

19th August 2008
Sag 07/655 9307-07 /abj

Making space for difference

DPOD's Mini Programme Partnership Strategy

1 Background

DPOD provides support through the mini programme for collaboration between Danish organisations of disabled people and organisations of disabled people in the ten selected partner countries. Its goal is to improve the conditions of people with disabilities in the developing world - a group that comprises some 10 % of the total population, and one that often faces extreme social, political, financial and cultural marginalisation. Sending people to work in developing countries is financed by the personnel programme.

The mini programme was set up at the end of the nineteen-nineties and since then improvements have gradually become visible. When the programme was evaluated in 2003 Danida recommended that DPOD should devise additional strategies for its work in the developing world. These would include establishing partnerships between DPOD's member organisations and those in the third world.

The partnership strategy clarifies the type of collaboration and purpose required by DPOD under the mini programme. The aim is to strengthen the overall effect of the mini programme by gradually developing long-term, resource-conscious and targeted collaboration, while at the same time doing as much as possible to ensure equal status between the Danish organisations of disabled people and their partners overseas.

DPOD's partnership strategy has its roots in Danida's development strategy 'Partnership 2000', and should be regarded as supplementary to DPOD's mini programme strategy, which incorporates the mini programme's main objectives and special areas of initiative.

The formulation of DPOD's partnership strategy is based on a major survey of opinions and experiences among its member organisations working overseas, DPOD itself, its partners and a number of development workers. This survey was carried out from September 2004 to December 2004.

2 Mini Programme 3: Priorities and Objectives

The main objective of the mini programme is to combat poverty and marginalisation by making disabled people in the developing countries aware of their rights. DPOD contributes to this by providing support for the establishment and development of disabled people's organisations in the developing world. Sending people to work in the developing world is part of this initiative.

Planning and managing organisational development and sending development workers overseas is taken care of by DPOD's member organisations and their partners. Whenever there is a need and a potential, DPOD provides professional support. Partners in the developing world are responsible for implementing project activities.

The establishment and development of powerful organisations of disabled people in the developing world require the existence of adequate financial resources as well as long-term planning and strategic management, which Danish organisations of disabled people and their partners should define together by means of dialogue and collaboration.

Through this dialogue and collaboration Danish organisations of disabled people and their partners should ensure that local needs are met and that the Danish organisation's capabilities are put to appropriate use in its support for similar organisations of disabled people in the developing world. Capabilities that focus on knowledge relating to the organisations and their specific disabilities have developed in accordance with special social, political, financial and cultural circumstances in Denmark and because of this, careful consideration must be given to deciding whether they are appropriate for use overseas. Careful evaluation must therefore take place before implementing or setting up any activity intended for a developing country – especially of the partner organisation's capabilities, while simultaneously bearing in mind the experience already gained by that partner.

Dialogue and mutual exchange of experiences between Danish disabled people's organisations and their partners are thus of great importance in the effect of the mini programme. Sustainable improvements are not only conditional upon user's project-related skills, they also depend on peoples' ability to work together in order to find new solutions to dilemmas that are often familiar, though with aspects peculiar to the developing world. The Danish disabled people's organisations and their partners must be aware, not only of the results of their collaboration but also of the long-term objectives and what the collaboration process involves. Establishing and developing partnerships should ensure that focus is directed into these areas.

A great many mini programme users possess very specific resources but lack sufficient capacity at the present moment to establish and develop long-term partnerships. This form of collaboration requires: project-related skills which many still need to develop, as well as experience of the developing world - which not everyone has -, and the ability and understanding of collaboration involving difficult processes, despite differences that may often be quite considerable.

DPOD will seek to encourage these attributes among mini programme users. The basis for ensuring that organisational development is to a high standard needs to be reinforced generally, users' capacity for collaboration strategically targeted and long-term, and in addition, the equal status of all parties must be enhanced. This will improve the standard, not only of existing collaboration but the overall impact of work done in the developing world in the longer term.

During the course of mini programme 3, 2004-2008, DPOD will prioritise the following areas of input:

