



## DOCUMENTS

### BACKGROUND AND STATUS REPORT

#### THE AFRICAN DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS 2000 - 2009

This document was prepared in April 2001. It is based on PAFOD's Framework Document, other available documents and interviews.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

1983 - 1992 saw the United Nations Decade of disabled persons, the period in which UN member States were expected to implement the World Programme of Action Concerning People with Dis-abilities. The idea of the decade came up in response to the need for a concerted effort to improve the quality of life of disabled people the world over. The decade raised many expectations on the part of disabled people everywhere. It was hoped that after the UN Decade, the quality of life of disabled people would have improved and that they would be part of mainstream society. While some states took note of the Decade and did something about it, others just let it pass by.

Thus, the UN Decade for disabled persons had its successes and failures. The following are some of its successes:

- It created an opportunity for disabled people to meet globally to discuss their issues;
- There was an improvement in attitudes in some parts of the world towards people with disabilities;
- It resulted in the formulation of the Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities of People with Disabilities;
- There were more organisations of disabled people formed during the Decade than at any other time and those already in existence were strengthened - in many parts of the world, including Africa, organisations controlled by disabled people are championing their cause.

However, at the mid-term review of the Decade it was observed that the Decade had its own problems:

- The United Nations Decade was not well publicised by the UN and some governments, whilst they were signatory to the UN Resolution, did nothing to promote the Decade;
- The UN itself and many governments did not provide adequate funding for Decade activities;
- No specific fund was established by the UN for the Decade, as was the case with the UNIFEM Decade (Women's Decade). The set-up was a voluntary fund, which depended on

the will of the well-wishers to contribute to it.

The above problems contributed to some of the shortcomings of the Decade. Many successes were scored by the Decade in North America, parts of continental Europe and in the Scandinavian countries, but in Africa, the World Programme of Action had very little impact. By-and-large, the United Nations Decade was a global approach to the problems of disability and the solutions that were offered were general and global - or based on assumptions of availability of economic and technical resources. There is, therefore, a need for a Decade of Disabled People in Africa, which will have an African approach to the problems of disability and thus develop African solutions to the problems.

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## 2. SPECIFIC AFRICAN CHALLENGES

Africa's problems are largely due to low levels of economic development, war and other forms of conflict, epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, illiteracy, and the consequent lack of infrastructure. Disabled persons are commonly concerned about the lack of attention to their needs and rights. It would be incorrect to assume that this lack of attention is merely due to the lack of human and infrastructure resources, weak organisations of disabled persons, little or no policy and legislation, and negative attitudes towards disabled Africans. Poverty and its implications is the major problem in Africa - both as a cause and as a consequence of disability.

At present;

- Only 1 - 2% of disabled persons have access to care, rehabilitation and education services in Africa
- The belief and practice is that disability is an NGO matter and therefore does not get finance through normal budgetary allocations.
- Disability is a life and death issue (survival issue). Many severely disabled people in rural areas do not survive because of lack of supportive services and resources.

In order to address some of the problems outlined, it is vitally important that disabled Africans themselves are organised and fully equipped to address the scope of their needs. Africans are now gearing themselves to finding African solutions to their problems. The ownership of the Decade must be clearly in the hands of the African governments and DPOs (Disabled Person's Organisations).

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## 3. THE PROCESS LEADING TO THE DECADE

### *3.1 Preparations and lobbying*

The idea of a Decade for Africa is not an imposition on disabled people in Africa but is a result of their own initiative and has received support from different international organisations of disabled people. The idea of an African Decade for disabled persons was conceived in New York by dis-abled Africans celebrating the end of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992.

When PAFOD (Pan African Federation of Disabled Persons - formed 1991 as indicated by the attached Constitution) held its congress in Lusaka in October 1994, it endorsed the idea and asked its affiliates to make proposals for a concept paper on its objectives.

Negotiations with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) started at a low level in 1995. PAFOD was supported in its lobbying process by the African Blind Union (AFUB) and African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI) at the final leg of negotiations in 1997.

At the DPI World Congress in Mexico in 1998, the African caucus (PAFOD and its affiliates) assigned duties to the Secretary General of PAFOD and other members to produce a concept paper for circulation to member countries. The initiative was supported by the DPI World Council and a letter of support was issued to PAFOD.

The African Disability Movement has also gathered inspiration from the Asian/Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, which was recently completed. When the evaluation is available, it will no doubt inform the African Decade.

### ***3.2 Cape Town Seminar on Disability and Human Rights***

In January 1999, major disability organisations together with SHIA conducted the African Seminar on Development Co-operation on Disability and Human Rights in Cape Town. In a resolution taken during this seminar, they called upon all governments in Africa to declare on 3rd December 2000 "The African Decade of Disabled Persons 2000 - 2009".

