Briefing notes: ‘Building Partnerships for the SDGs – Empowering Disabled People’s Organisations’

What is the project aiming to achieve?

The project will strengthen 15 Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) across five Indian states to advocate for their rights and allow them improved access to government development schemes and entitlements – such as equal job opportunities, decent work conditions and equal participation in the democratic processes. The project will also strengthen partnership between Indian DPOs and EU institutions, bringing the voice of India’s DPOs to an international stage – and, crucially, ensuring that information on global processes reaches grassroots activists. Gender equality is at the core of this project, which aims to develop disability inclusion in the SDG implementation from the perspective of women with disabilities.

How will it work?

The project will work with DPOs, government and civil society organisations (CSOs) to engage them to proactively shape up and monitor SDG implementation at local, state, national, regional and international level. This will be carried out through:

- Raising awareness among targeted communities and their association (persons with disabilities and DPOs) and mobilising support within local government and other networks to identify ways in which to ensure disability inclusion.
- Support people-centred and people-led campaigns to raise awareness among citizens and mobilise support from the government on the effective monitoring and implementation of the SDGs and UNCRPD. Sightsavers will provide necessary external technical input such as organising participatory training and developing IEC materials in local languages.
- Working with strategic partners and key stakeholders to coordinate state and national-level campaign initiatives.
- Promoting dialogue and encouraging exchanges between EU and Indian CSOs through learning workshops, sharing of best practice and joint participation at key policy forums.
- Promoting advocacy initiatives from local through to national level to build both support for disability inclusion and more supportive policy frameworks for persons with disabilities.

Why is it needed?

DPOs in India lack the skills, resources and knowledge of where and how to get the support they need to function effectively, meaning the voice of people with disabilities is not adequately reflected in mainstream CSO platforms, local government or national level planning. This impacts the effectiveness of mainstream advocacy efforts around the central principle of ‘Leave No One Behind’ in the implementation of the SDGs in India. The project is therefore designed to address the gaps in the representation, participation and voice of DPOs.
Who is funding and delivering the project?

The project is co-financed by the European Union and Sightsavers with a budget of €5.21 million over 36 months. It is being delivered by Sightsavers and other partners including the European Disability Forum (EDF), Together 2030, APRCEM, WNTA and other likeminded women’s organisations in close collaboration with the government at State and National level.

The project in numbers

- The networks of 15 DPOs across five Indian states will be strengthened.
- 14,333 people with disabilities (of which 5,995 are women) will be reached out to.
- There will be engagement with 859 Self Help Groups (SHGs), including 14 run by women.
- 100 Gram Panchayat (Panchayati Raj institutions) members in 15 districts across five states will be oriented/trained in the SDGs and UNCRPD.
- At least three strategic partnerships will be established between European and Indian DPOs, Together 2030 and Indian DPOs, and women with disability organisations in Europe and India.
- 90 members of the EDF will benefit from greater EU and Indian CSO collaboration.

How does it fit in with the SDGs?

The success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must be measured by its ability to serve the most disadvantaged communities and people, particularly those with disabilities. This project will monitor the effective implementation of the SDGs at various levels from individuals right through to global level.

What about the national picture?

India’s disability sector is strongly represented by CSOs, yet focuses mainly on urban areas. 70 million people with disabilities living in rural areas find it difficult to access services due to economic deprivation and inaccessibility, which impacts on their ability to organise and advocate effectively. There is an increased awareness by policymakers, government and people’s representatives to work on SDGs and ensure disability rights and entitlements in development programmes and schemes. Awareness is an important prerequisite for the effective implementation of the SDGs for persons with disabilities in India; this project will address this weak linkage.

And finally, why are we running the project?

Sightsavers and our partners believe in protecting disability rights as part of the broader human rights framework. This project will support people with disabilities through DPOs, giving them a voice in sustainable development planning, implementation and monitoring from local to international level. DPOs will be able to better articulate their needs and to demand their rights. They will be part of the EU and Indian government’s commitment to safeguarding the fundamental rights of people with disabilities, while achieving prosperity and development – which is in line with the SDGs. The learnings from the project will be shared with the government, other stakeholders and interested parties.