

**“Making it work - Civil society participation in the
implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons
with Disabilities”**

Recommendations from the Expert Group to Civil Society

Madrid, November, 27 2007

Introduction

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Government of Spain, and Fundación ONCE, has organized an Expert Group Meeting Making it work - Civil society participation in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held in Madrid, Spain, from 27 to 29 November 2007.

The meeting had the following objectives:

- To inform and consult civil society on the future steps of the Convention process, and particularly the Conference of the parties, including implications on civil society participation;
- To learn from functioning of and lessons learned from other civil society mechanisms linked to existing Conventions;
- To establish dialogue and present proposals aimed at ensuring effective civil society participation in the future steps of the implementation of the Convention, upon its entry into force.

An Ad Hoc Expert Group composed of Disabled People Organization (DPO) leaders and leaders of allied NGOs* that have participated in a DPO led coalition, participating in their personal capacities, held intensive discussions culminating in two documents with recommendations for the Member States** and Civil Society, accordingly. The following statement corresponds to the Recommendations to civil society.

The Recommendations

The Expert Group recommendations for civil society fell into four broad categories:

1) Principles

* In this document, “allied NGOs” and “allied organizations” indistinctly mean organizations that, although do not represent people with disabilities, are engaged or are interested in disability issues and recognize and accept the leadership role of people with disabilities and their representative organizations in disability issues.

** Entitled “Declaration of Madrid”

- 2) Objectives
- 3) Strategy
- 4) Activities

1) Recommendations related to Principles

In addition to the principles and standards articulated in the CRPD, civil society must follow the following criteria:

- Disability advocacy is designed and executed under the leadership of DPOs, based on the principle “Nothing about us without us”
- Disability Advocacy grants a policy making role to DPOs with representative legitimacy and expertise on particular issues
- Disability Advocacy concentrated on ratification and implementation of the CRPD is open and inclusive to all DPOs as well as other organizations which recognize and accept the leadership role of DPOs
- Disability Advocacy acknowledges the interdependence between the human rights approach to disability and inclusive development
- Disability Advocacy is aware of the utmost necessity of public investment to meet the goals of the CRPD

2) Recommendations related to Strategy

In light of the imminent entry into force of the CRPD we encourage:

- DPOs and allies to work together and coordinate their activities at national, regional and international level
- DPOs to clarify at all levels (national, regional, international) which is/are the representative DPOs that should be consulted by public authorities
- Particularly in relation to the Committee of Experts:

- To influence the selection of candidates for the Committee of Experts at national level
- To identify and train experts with disabilities to become candidates for the Committee of Experts
- To influence the election of the Committee of Experts at the Conference of States Parties, supporting those candidates that best meet our expectations
- Particularly regarding the Conference of State Parties operational framework:
 - To advocate for a broad configuration of the Conference considering substantive matters for implementation of the Convention
 - To advocate for a deep involvement of civil society, particularly DPOs and allied organizations in partnership with them, in the CoP activities according to the experience of participation at the Ad Hoc Committee
- Regarding the UN Agencies and Programs
 - To advocate for an increase of human and financial resources for the work and coordination of the UN different agencies among themselves regarding their work on disability
 - To advocate for close consultation and active involvement of DPOs in design, development and implementation by UN agencies of policies and programs related to the CRPD and other matters concerning persons with disabilities

3) Recommendations related to Objectives

Given the proximity of the entry into force of the CRPD, and the consequent need to consolidate the basis for an effective disability advocacy, civil society organizations should prioritize the following objectives:

- In fostering CRPD implementation and monitoring, organize ourselves in such a way that we best influence the Committee of Experts, the Conference of States Parties, the different UN agencies (DESA, OHCHR, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.), interagency support group
- Provide capacity to the national DPOs for implementation and monitoring of the CRPD at national level, including capacity on the specific monitoring techniques (shadow reports, etc.)
- Promote the establishment of fully inclusive national coalitions/alliances of DPOs, which may include allied NGOs, focused on the implementation of the CRPD
- Establish coalitions with other organizations with experience in treaty implementation and adjacent interests (for example: human rights, women's organizations and children's advocacy organizations)
- Articulate and provide for a fundraising dimension when planning and implementing activities

4) Recommendations related to Activities

In order to translate objectives into timely outcomes, we suggest civil society, particularly DPOs and allied organizations in partnership with them, to undertake the following activities with celerity:

- Establishing thematic working groups to produce training material on the CRPD
- Developing resources on how to advocate for the implementation of the CRPD
- Advocating for and contributing to the translation of the CRPD into local languages

- Realizing awareness raising and education campaigns around the CRPD