The seminar in Cape Town was constituted by representatives from organisations of persons with disabilities from 14 African countries as well as the six major international Disabled Peoples Or-ganisations.

- Disabled Peoples International,
- Inclusion International,
- The World Blind Union,
- The World Network of Psychiatric Users,
- The World Federation of the Deaf, and
- The World Federation of the Deaf Blind.

The Seminar referred to the rights of disabled children, women and adults as entrenched in the following human rights instruments and resolutions:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981),

- The Standard Rules for the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), and
- The resolution 31 of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights adopted in 1993.
- Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

The resolution of the Seminar asserted the primary role of governments in addressing the needs of disabled Africans by developing and resourcing appropriate policies and legislation in consultation with representative organisations of disabled persons.

### ***3.3 The proclamation of the Decade***

In April 1999, the OAU Labour and Social Affaires Commission meeting in Namibia recommended that the period 1999-2009 be proclaimed as the African Decade of Disabled Persons. PAFOD and its members approached the Commission again in August 1999 to follow up on this recommendation. The Commission then confirmed that the African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI) was the official department within OAU to be responsible for the Decade and for collaborating with PAFOD. It was further confirmed that the recommendation was to be presented for approval at the forthcoming meetings of OAU Ministers and Heads of State and Government. On 3rd December 1999, the Disability Movement in Africa officially declared 2000 - 2009 the African Decade of Disabled Persons.

The recommendation from the OAU Namibia meeting was formally adopted by the 23rd session of the Labour and Social Affaires Commission in Algeria in April 2000 and endorsed by the OAU Council of Ministers and Assembly of Heads of State and Government respectively, in Togo in July 2000. The Heads of States made a very strong proclamation at this meeting in support of the Decade (full statement is attached) showing a high level of awareness and commitment to full participation, equality and empowerment of persons with disabilities in Africa.

The UN, realizing the shortcomings of the World Decade, has pledged its full support for the African Decade initiative as it has done with the Asian/Pacific Decade 1993-2002.

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## **4. THE PROCESS AFTER THE PROCLAMATION**

At the Cape Town Seminar in January 1999, the focus and priorities of the Decade were dis-cussed for the first time by a representative group of African DPOs. Based on the recommenda-tions made, PAFOD was asked to develop a framework for the Decade work. This framework was to guide the practical implementation of the Decade and to serve as a funding proposal to potential supporters.

### ***4.1 The Harare Meeting***

In connection with the proclamation of the Decade in December 1999 PAFOD, in consultation with ARI, presented a draft framework paper. A meeting was called by ARI in Harare in March 2000 in order to discuss this framework and the way forward. Apart from DPO and ARI representatives, the meeting was attended by representatives of the UN. The meeting

- mandated PAFOD to take the lead in planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the Decade
- suggested that ARI was to be the link between DPOs and governments at regional and continental levels
- requested all documents pertaining to the Decade be circulated to African DPOs for consultation - especially regarding the framework and the composition of the coordinating committee requested PAFOD and ARI to call another meeting at the end of 2000

At the Harare meeting, it was also obvious that the framework developed was too wide in scope to serve as a funding proposal. A consultancy team was hired (financed by Swedish Sida) to assist PAFOD in the development of a Business Plan that was to complement the framework paper. The Business Plan was to be more specific on objectives, outputs and activities and presented in a LFA-format. A draft Business Plan was circulated in September 2000.

#### ***4.2 The Copenhagen 2000 Meeting***

At a Nordic meeting on the Disability Dimension in Nordic Development Cooperation in Copenhagen in December 2000, PAFOD and representatives from DPOs in Uganda and South Africa met to discuss and promote the Decade. The Nordic Development Cooperation Ministers were approached by the African delegates through a joint statement requesting the Nordic countries to inform their respective governments, particularly diplomatic missions abroad, about the African Decade and to realign their development cooperation programs in order to better contribute to the aims of the African Decade. Most importantly, the Ministers were asked to focus on influencing multi-lateral institutions for support to the implementation of the African Decade. The statement further requested that specific development initiatives be supported to include the following:

- Capacity building of organisation of disabled persons (DPOs), particularly the development of advocacy and lobbying skills.
- Institutional development of organisations of disabled persons.
- Affirmation of disability as a human rights issue.
- Eradication of poverty amongst citizens with disabilities.
- Active support of interventions, which address disability in on-going crises such as the HIV-AIDS pandemic, in natural disasters and in war conflicts. Support of the development of organisations of disabled women, the girl-child and mothers of disabled children.

The Ministers all demonstrated their commitment to include disability issues in development cooperation and especially in multilateral programs. The Swedish Minister specifically promoted the idea of the African Decade and called for its support. PAFOD

and African DPOs were encouraged to submit their proposals directly to the Nordic bilateral agencies.

