



RIGHTS IN ACTION

**GOOD PRACTICES FOR
INCLUSIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE
IN WEST AFRICA**

Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

**Making
it Work** 
Good Practices for
Inclusive Development

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SUMMARY REPORT



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The “Rights in Action” initiative is part of a broader regional project - DECISIPH - which addresses the issues of rights, equality, citizenship, solidarity, and inclusion of people with disabilities across six countries in West Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

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THE FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The « Rights in Action » initiative is implemented as part of a broader regional project: **DECISIPH** – which addresses the issues of **rights, equality, citizenship, solidarity and inclusion of people with disabilities** across six countries in West Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

DECISIPH is a five year programme, started by Handicap International in 2008 and implemented in partnership with:

- the Secretariat of the African Decade of People with Disabilities (SADPD)
- national federations of DPOs
- national and local DPOs
- public institutions responsible for disability issues.

THE « RIGHTS IN ACTION » INITIATIVE

OBJECTIVE

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) entered into force in 2008. This major international legislation represents a significant step towards addressing the poverty and social exclusion experienced by people with disabilities worldwide.

A key part of the CRPD concerns the rights of people with disabilities and their representative organizations to be involved in **governance and decision-making processes at the local level**. This

right is enshrined in **Article 29** of the CRPD.

The **primary objective** of the “Rights in Action” initiative is to **promote practical, evidence-based recommendations on how to achieve inclusive local governance** in West Africa, so that people with disabilities have an active role in shaping the local policies and services that impact directly on their lives.

Underpinning this objective is the goal to promote effective implementation of the CRPD at all levels across West Africa.

This summary report presents in brief the key findings and recommendations from the Rights in Action project.



BACKGROUND

DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS

The decentralization process is well advanced in most West African countries, with decision-making and resource allocation increasingly deployed to government authorities at the local level.

As a result of this movement, local authorities are becoming key players in many countries. Indeed their decisions often have a strong, direct impact on the daily lives of people with disabilities. As such, we can see that the issues of good

governance and the participation of traditionally excluded groups are often most effectively addressed at the local level.

This shift towards decentralization now offers greater opportunities for people with disabilities and their representative organizations to influence local development and decisions about the provision of public goods and services.

INCLUSIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The term “local governance” is related to decentralization and local development and includes both the concepts of accountability and local democracy.

“ Local governance refers to the interactions between different stakeholders at the local level, from local authorities and representatives of civil society to the private sector.

Efficient and effective local governance (good governance) is the result of a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and groups can express their interests and needs (including discriminated against individuals, such as people with disabilities, women, minorities and people living with HIV/AIDS), communicate their differences, and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level.¹

¹ UNDP, Supporting Capacities for Integrated Local Development, Practice Note (UNDP, 2007).



Inclusive local governance means placing an emphasis on the **effective inclusion** of marginalised and discriminated populations.

WHY it is important for local authorities to engage with this issue of local inclusive governance?

Because they have a responsibility to meet the needs of all people in the communities they represent, and people with disabilities comprise 10% of the community. Local authorities can support the practical implementation of the rights of people with disabilities through the development of inclusive policies. As such, local inclusive governance is a way for authorities to meet their responsibilities under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

WHY it is important for Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) to engage with this issue of local inclusive governance?

Because it is a clear and direct way for them to influence changes in the community for people with disabilities. DPOs can engage in constructive dialogue with policy-makers and influence local development and decisions about the provision of public goods and services.

WHY it is important for development partners to engage with this issue of local inclusive governance?

Because if development partners (mainstream NGOs etc) are working on issues of local development and governance – they have a duty to consider the rights of people with disabilities and to integrate disability issues in their programs.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of Rights in Action was developed using the **Making it Work** approach:

www.makingitwork-crpd.org.



Making it Work takes a unique and innovative approach to effect social and political change on

disability issues. Rather than focusing on human rights violations and what is not working, Making it Work shifts stakeholders' attention to what does work and **how it can be replicated or 'scaled up'**.

The Rights in Action initiative adopted a **participatory, multi-stakeholder** approach, with advisory committees established at regional level (West Africa) and national level: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

These committees provided expertise on local inclusive governance and supported the process to identify, select and validate good practices.

A field researcher documented examples of good practices in each country. These examples were then analysed by the regional committee in order to formulate a series of recommendations for key stakeholders, on how to improve inclusive local governance in West Africa.

This process led to the production of the Rights in Action report, which includes 26 good practice case studies, recommendations and additional analysis from each country.

The full report is available online at:

www.makingitwork-crpd.org.

The objective of the recommendations is to provide clear, practical steps on **HOW** key stakeholders can engage on the issue of local inclusive

governance.

A synthesis of the key recommendations is presented below, with references to some of the good practice case studies from which they were inspired.







RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING OR IMPROVING LOCAL INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

Develop knowledge (through formal or informal mapping) about existing local consultation mechanisms

To develop or improve local inclusive governance it is necessary to first identify existing consultation mechanisms and understand how they work.

Having completed this type of mapping and disseminated the results, it is then possible to consider the different ways to include people with disabilities in local consultation mechanisms.

Promote a participatory local diagnosis of the situation of people with disabilities

To ensure governance responds directly to the needs and interests of the whole community, local decision-makers can conduct a local diagnosis.

The process of involving representatives of all local stakeholders (DPOs, local authorities, service providers) in the planning, implementation, analysis and dissemination of the results of the participatory local diagnosis is fundamental.

Improve accessibility of the physical environment, information materials and communications

Local decision-makers should take measures to improve the accessibility of:

- public buildings and meeting rooms used for consultation mechanisms;
- information materials and communication strategies used by consultation mechanisms, for example to ensure all meetings, reports and media have accessible formats (use of sign language, Braille, etc.).

Invite Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) to play an active role inside local consultation mechanisms

Examples of activities:

- present to DPOs the purpose/functioning of the consultation mechanisms and call upon them to identify the most appropriate persons to join these mechanisms;
- for selecting candidates, encourage representation of people with different kinds of impairments and also women with disabilities;
- take the necessary accessibility measures to allow the full participation of the persons selected.

Ensure people with disabilities can freely express their interests and needs inside meetings for consultation and decision-making

Local decision-makers should:

- ensure that DPO representatives inside the consultation mechanism have regular opportunities to formally propose key issues for action;
- ensure DPO representatives are actively participating and contributing during all meetings.

Develop specific indicators for the participation of DPOs in the consultation mechanisms

Examples of indicators:

- the number of meetings in which DPOs were actively involved;

Encourage a participatory approach in the local development process

This participatory approach can be applied to:

- municipality development plans;
- local appraisal and assessments activities;
- municipality budgeting (called “participatory budgeting”);
- management of local services;
- monitoring the implementation of the actions planned;
- assessing the achievements.

Support DPOs’ activities (particularly networking between DPOs)

Examples of activities:

- simplify procedures and reduce costs for the creation of groups and associations of people with disabilities;
- facilitate access to public meeting rooms and equipment (computers, internet, audiovisual

Examples of case studies: good practices for local inclusive governance in West Africa

The following short case studies provide introductory examples. The Rights in Action full report includes 26 case studies collected across West Africa. To read these in full please download the report from: www.makingitwork-cprd.org

Municipality of Savalou - Benin

People with disabilities actively involved in public decision-making

The Savalouase Association of People with Motor Disabilities takes an active part in a local platform of civil society organisations known as the ‘Social Watch of Savalou’ (www.socialwatch-benin.org), and one of its members has now been elected to the position of rapporteur.

The involvement and participation of this DPO in town council meetings and other sub-groups has ensured that people with disabilities have a say in public debates and contribute to decisions related to the development of the community. This participation has led to concrete actions to improve the situation for people with disabilities, for example: granting microfinance for the development of income-generating activities and the provision of training for DPOs (on management, basic accounting skills, hygiene, and agricultural techniques).



City of de Fada N’Gourma - Burkina Faso

People with disabilities influencing local poverty alleviation strategies

Through its Communal Management Support Unit (CAGEC) and in collaboration with the municipality of Fada N’Gourma, the Swiss Cooperation has developed a support strategy for vulnerable people in Fada N’Gourma. The Disabled People’s Organization (DPO) of Fada was involved in the Communal Management Support Unit throughout the process. This allowed members of the DPO to contribute to the study and to influence policy decisions the outset. The DPO later joined the management committee of the social development fund regarding support for income-generating micro projects. The involvement of the DPO has influenced some key policy decisions, for example the creation of a social service unit within the Town Hall and the financing of handicrafts activities run by people with disabilities.

equipment etc);

- promote the inclusion of people with disabilities/ DPOs as beneficiaries of training/reinforcement projects implemented by international and local development partners;
- encourage collaboration and networking between DPOs;

Encourage participation of people with disabilities in politics

Local decision-makers should take measures to:

- encourage DPOs to become political candidates for local elections;
- ensure that all elections or voting at local level are accessible to people with different impairments (by asking DPOs and specialized NGOs for specific advice in this area);
- conduct advocacy and awareness-raising on the issue of birth certificates for people with disabilities (most people with disabilities do not have these and therefore cannot vote);
- implement awareness-raising on citizenship and the importance of voting.