- *Information:* It is essential that mini programme users should be cognizant of DPOD's partnership strategy from the very beginning in order that partnerships between disabled people's organisations and their partners overseas may develop. DPOD will promote this by providing mini programme users and other interested parties with information about its strategies in appropriate contexts, such as the international affairs course at Egmont Højskolen. This strategy will also be incorporated into the methodology manual for mini programme 3 and the various country strategies, which will be revised for 2005-2008. In addition, DPOD will draw up and distribute a concise English language booklet about its partnership strategy for current and prospective partners overseas as well as increasing information about new initiatives for users of the mini programme.
- *Training:* In order to strengthen present collaboration within the mini programme users must perfect their project-related skills and capacity to work together. DPOD will provide funding for special partnership activities in which both Danish disabled people's organisations and their partner organisations do as much as possible to develop their capacity to plan and implement long-term collaboration carried out with an awareness of resources and as far as possible on equal terms. DPOD will also hold theme meetings and workshops on partnership for member organisations working overseas and their partner organisations, irrespective of their areas of interest.
- *Debate and learning:* An essential element in improving existing partnerships is for mini programme users to debate their partnership initiative, form their own opinions and actively contribute to the development of the partnership within the mini programme. DPOD will do all it can to promote this by strengthening existing forums for debate within Denmark, especially the four country groups for organisations with partners in India, Nepal, Ghana and Uganda. In addition, DPOD will set up debate forums for partners in a minimum of three partner countries. It will also back partnership activities that give the partners the opportunity to exchange experiences and acquire new and useful knowledge and learn about things together. People learn together through discussing and comparing different methods and approaches in relation to actual collaboration projects.
- *Professional and financial support:* As far as possible and where strategically appropriate, DPOD will provide whatever professional and financial backing member organisations abroad need for project work. Financial resources will be put aside in the mini programme for partnership activities, and specific proposals for initiatives to promote collaboration will be drawn up and made available for users of the mini programme.

3 Collaboration within the Mini Programme

Support from the mini programme presupposes that the Danish organisation of disabled people is working together with at least one organisation of disabled people and/or relatives

of disabled people on one or more activities in one of the ten partner counties.

Until now this collaboration has mainly been confined to project work in which DPOD's member organisations have provided financial and professional backing. Short-term projects have succeeded one another, with the parties concerned rarely discussing ways in which their counterparts abroad could develop into independent, operationally effective organisations of disabled people in the longer term - and because of this many of their partners in the developing world have become increasingly dependent on their Danish partners.

In addition, collaboration has often been dominated by the Danish organisations due to their connections with DPOD and Danida, with DPOD assuming responsibility for finances. Under the present draft agreement the main focus has been on the partners abroad meeting requirements for reports and accounts, which has been both time-consuming and hard work. As a result attention has been predominantly focussed on results. Dissemination of non project-related news and general information have been given lower priority, and there have been no regular meetings for people to discuss ideas and the best ways in which they might collaborate.

DPOD and the partner organisations associated with the mini programme would like to change all this. The aim is that current project work between Danish organisations of disabled people and their partners should gradually develop into long-term, broadly based partnerships characterised by collaboration on equal terms and with a balanced focus on both results and the collaboration process. In order to develop partnerships it is essential for everyone to have basic knowledge about one another and possess sufficient experience of collaboration procedures. With this in mind, DPOD will concentrate first and foremost on developing working relationships that are already functioning well and have plentiful resources and in which the Danish organisations and their partners have already established a sound basis for partnership.

3.1 Partnership – A Special Type of Collaboration

There are many ways of defining partnership and it can be used in everyday language to describe completely different types of working relationships. With this strategy DPOD uses a definition that incorporates current attitudes amongst member organisations working abroad, their partners and DPOD itself. Here partnerships are about collaboration between organisations of disabled people – and in exceptional cases only, other participants.

DPOD considers that a partnership is an ideal form of collaboration. As such it is both an objective and a vision of how collaboration between Danish organisations of disabled people and ones abroad could develop under the mini programme. DPOD's understanding of a partnership is that it is:

“..an independent, long-term, equal status and mutually beneficial collaboration between disabled people's organisations who respect one another and share common goals... ”

A partnership normally develops out of short-term, low-key project collaboration which

gives the partners the opportunity of getting to know each other, developing mutual understanding and gaining the experience required for a partnership.

The characteristics of a partnership include:

- *Common goals:* Both parties are in mutual agreement on long-term objectives for their collaboration. Their goals are defined jointly and are discussed at regular intervals when they evaluate their collaboration together.
- *Clearly defined distribution of work and responsibility:* Both parties enter into a partnership agreement that outlines their areas of responsibility and obligations to each other within the main areas of their collaboration. Responsibility and obligations are normally negotiated at partnership workshops.
- *Close dialogue:* Communication between the parties must be open, regular and clear, and is normally based on a partnership communication agreement. The characteristic of a dialogue is that both parties do as much as possible to participate and contribute information, knowledge and experience of relevance to the partnership.
- *Mutual respect:* In every partnership there will be basic differences, such as in values and points of departure between the parties. These must be recognised by both/all the parties and respected as much as possible. As a rule, important differences between the parties should be analysed and discussed jointly.
- *Learning together:* Parties in a partnership work together to support each other and learn from each other's experiences and methods. Common goals will normally be adjusted as people exchange experiences and gain new ones while working together.
- *Transparency:* In a partnership as much as possible should be done to ensure that decision processes are joint, open and understood by all parties. In areas and situations where this is not possible or not permitted by Danida, decisions should be based on a joint agreement/contract between the parties.