### **4.3 The Durban Meeting**

A follow-up meeting was held in Durban (funded by Sida) in December 2000 for African representatives of the six international umbrella DPOs and ARI. At this meeting the role of PAFOD as coordinator of the Decade - specifically on the DPO side - was confirmed. Furthermore, the representatives were trained in the LFA planning method and then had the opportunity to discuss and review the Business Plan. After the meeting, a revised version of the Business Plan was presented.

### **4.4 The Lusaka Meeting**

A PAFOD consultative meeting with 4 of the 5 regional federations was held in Lusaka in March 2001 (funded by the Commonwealth and the UN Voluntary Trust Fund). At this meeting, the framework paper was presented and the Business Plan was discussed and endorsed as a backbone for the Decade activities. The role of the PAFOD regional federations of disabled persons in the Decade was also discussed and the importance of collaboration with ARI and African Regional Economic Networks (SADC, ECOWAS) was stressed.

### **4.5 Plans for an All Africa Conference on the African Decade**

Addis Ababa November 2001 ARI, in collaboration with PAFOD is preparing an all Africa meeting on the African Decade to be held in Addis Ababa in November 2001. Representatives of governments, DPOs and the UN Agencies will be invited. The purpose of the meeting is to summarise present and planned activities that fall under the overall aims and objectives of the African Decade and to establish an over all plan of action for the Decade - still with the PAFOD Business Plan as a backbone and central part. Specific resources will be allocated to collect all information and circulate it well in advance of the meeting. Financing of this conference is primarily sought from the UN Voluntary Trust Fund. A proposal has been submitted.

4.6 Nordic Action so far In Sweden, Sida is now considering how to best support the Decade in general and the Business Plan activities in particular. An assessment of the Business Plan and other possible areas of support is ongoing and a decision will be taken in August - September 2001. In connection with this assessment, letters have been issued from Sweden early May 2001 to collate information from all Nordic countries - and the EU - about their plans in relation to the African Decade. A cohesive action from the Nordic side would be beneficial for the Decade and its intentions.

In Denmark, three major initiatives have already been initiated within the framework of the Decade - but in addition to what is outlined in the Business Plan

- A proposal from Uganda for an Institute for training of NGOs, including leaders of DPOs in Africa, to be situated in Kampala. The proposal will be submitted to DANIDA for consideration.

- A proposal from Inclusion International for support to mobilisation of parents of disabled children and support to these parents to organise and to advocate for the rights of their children - in 7 African countries. DANIDA has rejected this idea and it may be forwarded to others for consideration

Development of an African Network of Women With Disabilities (WWD). The disabled African women participating in the Beijing +5 meeting in New York brought the idea of the Network forward. At this meeting, preliminary plans were made to initiate a project focusing on reproductive health and HIV/Aids targeting women with disabilities. A planning meeting will be held in South Africa in June 2001 (financed by DANIDA/DSI) and a formal proposal will be forwarded later this year for consideration by Nordic Agencies. In Finland, FIDIDA is considering supporting PAFOD to produce a Decade Newsletter.

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## 5. THE FRAMEWORK PAPER

A framework paper on the African Decade has been prepared by PAFOD. That paper outlines the long-term objectives of the Decade, the outcomes expected, the areas of priority actions as well as the overall organisation and monitoring of the Decade at continental and regional levels.

### ***5.1 Long Term Objectives***

The long-term objectives of the Decade are · Poverty alleviation amongst people with disabilities and their families;

- Awareness raising and sensitisation on disability;
- Combating causes of disability by promoting peace and reducing other causes of disability;
- Strengthening of the African voice of people with disabilities;
- Putting disability on the social, economic and political agenda of African governments;
- Spearheading the implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities and ensuring the use of the Standard Rules as a basis for policy and legislation to protect the interests of disabled people in Africa;
- The application of all UN Human Rights Instruments to promote and monitor the rights of persons with disabilities; Addressing issues pertaining to children, youth and women with Disabilities.

### ***5.2 Expected outcomes At the end of the Decade:***

- Disabled people will have been equipped with skills of alleviating poverty amongst themselves and their families,
- People in Africa will have improved their attitudes towards people with disabilities as a result of awareness raising programmes,
- The major courses of disability like wars and diseases will have been reduced,
- The United Nations (UN) Standard Rules will have been accepted as the guiding

principle on disability legislation in Africa,

- Issues pertaining to children, youth and women with disabilities will have been addressed,
- The education needs of children with disabilities will be given priority,
- A greater number of OAU member states will have developed ways of ensuring the employment of people with disabilities,
- The rehabilitation of disabled people will have been made to be within reach of most people with disabilities and ways will have been developed of making appliances affordable,
- Disabled people will have more access to income and a trend will have started of improving their quality of life,
- Disability will be on the National Socio-economic development programmes (Agendas) of governments,
- The African Disability Rights Movement will be strong in capacity and institutionally.

