

Good Practice case study

How can a Disabled People's Organisation be represented in the municipal council and ensure disability issues are included in decision-making processes?

Relevant articles of the CRPD: 29

Country: Mali

Region: West Africa

Languages available: English, French

Representation of a DPO on the Social Affairs Committee of the Municipal Council of Koumantou

Description of the practice and the process involved

The Koumantou municipality is under the administrative supervision of the circle of Bougouni in the Sikasso region. It comprises 37 villages and has a total population of 41,189 inhabitants, distributed over an area of 1,268 km².

The DPO of Koumantou was created in 2004. It is an organization composed of 63 of the 116 people with disabilities living in the municipality (source: city council). This organization is implementing several income-generating activities to benefit people with disabilities (dyeing, bogolan, soap making, sewing and small businesses). Within the organization, there is a theatre troupe that raises awareness in the community about disability issues.

In 2007, the organization initiated a process at the municipal council for the allocation of space for the construction of its headquarters. This request was granted in 2008 and the organization was able to build its headquarters with the support of a French organization. This had a big impact in the municipality, because no local NGO had previously had a headquarters.

In June 2008, the municipal council, after the setting up of the new municipal board, invited the DPO to select a member to join the Committee for Social Affairs in the municipality.

A woman was chosen to become a member of the committee, although she was not herself a municipal councillor. The decision was taken by the unanimous vote of the members present during a meeting arranged by the organization.

In October 2009, the DPO, in collaboration with the local federation of DPOs (FELAPH) of Bougouni, approached the council for the establishment of a partnership convention between the federation, the local municipality and the DPO of Koumantou. This convention was designed to encourage the participation of people with disabilities in the development process and in the implementation and monitoring of the Program for Economic, Social and Cultural Development.

The partnership agreement signed in November 2009 led to a consideration of the needs of citizens with disabilities by involving them in the decision-making process of the municipality.

The Regional Director for Social Development and Solidarity Economy of Sikasso said: *«Local governance at DPO level necessarily entails building the capacity of these organizations to govern themselves by taking an active part in the development activities in their various local areas».*

The factors that made this practice possible

The factors that made this possible were the existence of a **structured and dynamic disability organization** as well as **good relations** between the DPO, the local federation, and the town council.

The **positive dialogue** with the local municipal council has allowed the DPO to have some **credibility** at the level of the municipality.

The fact of being **the only local NGO** to have headquarters in the town has promoted the **visibility** of the DPO and demonstrated the **commitment** of its members.

The mayor said in interviews that they *«were **more dynamic** than many other organizations in the village».*

The **participation** of the representative of the DPO in many of the activities of the municipality (weekly management of the market, events and festivities...) has shown her **willingness and commitment** to the development of the locality.

Some of the difficulties encountered

Discrimination and social stigma will always present a major barrier for **women with disabilities** wishing to be involved in local decision-making mechanisms.

In this case, the **prejudices** of the community were overcome by the **strength and determination** of this woman. Her considerable **abilities were recognized** by all members of the DPO and the local council.

The effects / impact of the practice

This practice has had a direct effect in terms of the **involvement** of people with disabilities (and particularly women) in local governance. Local authority management has become **more participatory and collaborative**.

The appointment of a woman with a disability to such a position of responsibility can have a significant impact in terms of **changing the social perceptions** of disability and the role of women in general (the commission is

composed only of men). One practical effect observed was the **increased awareness** among the staff of the municipality.

Steps have now been taken to **promote the participation** of people with disabilities in the process of **preparing and monitoring** the Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programme.

The DPO is now confident that **the council will address** some of the difficulties faced by local people with disabilities. The DPO now wishes to participate (like all other local organizations) in **decision-making** processes.

An example of disability inclusion

The participation of a woman with a disability on the Social Affairs Committee will encourage the **consideration of the rights and needs** of people with disabilities in general and those of women with disabilities in particular.

- Maimouna Koné, the first woman with a disability to sit on a municipal commission, said: *“I’m proud of myself but I’m also proud of the decision of the other members of our organization. In addition to being a woman, I am also disabled and therefore vulnerable in two respects. I am a citizen and I am concerned with the management of my town. I invite other people with disabilities in the municipality who are not members of an organization to forget their personal little difficulties and to come and demonstrate their capabilities and potential in the management of our community”.*

Related articles of the CRPD

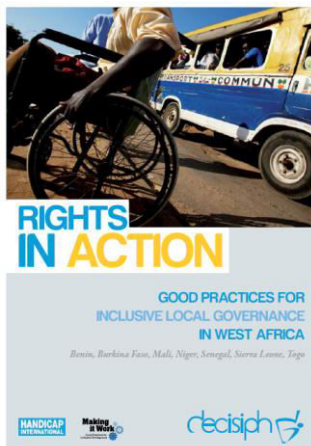
The inclusion of a woman with a disability in the social welfare committee is in line with **Article 29** of the CRPD on the right of people with disabilities to participate fully and freely in the political and public life of their locality on an equal basis with others.

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Background and context



Full project report: [Rights in Action - Good Practices for Local Inclusive Governance in West Africa \(Handicap International 2010\)](#)

Criteria for the good practices: see pages 54 – 55.

Recommendations from the good practices: see pages 98 – 111.

Links to further resources:

[Full text on article 29 – Participation in political and public life](#)