3.2 Flexibility with collaboration

Collaboration in a partnership is broad, deep and long-term. People work closely together; they keep in mind their common objectives and goals, especially with regard to aspects of the organisational structure and development of their partners from the developing world, such as management structure and style, articles of association, equal opportunities and fundraising. The mini programme provides support in particular for building up capacity to ensure that the partner organisation in the developing country develops the capacity to plan and implement its own activities independent of the Danish organisation. At the same time priority is also given to building up a democratic organisational structure and culture. The aim is to develop strong and independent organisations of disabled people in the developing countries in which all marginalized groups participate and exercise influence.

Power and independence are closely linked to financial resources. Within partnerships focus is therefore directed at the way in which joint resources can be utilized in a cost effective manner and how financial sustainability in the developing world can be guaranteed.

Financial independence for our partners in the developing world is paramount from the start and should be discussed continually by the partners. It is essential that the Danish organisation of disabled people should not claim to being the only partner organisation, but instead collaborates with other parties and donors and contributes to the implementation of initiatives that can promote financial independence in the developing world, for instance by a gradual phasing out of support combined with special fundraising initiatives.

3.4 Partnership Development

There is not just one, but several correct approaches to developing and maintaining partnerships under the mini programme. Because they need to be formed according to the resources possessed by the users, they tend to develop in different ways. Some organisations have extensive human and financial resources whereas others only have access to a few very limited basics. When it comes to developing partnerships abroad, the conditions of DPOD's member organisations vary considerably. These variations include:

- *Membership* Some of DPOD's member organisations have up to 75,000 members, such as the Danish Rheumatism Association, while others are quite small, such as the Association of Stutters in Denmark with 600 members. The membership base of an association has great significance for its financial and human resources.
- *History:* DPOD includes some very old organisations with histories going back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Among these are the Danish Deaf Association, the Danish Association of the Blind and the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People. DPOD also has some very young member organisations, such as the Danish Association of Deaf Blind People.
- *Financial and human resources:* There are also great differences in resources that member organisations have available. Some DPOD members have plentiful resources, such as the National Society of Polio and Accident Victims and the Danish Association of the Blind in which paid personnel undertake a considerable amount of work in the developing world with enormous sums of money that guarantee the services of a large secretariat. DPOD also has members who do not have a large secretariat and who rely on volunteers to carry out their work abroad, for instance the Danish Association for Laryngectomees and the Association of Stutters.
- *Type of organisation:* Among DPOD's members are organisations which consist solely of adult disabled people, for instance the Danish Association of the Blind, as well as ones which mainly comprise parents of disabled children, such as the National Autistic Society of Denmark and the Danish Society of Persons with Learning Disabilities. In addition there are organisations in which people with disabilities, professionals, relatives and interested parties work together such as the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation and the Danish Rheumatism Association.

Because of these differences DPOD strongly emphasises flexibility in the mini programme. It is essential that there should be space for these differences and that the implementation of the partnership strategy is as consistent as possible with the various points of departure of the member organisations. The development of partnerships should take place to the extent and at a pace that member organisations abroad and their partners find acceptable.

DPOD also wishes to prioritise the general building up and strengthening of the capabilities of all users of the mini programme. This is to ensure that a certain amount of harmonisation of the greatest differences in human resources takes place over a period of time. DPOD will do as much as it can to ensure the development of foreign languages and technical skills applicable to projects overseas and to encourage the capacity of volunteers from member organisations, overseas employees and their partners to work together. For example, this might involve DPOD drawing up a plan together with a member organisation as to how the necessary skills could be acquired by members and possibly financing one or more courses. However, member organisations working abroad are expected automatically to take on joint responsibility for building up their capabilities in order to enhance the standard of work done under the mini programme. Organisations active abroad are encouraged to give priority to ensuring that basic skills, for example a knowledge of English of volunteers and employees, are both satisfactory and up-to-date.

DPOD will also ensure that more is done to provide information to all its members about current collaboration initiatives under the mini programme. This may well increase political backing for work abroad at a general level – and could certainly create additional opportunities for discussion within individual associations for people active abroad. This is something that such organisations are encouraged to take advantage of and to form developing world groups or committees wherever possible.

4 Partner Organisations

The mini programme supports collaboration between DPOD's member organisations and democratically minded organisations abroad. The kind of democratically minded organisations preferred as partners are those with a board of directors, democratic articles of association, strategies and action plans. The association's attitude to the collaboration project must be positive and there should be backup for working on equal terms on democratic initiatives, for instance increased involvement of marginalized groups such as women, children and young people in organisational work. As far as possible DPOD gives priority to partnerships with organisations working specifically for the mini programme's primary target group – namely marginalized handicapped people.

