

How can people with disabilities participate in city councils and ensure disability issues are included in decision-making processes?

Relevant articles of the CRPD: 29

Country: Burkina Faso

Region: West Africa

Languages available: English, French

Official Participation of People with Disabilities in the Sessions of the City Council of Bilanga

Description of the practice and the process involved

The rural municipality of Bilanga is one of the largest and most populated in the Gnagna province in the eastern region of Burkina Faso. The department of Bilanga was made a municipality in December 2004, but municipal authorities were put in place and began operating only in 2006. The municipality comprises 70 administrative villages spread over 2,100 km² and has 9,266 inhabitants.

The stakeholders working on local development issues include the Association for the Development of the Department of Bilanga (ADDB) and a group of people with disabilities present in two villages.

One grouping is called Tin Taani Soani Grouping of People with Disabilities of Bilanga (GHTB) and the other is called Tin Taani Soani Grouping of People with Disabilities of Bilanga - Yanga. These entities have been working since 2009 to establish a communal association of people with disabilities.

The close collaboration between ADDB and GHTB, including the joint development of certain activities, has helped strengthen relations and exchanges with the city council. This has led to the participation of people with disabilities in the sessions of the council. The president of GHTB, who is also a Bilanga municipal councillor, introduced a request for the involvement of people with disabilities in community decision making.

In December 2008, official correspondence was addressed to the representatives of the DPOs in both villages inviting them to attend the sessions of the council. Since then, they have been playing a very active role in these meetings.

The factors that made this practice possible

The President of GHTB is a **municipal councillor**, who is influential and respected. He works at the registry office and is involved in development actions. Through his position and his office, he has promoted exchanges and meetings between people with disabilities and the city council.

The ADDB association has had a **new president** since 2008 who is very dynamic and committed to issues concerning vulnerable groups. He supports the DPOs in preparing their activity reports and in the selection of important issues to be discussed at council.

The **capacity building activities** undertaken by the partners of the DPOs have allowed better organization. According to Suleyman Lankouandé, President of the municipal councillors, « *they are better organized than other associations, and it is easier to work with them and involve them* ».

Some of the difficulties encountered

The **low level of education** and the **conditions of poverty and disability** have limited the involvement of some group members in the discussions on issues to be submitted to the council. That is why ADDB has initiated actions to strengthen the capacity of disability organizations in terms of the analysis of problems and stakeholders, speaking in public etc.

The effects / impact of the practice

The inclusion of people with disabilities inside this platform for exchange and participation in the city of Bilanga has enriched the council significantly. It has led to increased **reflection** on issues about local inclusion, accessibility and the needs of marginalised groups, including people with disabilities.

According to the accountant of the city council, «the participation of people with disabilities is very significant and opens the eyes of many municipal councillors».

The representatives of the disability groups who take part in the sessions of the council regularly report on their activities, ask questions, participate in discussions, and influence decisions.

Their contributions are increasingly taken into consideration, and have raised the **awareness** of municipal councillors about the problems and needs of people with disabilities. As a result, municipal councillors have become **involved in activities** such as the identification of people with disabilities in the city and the issuing of birth certificates, as most people with disabilities do not have these vital documents.

Moreover, one result of this participation has been the provision of an **equipped literacy centre** for use by DPOs, with technical supervision provided by the city council. Also, with the support of Projet Production Internationale (PPI) for the drilling of wells, a disabled person has been selected to **manage the largest pump well** in the district.

The most important effect of this practice has been the inclusion of people with disabilities in the **Municipal Development Plan (DCP)** and the **2010 municipal budget**. Specific actions have been identified and budgeted for.

These involve raising public awareness of disability, of the work of DPOs and of the situation of people with disabilities on issues such as gender and HIV/AIDS, as well as vocational training.

For future joint projects, such as the construction of the municipal market, public latrines and other pump wells, people with disabilities are expected to be involved in the **planning and management**.

An example of disability inclusion

Council meetings are, in principle, open to all citizens, but the process of sending official correspondence to solicit the participation of people with disabilities, who were previously excluded, reflects a genuine desire for collaboration on the part of local decision makers. The **participation of DPOs in the sessions of the council** is an example of inclusion in public life and in politics. The inclusion of disability in the **Municipal Development Plan** shows that the participation of people with disabilities has produced concrete results in terms of inclusion.

Related articles of the CRPD

The sharing of information, the contribution to municipal debates and involvement in the management of community facilities link the practice to **Article 29** of the Convention.

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

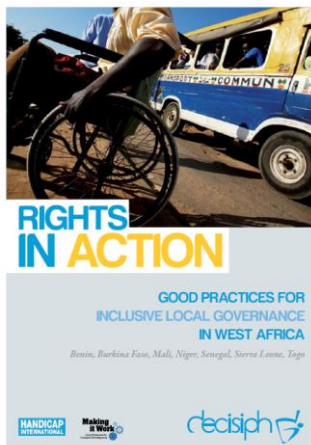
Presidents of DPOs should ensure that their members are **active** in contributing to the **reflections / planning** of the council. To this end, **systematic preparation** for board meetings is essential.

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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 45-46 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](#)