

## **How can Disabled People's Organisations ensure disability issues are included in education programmes?**

**Relevant articles of the CRPD:** 24 and 29

**Country:** Mali

**Region:** West Africa

**Languages available:** English, French

Appointment of a Focal Point in Charge of Disability Issues within the Advisory Educational Centre of the Municipality of San

### **Description of the practice and the process involved**

The municipality of San is located in the fourth administrative region of Mali, 200km from Ségou; the administrative centre of the region has a population of about 63,000 inhabitants, according to the census of 1996.

In 2009, the local Federation of DPOs (FELAPH), with the support of an international NGO, conducted a participatory local diagnosis to determine the difficulties faced by people with disabilities in the locality and to propose solutions.

The study showed that people with disabilities faced many obstacles in enjoying their basic rights, particularly in the fields of health, education, employment and family life.

A workshop was organized to share the results of the diagnosis with key local stakeholders, namely the local government, elected municipal officials, representatives of technical services (education, health, justice, etc.), representatives of the Social Development and Economic Solidarity (SDES) department, NGOs and local district representatives.

During the workshop, priority intervention areas were identified through a participatory approach. Improving the enrolment of children with disabilities in municipal schools turned out to be the No. 1 priority.

After this workshop, steps were initiated before the start of the 2009 - 2010 school year by FELAPH and the SDES department, in collaboration with the educational authorities.

A contact person responsible for the education of people with disabilities within the municipality was to be appointed.

After several attempts and negotiations, the Director of the Advisory Educational Centre (a decentralized body of the Ministry of Education) issued

a memo on July 3, 2009 on the appointment of a social development focal point in charge of disability.

The appointment of this focal point has been widely appreciated by the SDES department and the local Federation of DPOs. They have since demonstrated their motivation and willingness to support the focal point in her mission to promote the schooling of children with disabilities.

An action plan for the 2009-2010 school year was developed and validated by the school authorities and the SDES department. The main activities of this plan, whose implementation started in October 2009, are presented below:

- Identify children with disabilities by age and type of impairment;
- Hold advocacy meetings with school management committees and principals for a reduction of school fees for children with disabilities;
- Inform and educate school officials and leaders of construction companies that build schools so that they take accessibility issues into account;
- Develop and disseminate awareness-raising messages about disability on local radios;
- Inform and educate community leaders about the educational rights of children with disabilities;
- Produce radio programmes on the lives of children with disabilities in schools;
- Organize a conference on care for children with disabilities;
- Promote the creation of associations of parents of children with disabilities;
- Mobilize resources to support children with disabilities in mainstream schools (e.g. development of projects for submission to funding bodies).

## The factors that made this practice possible

- The main factor that made this practice possible was the **participatory local diagnosis** which identified the difficulties encountered by people with disabilities and made proposals for concerted actions.

*«During the feedback workshop, we were deeply moved by the difficulties experienced by children and adults with disabilities»*, said the social development focal point at the Advisory Educational Centre.

- The **constructive dialogue** between stakeholders has been an important factor throughout the process.

- **The positive engagement of the school authorities** in the smooth running of this initiative was also crucial.

## Some of the difficulties encountered

No major difficulties were encountered in the carrying out of the local diagnosis and the appointment of the focal point. However, there was a problem regarding a **lack of funds and logistics** for the implementation of actions to promote access to education for children with disabilities. The local government and the DPOs have actively searched for resources for this.

## The effects / impact of the practice

- This practice has enabled the local Federation of DPOs to initiate a **public debate** on the obstacles faced by people with disabilities in San in terms of enjoying their fundamental rights. This has made it possible to **inform and raise awareness** among local stakeholders of the issue of disability. The appointment of a focal point for disability in schools demonstrates that the concerns of people with disabilities have been **taken into account by policymakers** at the local level.

- The work of the focal point has led to over a dozen children with disabilities **attending mainstream school with exemption from payment of registration fees**. The identification of children provided **information on the number** of children with disabilities in the municipality and the **type of impairment** they have, meaning that **appropriate educational solutions** could be proposed.

### An example of disability inclusion

This practice is an example of taking into account the **needs** of people with disabilities by **local decision makers**. Solutions are sought to ensure that children with disabilities have access to the **same educational services** as other children of the municipality.

## Related articles of the CRPD

This practice is in line with **Article 24** of the CRPD on the right to education. The local Federation of DPOs has demonstrated that it can influence public policy in education at local level through advocacy. In this respect, the practice reflects the principles of **Article 29** of the Convention on the participation of people with disabilities in public life.

## What are the main points that require attention? How could it be improved?

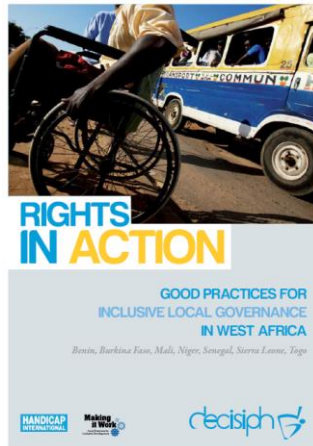
This model of employing a disability focal point could be replicated in other municipalities of Mali, and indeed throughout West Africa. But, there is a need to **finance specific actions by the focal point person** – and **a budget** for this must be allocated. In this case, there was no specific budget allocation for actions on education. There is a need **to identify lasting financial resources** for inclusive education.

### For more information, contact:

**Yacouba Diarra**, Head of Social Development Service.

Tel: 00 223 76145543.

## 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 61 – 62 of the full report.

**Recommendations from the good practices:** see pages 98 – 111 of the full report.

**Links to further resources:** [Full text on CRPD article 24 – Education](#)

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