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### **5.3 Priority areas**

In as much as disabled people have many problems, the decade will streamline them and focus on those that will help to empower people with disabilities to deal with the rest. These problems will be tackled in line with the provision of the UN Standard Rules and the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled People. The critical issues to be addressed are as follows (*Rule numbers refer to The Standard Rules*):

*Poverty Alleviation (Rule 16)* OAU Member States should commit themselves to include disability matters in the regular budgets of all national, regional and local government bodies; make provision for disability concerns in poverty reduction programs and use access to basic services for persons with disabilities as indicators of progress. International agencies and NGOs should include the disability dimension in all development programs and use the conditions of disabled persons to measure level of fulfilment of human rights, democracy and equity.

*Education (Rule 6)* OAU Member States should endeavour to recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities in integrated settings. They should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the normal educational system and that adequate support is given to ensure accessibility and participation in integrated settings. They should also recognize the special communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons and ensure that their education be provided in special classes, units or schools where the means of instruction is sign language

*Employment (Rule 7):* OAU Member States should endeavour to recognize the principle that persons with disabilities must be empowered to exercise their human rights, particularly in the field of employment. In both rural and urban areas, they must have equal opportunities for productive and gainful employment in the labour market

*Rehabilitation and Appliances (Rule 3):* OAU Member States should ensure the provision of rehabilitation services to children, women and men with disabilities in order for them to reach and sustain their optimum level of independence and functioning. OAU Member States should also ensure the development and supply of support services, including assistive devices for persons with disabilities and interpreter services, to assist them to increase their level of independence in their daily living and to exercise both their rights as disabled people and their human rights as human beings. Persons with disabilities and their families should be able to participate in the design and organisation of rehabilitation services concerning themselves.

#### **5.4 Organisation and monitoring of the Decade**

The Pan African Federation of Disabled Persons (PAFOD) has been given the mandate by African DPOs to drive and coordinate the African Decade activities at the continental level.

The activities will also be coordinated and monitored at regional level by the five regional Federations of Disabled Persons; Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) East Africa Federation of the Disabled (EAFOD) West Africa Federation of the Disabled (WAFOD) North Africa Federation of the Disabled (NAFOD) Central Africa Federation of the Disabled (CAFOD)

This will enable effective implementation in line with cultural differences. Annual reports will be submitted by the Regional Federations to PAFOD and review meetings will be held every 3 years in order to evaluate progress and ensure that focus and objectives of the Decade are not lost sight of. OAU member states are also expected to monitor the Decade through their regional groupings like ECOWAS, VCOMESA and SADC etc.

PAFOD will work in collaboration with OAU bodies (in particular ARI), Economic Commission for Africa and International DPOs. PAFOD's work for the Decade will be guided by a Coordinating Committee. This Committee will also be the Steering Committee of the Business Plan. The Committee will comprise of representatives of:

PAFOD (chair) African Union of the Blind (AFUB) Inclusion International World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) International Organisation of the Deaf/Blind International Association of People with Psychiatric Disabilities Disabled Peoples International (DPI) African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI)

The International Disability Organisations will be represented by their Continental African Representatives - one woman and one man.

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## **6. THE BUSINESS PLAN**

The challenges and the long-term objectives expressed in the PAFOD framework paper

are many and wide in scope. Hence, it was agreed that the Business Plan should focus primarily on creating awareness and on generating government commitment from the African states to address disability issues. It is assumed that an enabling environment is a precondition for achieving the rest of the objectives of the Decade. The business plan is aiming at;

- empowerment of disabled persons and their organisations in order for them to become strong advocates for their human rights and their right to participation and equal opportunities in society and through
- provision of planning and monitoring tools and training opportunities for government officials in order for them to be able to include the disability dimension in their work in different departments.

The Business Plan is divided into two four-year phases, whereof the first phase focuses on the building of capacity among disabled persons' organisations and their leadership as well as in African governments. The second four-year phase also addresses capacity building but, in addition, includes some important service delivery components.

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## 7. CONCLUSION

In as much as the Decade is a good idea that will certainly bring about change, it is important to re-iterate the fact that this will only be possible if there is political will from governments. The political will must be transformed into action.

The success of the Decade is also depending on the capacity of the organisations and networks charged with the responsibility of driving, coordinating and monitoring the Decade. A primary concern for those supporting the Decade must be to assist these bodies to build the capacity required.

It also needs to be understood that what disabled people are calling for is something that is attainable. They are calling for a major improvement in the quality of their lives and recognition of their human rights. Persons with disabilities, if given the opportunity, can be productive members of the OAU member states. The current scenario in most countries is that disabled people have been reduced to beggars. To worsen the situation is the fact that social service budgets are diminishing the world over. There is therefore a need to reduce the number of people who are heavily dependant on social handouts. Empowerment of persons with disabilities is a good investment as well as a human rights issue

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