

People with Disability in the Development Aid Policy of Scandinavian Countries

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First of all, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to present to you: how Scandinavian countries integrate disability issues in their development work. The heading of my presentation suggests that it is possible to give a unified and holistic presentation of the subject matter. Not necessarily so. Let me illustrate this with the following story:

I don't know if you ever saw the movie *Life of Brian*. A Monty Python film. One of the key points in this movie is when a fish, swimming in an aquarium is about to tell us the meaning of life. But on the threshold of uttering the magical words that explains everything – the sound goes *biiiiip*. So if I attempt to sum up the status of inclusion of disability dimension in the development work of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Norway in one sentence - I hope someone will pull the cord on me as well.

So the only way to go about describing the disability work within a Scandinavian development setting is to do it country by country.

But alas, there is something that unites our efforts. That something is the Copenhagen 2000 conference. At this conference the Nordic Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) met with all the Scandinavian government ministers. The output of this conference is our common bases - a standard in order to measure our progress from November 2000 to November 2003. But before I attempt to measure progress since the Nordic conference in 2000 I will give you a very brief description of the Scandinavian DPOs development work.

In *Denmark* there is the Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People (DSI). DSI is the only Danish umbrella organisation in the disability field – with 32 member organizations. DSI works within the field of organizational development, rehabilitation and education. The total annual budget of DSI is approximately 3 million euro. DSI has projects in 10 different projects. The actual development work is carried out in some of the organizations that are members of the DSI. The secretariat of DSI is also responsible for some projects.

In *Sweden* there is the Swedish Disability Organization International Aid Association (SHIA). SHIA works primarily in the field of influencing political development in poor countries and in the field of organizational development. SHIA is involved in 130 projects in more than 30 countries. Most of the development work in SHIA is carried by the secretariat of SHIA in collaboration with the member organizations. SHIA has 25 member organizations.

In *Finland*, the organization is Finnish Disabled people's International Development Association (FIDIDA). FIDIDA is involved in twenty-nine projects. The projects are organizational development and influencing political development. FIDIDA has seven member organizations. The secretariat and the member organizations are involved directly in the management of the projects.

The Atlas-alliance in *Norway* consists of 9 member organizations with almost 40 projects in 17 different poor countries. Core business is organizational development, community based

rehabilitation programs and tuberculosis control. The annual budget is approximately 7 million euro. The member organizations carry out the actual development work.

In sum the Scandinavian DPOs mobilize and involve almost seventy different organizations of disabled people in Scandinavia. Through the various member organizations there are more than a million disabled persons that gives the Scandinavian DPOs development work its grass root legitimacy. The key distinguishing feature of this development work is that we try to use the knowledge and experiences of disabled people in order to improve human rights for disabled people in more than 40 of the poorest countries in the world. This basic root of this knowledge and experience is in the area of building healthy and strong civil societies.

Hence, this knowledge and resources, represents an important force when it comes to strengthening and improving civil society in poor countries. A strong civil society in a poor country has positive influence on the governance of that country. When good governance is achieved in a poor country all studies suggest that the country will succeed in the battle against poverty.

On this note, let's return to the Nordic Conference in Copenhagen 2000. The Scandinavian DPOs initiated and organized a conference in collaboration with the development aid ministers from Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway in November 2000. The overall aim of the conference was to create a platform for mainstreaming disability issues into all areas of development co-operation from the Nordic countries.

The main output of the conference was seven steps that were identified as the way forward. In order to give you an overview of the situation of people with disability in the development aid policy of Scandinavian countries I will present the seven steps that was identified in 2000.

I will then present to you an updated status report in the context of these seven steps.

A copy of the final report from the conference is available.

The seven steps that were identified in the conference were as follows.

1. To establish national strategies for inclusion of the disability dimension in the development cooperation
2. To empower persons with disabilities and to strengthen the capacity and involvement of DPOs in development work
3. To increase the knowledge of the status of persons with disabilities
4. To increase collaboration between DPOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies.
5. To establish a joint Nordic platform for promotion of the disability dimension in multilateral institutions as regards:
 - Financial institutions
 - UN technical agencies
 - The UN Human Rights system
6. To support development efforts within the context of the African Decade
7. To revisit the joint Nordic agenda at expert level after three years and ministerial level after five years.

The status with respect to progress since November 2000 on the seven steps is as follows:

To establish national strategies for inclusion of the disability dimension in the development cooperation

| Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland |
|--|---|---|---|
| DANIDA will not establish the strategy, because mainstreaming disability issues is not such priority . | 2001 :The strategy accepted 2002 : waiting implementation 2003 : agreement with Atlas Alliance on follow-up of implementation | Strategy or guidelines making has not taken place . Instead , some achievements in integration of disability aspects in HIV/Aids, poverty reduction, health promotion strategies. Follow-up + practice not active. | 2001 Drafting strategy 2002 Evaluation of disability projects 2003 Brief statement , no acceptance of the Strategy; concrete action plan is missing |

To empower persons with disabilities and to strengthen the capacity and involvement of DPOs in development work

| Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland |
|--|--|---|---|
| DPO`s role : to implement disability specific projects with funds given from Ministry. Role of watch dog. | Role of DPO`s (Atlas Alliance) to lobby, train and follow up disability dimension. Role of member DPOs: to implement disability projects. Role of watch dog. | Role of SHIA as a frame organisation of SIDA for DPOs in funding and implementing Disability projects with own and government funds. Role in “mainstreaming” has not clearly been given in practice . Role of watch dog. | Role of DPO`s: To implement disability projects. Recommendations of the 2002 evaluation: MAINSTREAMING and PARTICIPATION of DPOs. In level of discussions. Role of watch dog. |

To increase the knowledge of the status of persons with disabilities.

| Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland |
|---------|---|--------|--|
| | Study suggests that the knowledge and awareness of disability issues, among government staff, is on the same level. | | Evaluation 2002 provided information and recommendations |

To increase collaboration between DPOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies.

| Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland |
|---------|--------------------|--------|---|
| | Slightly improved. | No. | Dialogue between DPO`s and Ministry has started |

To establish a joint Nordic platform for promotion of the disability dimension in multilateral institutions.

No historical evidence – besides a renewed commitment between the Scandinavian DPOs in august 2003 to achive progress in this area.

**To support development efforts within the context of the African Decade
To revisit the joint Nordic agenda at expert level after three years and ministerial level after five years.**

| | | | |
|---------|--------------|--------|--------------|
| Denmark | Norway | Sweden | Finland |
| Yes | Not directly | Yes | Not directly |

To sum it up. There is evidence that, on an overall level, we are moving forward with respect to the seven steps mentioned. But the progress and drive towards realizing the ambitions embedded in the seven steps is not satisfactory. It is absolutely neccessary to renew our efforts and commitments in this area. I think the best platform to move forward on is the platform that the scandinavian DPOs managed to create togheter with the nordic ministers in november 2000. The key challenge for the future is to reestablish dialogue and commitment between the nordic ministers on this platform.

In this context, the scandinavian DPOs has drafted unified request to the nordic ministers, where we propose that we continue our movement *“towards a clear inclusion of disability aspects in international development co-operation”*.

We challenge the nordic ministers to add this issue to the Agenda of the Nordic Minister´s meeting in June 2004 in Sweden.