DISABLED PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS (DPOs):

Ensure good internal governance

DPOs should pay particular attention the following points:

- ensure that regular general assembly meetings take place;
- respect their own statutes and internal regulations;
- hold regular democratic elections to select DPO decision-making and management bodies (president, treasurer etc.);
- ensure transparency in terms of financial management and planning;
- ensure good communication and information flow to keep all their members updated;
- ensure representation of people with all types of impairment in their membership/management. (This applies to umbrella organizations and DPOs which are not impairment-specific).

Improve representation of women with disabilities and people with different types of impairments

If DPOs are to represent people with disabilities in local consultation mechanisms this should mean they are in a position to represent the needs and interests of ALL people with disabilities. With this in mind:

- DPOs should try to include women with disabilities and people with different types of impairments within their organizations;
- DPOs should carry out research into the local needs and interests of women and girls with disabilities and people with different types of impairments.



Municipality of Bougouni- Mali

People with disabilities influencing local development programmes

Following a participatory local diagnosis of the situation of people with disabilities, the local Federation of Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and local communities signed several conventions to promote the involvement of DPOs in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social, cultural and economic activities of the municipalities. Specific actions have been developed for people with disabilities, for example free physician consultation in health facilities, reduced fees for admission to a technical school, funding for income-generating microprojects or professional training.

Create or reinforce collaborative DPO networks or federations and possible alliances between DPOs and organizations representing other marginalized social groups

Exchanges and collaborations between DPOs as well with organizations representing other marginalized groups should make it possible to:

- create synergies and increase the impact of advocacy and lobbying actions;
- reinforce the dialogue with local authorities;
- share practices, information and contacts.

Promote effective information-sharing between DPOs at different levels

Examples of activities:

- informal meetings or formal seminars for exchanges between local, national or regional DPOs;
- joint field visits by DPOs within the same country or by federations from different countries;
- regular field missions by national federations; production and dissemination of communications materials featuring news on DPOs.

Conduct awareness-raising activities about disability rights, mainstreaming and inclusive development

This is a priority activity for all DPOs as it creates the necessary conditions for effective advocacy on local inclusive governance.

Examples of activities:

- raise awareness of legislation and policies on disability rights, at local, national and international levels;
- raise awareness of the social model of disability;



- capitalize and disseminate successful experiences of the social, economic and political participation of people with disabilities;
- highlight the importance of accessibility in relation to the physical environment and communication/information.



Carry out joint advocacy with the objective of being included in consultation mechanisms

DPOs should identify existing local consultation mechanisms (mapping). There are two possible strategies for DPOs:

- In areas where consultation spaces already exist, DPOs can advocate to be included in meetings and committees;



Municipality of East Pikine - Senegal

Inclusion of people with disabilities in the Local Development Consultation Framework

The Local Development Consultation Framework of East Pikine was created to promote conditions for concerted and participatory development. It is composed of local networks and federations of organizations from the municipality. The Disabled People's Organization (DPO) of Pikine joined the framework following its creation in 2001. As a result of this collaboration, different activities have been developed to respond to the needs of citizens with disabilities. These include: the creation of a vocational and basic literacy training centre run by the DPO; launching income-generating activities; and the schooling of children with disabilities. Additionally, the chairwoman of the women's section of the DPO has now been appointed to the position of Technical Advisor for the Mayor in relation to disability issues.



Bo city - Sierra Leone

Representation of People with Disabilities on the Gender and Child Protection Committee of the Ministry of Social Welfare

The Gender and Child Protection committee was established by the Ministry of Social Welfare as an additional coordination structure. A local Disabled People's Organization (DPO) now represents people with disabilities on the committee and provides awareness-raising and technical advice on disability issues. As a result of the DPO's activities, the committee carried out a survey on the needs of local people with disabilities. This survey led to the creation of a vocational training programme for disabled beggars and the renovation of a school for visually impaired children. These results were achieved as a result of the DPO's ongoing advocacy, its active participation in Ministry meetings and awareness-raising activities via radio broadcasts.

■ Where such spaces do not exist, DPOs can lobby for the creation of inclusive consultation mechanisms.

In both cases it is important for DPOs to ensure the democratic selection of their representatives, chosen on the basis of their expertise, experience and capacities to actively participate in these mechanisms.

Advocate to local decision-makers and NGOs about the importance of a local diagnosis of the situation of people with disabilities

DPOs should be supported in playing a key role in the following activities:

- identifying and consulting the main stakeholders who are involved or should be involved in disability issues;
- assessing the major barriers in the social environment that bring about disabling situations;
- studying various possible activities to address these major barriers;
- publishing the results of the diagnosis and disseminating them extensively among local stakeholders.

Promote the right to political participation of people with disabilities

DPOs should educate people with disabilities on citizenship and encourage their participation in national and local elections. In West Africa and other regions of the world, this can also require advocacy on the issue of birth certificates.

DPOs should work together to support disabled leaders in standing as candidates in elections and becoming official representatives in national and local government.