DPOD's member organisations select partner organisations based on their own interests and values. The partners in the developing countries therefore comprise a wide variety of organisation types that clearly reflect differences in interest amongst DPOD's member organisations. Danish disabled people's organisations work with single disability groups, parents' associations, cross-disability organisations, women's groups and youth groups abroad. DPOD regards this range of partner organisation in the developing countries as very beneficial and will do all it can to retain it in future partnerships. The opportunity to select their

own partners on the basis of their own values guarantees great motivation on the part of the Danish organisations. In situations where it is difficult for a Danish organisation of disabled people to find a suitable partner, DPOD will provide the necessary professional support, e.g. by sending out a development worker. Often the cause of such difficulties is that the required collaboration partner does not exist in the chosen country and so it is necessary to establish one beforehand. When this arises, DPOD is particularly aware that partner organisations should match each other and possess the necessary capacity – after an introductory phase of DPOD support – to manage the collaboration themselves.

At the same time it is a DPOD requirement that Danish disabled people's organisations select partners on the basis of the mini programme's country strategies and in close collaboration with appropriate parties in the partner county concerned. DPOD believes that sustainable development requires basic consideration to be given to local conditions in each partner county as well as close interaction with influential national and international players.

The establishment of partnerships must therefore start by considering both one's own and local interests.

5 Development Workers in a Partnership

Under DPOD's personnel programme development workers can be seconded from Denmark to partner organisations for long or short periods. The purpose of this is threefold:

- to give professional support to organisations with specific needs,
- to enhance joint learning through exchange of experiences between disabled people's organisations in Denmark and the developing world
- to improve knowledge of the living conditions of people with disabilities in the developing world among Danish people generally and Danish disabled people in particular.

Before a development worker is sent out, development of the partnership should already have been set in motion and a partnership agreement between the organisations involved must have been drawn up. Should any significant problems arise during the partnership, the partners must at the very least agree on what the problem consists of and how the development worker can contribute to a solution.

Sending a development worker abroad must be a joint decision. Both parties must support the decision and be prepared to make the necessary resources available. As a rule it is best when sending someone overseas for the partner organisation to identify what is needed and explain how the development worker can contribute.

The selection of a development worker must be based on a final decision by the parties involved and the tasks to be undertaken. The worker should be capable of making a considerable contribution towards implementing the agreed tasks and be prepared to work in col-

laboration with more than one employer. This requires maturity and good interpersonal skills, as well as an extensive knowledge of disability and local conditions. Although DPOD provides an induction course, it also expects the development worker to acquire the appropriate knowledge before going abroad, especially with regard to matters relating to DPOD's country strategy for the country in question and particular problem areas associated with the disability group that he or she will be working with.

Before leaving for overseas, the development worker must make a point of visiting both the Danish disability organisation and its partner organisation. This will enable all the parties to get to know each other and to discuss together both specific tasks and the collaboration project in as much detail as possible. Should this not be possible, the partner organisation, the Danish disability organisation, DPOD and the development worker should meet in Denmark before the latter departs.

Partnership agreement between the development worker, the partner organisation and the Danish disability organisation: There are a number of points regarding ongoing collaboration between the development worker, the partner organisation, the Danish disability organisation and DPOD which must be discussed before a development worker can be sent overseas, such as the expectations of each party and the development worker's position in the partner organisation. DPOD recommends that a short partnership agreement is drawn up which makes provision for areas that do not appear in the contract or in the job description.

This agreement should include the background and expectations of the parties involved, as well as any special agreements concerning communication and conflict resolution.

A partnership agreement provides an excellent opportunity for the partner organisation, the development worker and the Danish disability organisation to evaluate the success of the collaboration jointly on a regular basis. DPOD recommends that the development worker and the partner organisation meet regularly for discussions relating to the collaboration work and keep to a set agenda.

Evaluation of the development worker's efforts: When the development worker's contract expires, the collaboration project and their stay in the country must be evaluated jointly by all parties. Here the partnership agreement can often be used as the basis for discussions. It is most important that the appraisal takes the form of a discussion in which all parties are equally entitled to express their views and that everyone can gain insight into how the others have perceived the collaboration. This means that the parties must either meet in person and/or use the Internet for dialogue. Where possible common experiences should be shared with other member organisations and development workers in the countries concerned, e.g. during country group meetings, after-hours meetings or theme meetings.

6 Resources

During mini programme 3, 2004-2008, resources will be set aside by DPOD for the above initiatives. Particular priority will be given to granting professional and financial support

particularly to partnership activities and to improving the basic capabilities of mini programme users.

7 Follow-up

DPOD will jointly follow up the partnership strategy in conjunction with users of the mini programme. This will take place initially during the course of 2006.