

## **How can Disabled People's Organisations ensure disability issues are included in decision-making processes and development projects by their participation to district councils?**

**Relevant articles of the CRPD:** 29

**Country:** Sierra Leone

**Region:** West Africa

**Languages available:** English, French

The Inclusion of a Disabled People's Organisation Representative on the Moyamba District Council Social Welfare Sub-committee

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

Moyamba Town, with a population of about 23,000, is the district headquarter town for the Moyamba district, Southern Sierra Leone.

The current Government decentralization process in Sierra Leone makes provisions for district local councils to ensure the provision of services to socially marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities.

In order to carry out this mandate, the Moyamba district council has established various working subcommittees including education and social welfare sub-committees.

The main DPO operational in Moyamba Town and the district generally is the Disabled Rights Movement, Sierra Leone (DRIMSL) founded in 1998.

In October 2008, as a result of DRIM-SL-led awareness-raising and advocacy activities targeting community leaders and councillors within the Moyamba district council, the Coordinator of DRIMSL, Moyamba district branch, was co-opted to represent people with disabilities on the district council social welfare sub-committee. As a representative of people with disabilities, this person has provided insights and expertise on disability issues that has since guided the work of the social welfare sub-committee of the council.

In July 2009, the social welfare sub-committee, drawing on the DPO's expertise on disability issues, undertook a survey of vulnerable non-school going disabled children in Moyamba town. Several children with different impairments were identified. The committee recommended these children to the Moyamba district council for educational support. The Moyamba district

council accepted the work and recommendations of the social welfare sub-committee and provided scholarship support for the education of the children in specialized and mainstream schools.

## The factors that made this practice possible

- **Consistent approach** by DPO leaders in presenting disability issues to key managers, community leaders and local authorities in Moyamba district.
- **Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns** organized by DRIM-SL Moyamba on MoDCAR radio on the theme “wi sef get voice” (we have a voice too)
- Organizing **community-based awareness-raising meetings** focusing on disability issues, including the rights and involvement of people with disabilities in the life of the community.
- Very **positive and supportive working relationships** with the district council administration, councillors, Plan Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

## Some of the difficulties encountered

- The DPO representative on the social welfare sub-committee is **not an elected member**. He **does not sit in directly** on the main council meetings. However, he has **lobbied other elected members** (who are on the sub-committee) to present disability recommendations during the main district council meetings.
- The venue for the sub-committee meetings is usually the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries conference hall in Moyamba. This building is **a long way** from the DRIM-SL Moyamba branch office and therefore poses **transport and accessibility challenges** to the DPO representative, who travels to the venue **by hiring public motor bikes**.

## The effects / impact of the practice

- Usually, disability issues do not receive the respect they deserve. However, the representation of people with disabilities on the committee has **increased members’ awareness** and led to the inclusion of disability as a **mainstream theme** in the Moyamba district council **development plan**.
- The disabled people’s representative has also played a **pivotal lobbying role**, influencing decisions relating to the **provision of basic social welfare services** by local government councils to people with disabilities. For example, the refurbishment of the Moyamba Hospital took accessibility issues into account. The hospital entrance doors have been widened and ramps have been constructed at strategic points to ensure mobility for people with disabilities.

### An example of disability inclusion

This practice has demonstrated the inclusion of a DPO representative on a local governance committee (the social welfare sub-committee) that is an

integral part of decision making structures and processes for the provision of development support services to vulnerable people, including children, women and people with disabilities.

## Related articles of the CRPD

This practice relates directly to **article 29** of the CRPD. This practice enabled people with disabilities to participate in public affairs.

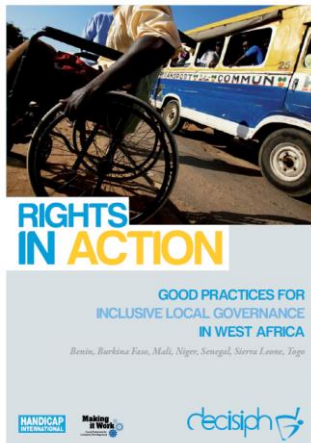
## What are the main points that require attention? How could it be improved?

This practice can be improved by having DPO representatives **sit in directly on the district council meetings**. Also, sub-committee members **with vehicles** could be **encouraged** to ensure disabled representatives attend meetings.

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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 87 – 88 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 29 – Participation in political and public life](#)