

Executive Summary

Capacity building of disabled people's organisations in Mozambique

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Executive summary

This report examines the role and efficacy of capacity-building initiatives of disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Mozambique. It compares and contrasts the different approaches taken by the Northern DPOs and NGOs that are active in disability and development within the country, and seeks to identify which have been the most effective, and why.

Methodology

The process involved two visits to Mozambique in January and March 2005, meeting Northern NGOs with headquarters in Finland and the UK, and local offices in Mozambique. Northern DPOs based in Finland and the UK were also sent questionnaires. A one-day workshop was held with 16 leaders from eight DPOs, at which the key research questions were discussed.

Mozambique: basic facts

In 2003, the World Bank put the population of Mozambique at 18.8 million people, of whom about 10 per cent were disabled people. Other key indicators for the country are available in Section 2.

Disability in Mozambique

The situation of disabled people is characterised by extreme levels of poverty, low levels of education and illiteracy, and low self-esteem. These factors present particular challenges to disabled people when it comes to organising around their issues and influencing policy makers and other development actors about disability issues.

Contrasting perspectives

Mozambican DPOs stated clearly that for them, capacity building means strengthening their organisations to be effective in their work and to achieve results for their members. They understand capacity building to be a process that gives them "legs with which to walk, or on which to stand". They felt clear that the processes of capacity building should increase their skills to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their work. However, the acquisition of skills alone is not enough. Technical support should be accompanied with the resourcing of their organisations, financially, and in terms of human resources.

However, they see some of their Northern NGO partners as concentrating their limited support on technical inputs, without paying attention to how organisations survive from day to day. Meanwhile, other Northern NGO partners are reported as striving to provide more balanced forms of support, and this is highly appreciated by DPOs. The Mozambican DPOs reported an over-reliance of the Northern NGO partners' on Northern experts for training inputs as opposed to local resource people, and saw this as unhelpful.

The Mozambican DPOs particularly appreciated the Northern DPOs for their empowering attitude, which aims to treat Southern counterparts as equals, who are respected and listened to. The shared values of the disability movement contribute to this more equal relationship.

Nevertheless, they also expressed anger at what they saw as unequal power with their Northern NGO partners. They commented that although the money is raised from the North in the name of disability, the organisations do not discuss openly and

flexibly how those considerable resources should be spent. In this role, DPOs reported feeling as if they are treated more like clients or objects than the primary constituency to legitimise outside intervention in the sector.

Mozambican DPOs viewed the government ministry responsible for disability issues as a helpless spectator. They reported that it has no resources for disability work, and that it actually seeks funding from the same few agencies that are involved with disability work in Mozambique.

Conclusions

The key findings of this research are as follows:

- Mozambican DPOs are very clear about what they want from capacity building. They understand capacity building as creating “legs with which to walk”.
- Southern DPOs believe that the approach of some Northern NGOs to capacity building is limited. Some partners see capacity building only in terms of training, while DPOs see the need for complementary support through covering core costs to enable them to implement what they have learnt.
- Southern DPOs are concerned about over-reliance on foreign experts instead of using local capacity.
- There are feelings among Southern DPOs that they are treated as clients or objects of capacity building rather than equal partners.
- A shared understanding of the philosophy of the disability movement between Southern DPOs and Northern partners helps to level the playing field between partners while minimising top-down approaches to relationship building.
- Considerable confusion exists over roles with the Ministry of Women and Social Action, which is responsible for disability issues.
- DPOs are not being empowered sufficiently to stand independently in order to approach donors in their own right.
- The lack of effective collaboration between different Northern NGOs operating in Mozambique promotes unnecessary duplication, waste and confusion with DPO partners.
- There is a need for commitment to open, frank discussion and experience sharing on an ongoing basis among Southern DPOs themselves. The DPO workshop held during the second visit was a response to this need, and all indications are that the organisations greatly valued the very frank exchanges that characterised the event.