DPOs should advocate on the issue of voting accessibility, for example physical access to polling stations, Braille ballot cards, etc.

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS (NGOS, DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES, DONORS, ETC)

Develop the capacities of DPOs in terms of the key skills required to participate actively and effectively in local consultation mechanisms

Provision of training, capacity building and technical support to DPOs to address:

- promotion of literacy;
 - structure and management of DPOs;
 - project management, communication strategies, institutional mapping, advocacy;
 - leadership and public speaking;
 - rights and citizenship;
- decentralization, local governance, planning tools and management of municipal participatory budgeting;
- key development strategies of the government and relevant donors.

Support DPOs to lobby for their inclusion in local consultation mechanisms

Examples of activities to be implemented:

- map existing local consultation mechanisms and review participation of people with disabilities;
- technical and financial support to develop advocacy plans and materials;
- monitoring and evaluation of DPO advocacy initiatives.



Municipality of Niamey - Niger

People with disabilities take part in the management of municipality affairs

In Niamey III municipality, Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) are involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of the social policies of the community. In fact, their proposals are taken into account into the communal budget, through a partnership approach with local government.

In Niamey III and municipalities, women with disabilities voice their concerns through a newly created union (comprising four associations of women with disabilities). The union has joined the general movement for the protection of women's rights.

In all the municipalities of Niamey, people with disabilities have successfully advocated for the exemption from administrative fees for the creation of associations which consequently led to an increase in the number of DPOs.



Promote consultation between local decision-makers, DPOs and other civil society organizations, with an emphasis on developing a common understanding of issues relating to good local governance

Examples of activities to be implemented:

- generate interest among local decision-makers on disability issues, raise awareness of the social model and rights-based approach to disability;
- increase local authorities' understanding of the importance of good local governance and their role and responsibilities in relation to this issue;
- support the establishment of new, inclusive consultation mechanisms and help to identify possible roles, functions, and objectives of the different stakeholders;
- facilitate effective discussions during local consultation meetings.

Support local decision-makers to define and use indicators to measure the participation of DPOs in consultation mechanisms

Examples of indicators:

- the number of meetings in which DPOs have been actively involved;
- the number of representatives of DPOs in consultation and monitoring mechanisms, particularly those occupying high-ranking positions in the various departments of local governance;
- the number of decisions directly influenced by the presence and speeches of representatives of DPOs.

Support local decision-makers and DPOs with the participatory local diagnosis of the situation of people with disabilities

Development partners (NGOs, development agencies etc) should provide organizational and methodological assistance to DPOs and local decision makers at the following stages:

- select the most participatory methodology for the diagnosis;
- establish a multi stakeholders steering committee;
- set up technical working groups ;
- create survey tools and train survey teams;
- publish and disseminate the results of the diagnosis with local stakeholders.

Promote networking and collaboration between DPOs and with organizations representing other marginalized groups

- Examples of activities to be implemented:
 - support to set up a forum, network or federation of DPOs
 - technical and financial support to develop a joint DPO advocacy plan;
 - promote information flow and exchanges between local, national and international DPOs by supporting
 - the organization of meetings between national federations of disabled people and local associations;
 - the organization of exchanges between federations of DPOs from different countries in the sub- region;
 - the participation of DPOs in international events;
 - the identification, dissemination and sharing of good practices among DPOs



Municipality of Mission-Tové -Togo

Inclusion of People with Disabilities in the Village Development Committee

An extensive awareness-raising and capacity building programme was developed and implemented by a local Disabled People's Organization (DPO) in the Municipality of Mission-Tové to promote the rights of people with disabilities. A local diagnosis, conducted in partnership with key stakeholders from the area led to the creation of an inclusive action plan, designed with the direct involvement of people with disabilities. A concrete result of the new plan of action was the improved accessibility of the medical centre and primary schools in the area.



Undertake actions to increase the awareness and knowledge of your own senior staff about disability issues

This process of awareness-raising can be part of a wider organizational diagnosis to identify how disability issues can be mainstreamed within the organization's strategies.

Ensure the integration of specific indicators on the participation of people with disabilities in the consultation and monitoring mechanisms of development projects and projects to support decentralization

Examples of indicators:

- the number of meetings in which DPOs were actively involved;
- the number of representatives of DPOs in consultation and monitoring mechanisms and particularly those occupying high-ranking positions in the various departments of local governance;
- the number of decisions directly influenced by the presence and speeches of representatives of DPOs.

NEXT STEPS

The next phase of the Rights in Action project is to use the report recommendations to implement training and advocacy activities on local inclusive governance, working directly with local authorities, DPOs and development partners in West Africa.

We would encourage all local authorities, DPOs and relevant development actors to review the report's recommendations and discuss how they can be included in future action planning.

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