create or strengthen dialogue between civil society (especially Disabled People's Organisations) and local authorities**. Strengthening links and mutual understanding leads to more effective implementation of concerted and joint actions and the inclusion of civil society in decision-making on local development.



Examples of expected outcomes from ILD projects

ILD projects focus on the analysis and modification of local practices with regard to disability issues and the effective application of the rights of people with disabilities.

- Local authorities and other local stakeholders give greater consideration to disability issues when drafting and implementing policies and actions.
- Local authorities give greater consideration to recommendations made by civil society and in particular, to recommendations from Disabled People's Organisations, when drafting local policies.
- After the ILD project, people with disabilities have improved access to local services, enabling greater social participation.
- People with disabilities are more aware of existing services and can seek their support more easily.
- The individual and collective capacities of people with disabilities are strengthened, particularly in terms of constructive advocacy with local authorities.
- Solidarity between local communities and people with disabilities is stronger as a result of the project.

The diagnosis phase (detailed previously) is excellent preparation for this new planning phase which defines who should do what, when, where, with whom, at what cost and for what outcomes. **Consultation forums for local authorities and civil society should become opportunities for regular exchanges** on the design, planning, monitoring and evaluation of all local policies and development plans, i.e. not just those specific to the project. The collaboration should start with small, clearly-defined projects to demonstrate the advantages of working together. It can then be extended to the main areas of social participation for people with disabilities (education, health, professional life, sports, leisure, accessibility).

Consultation forums should, in the long term, enable Disabled People's Organisations (and other organisations working on disability issues) to put forward operational proposals to be included in Local Disability Action Plans. **Actions from these local disability plans can then be integrated into the local authorities' development plans. These development plans are real roadmaps for the local authorities that help make it "natural"** and thus systematic to include vulnerability issues in local development strategies.

• **Component 5 - Creating a cross-cutting network of local services and facilitating effective systems for referral and information-exchange**

The information and referral services for people with disabilities and their entourage aim to create a link between them and the people and organisations that can meet their needs or refer them to adapted or specialised facilities listed in a database. These existing local services may be public, private or voluntary and managed by DPOs, NGOs, employers, public organisations, governmental agencies or departments, or local authorities.

• **Component 6 - Sensitize and train local development stakeholders**

Advocacy should create a collective awareness of the importance of disability issues and the recognition and enforcement of the rights of people with disabilities. This awareness should encourage local stakeholders to adapt their practices to meet the specific needs and interests of people with disabilities, to make their services accessible and to ensure development initiatives are inclusive. Awareness-raising actions must be supported by local stakeholders, and in particular, by Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). In addition to awareness-raising, **training activities are essential to bring about real change in the practices of professionals.** These activities include training teachers to adapt their teaching, or training micro-finance institutions to handle applications for microcredit submitted by people with disabilities.

A local development process aims to foster participatory local governance that can exert influence on the national level to promote and disseminate the good practices generated at all levels of local government: act local, think global, a policy of future.