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China



Everybody Counts

Realizing the Rights of Persons With Disabilities

EVERYBODY COUNTS

Realizing the Rights of Persons With Disabilities



Kofi Annan presenting a UN award to Deng Pufang, a close partner of UNDP and a renowned champion for the rights of persons with disabilities, October, 2004.

Persons with disabilities are indispensable actors in the achievement of the MDGs and a Xiao Kang society in China. Advancing the rights of the disabled is at the core of UNDP China's work for development with equity. UNDP is proud to be associated with the ongoing efforts of the Chinese Government and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to improve legislation, law enforcement, policies and practices to support the mainstreaming of people with disabilities into society. In order to strengthen the knowledge base for development in this field, UNDP's experiences of supporting people with disabilities in China are worth sharing.

Building critical mass

When people with disabilities encounter difficulties, they often turn to a rights protection worker for support. In 2002, having registered a great thirst for capacity building among rights protection workers, particularly in the Western Region, UNDP China initiated a project to meet this demand under the newly established rights protection network of the China Disabled Person's Federation (CDPF). The project started by holding training workshops for about 500 rights protection workers at central and grassroots levels. These focused not only on the content of legal knowledge and international standards, but also on the practices of disabled people's organizations in other counties. The rights protection workers' discussions were enriched through the sharing of experiences and knowledge. This also helped the workers to make recommendations for the revision of China's Law on Protecting Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Enlarging the impact

The training workshops were so well received that the UNDP and its partners were inspired to prepare a publication in order to reach a wider audience. The publication, *Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: International and Comparative Law and Practice*, synthesizes the materials and deliberations, and was the first of its kind in China. The launch, on the International Day of Disabled Persons 2003, was itself a display of the value of the

disabled's participation and capacities, and generated a great deal of publicity. The publication has been disseminated widely as a practical tool for grassroots rights protections workers, researchers, lawyers and CSOs.

Forging partnerships

In carrying out the endeavors of capacity-building for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, UNDP has actively involved stakeholders and engaged many partners from grassroots to international levels, including, most importantly, CDPF, the Irish Government, the UN High Commissioner's Office for Human Rights, and the China International Centre for Economic and Technical Cooperation. These partnerships have established a strong basis for international cooperation in this field, which helps to create a coordinated approach to supporting rights protection workers.

The fruitful relationship between UNDP and CDPF goes well beyond cooperation in the form of projects. UNDP continuously supports key nationwide initiatives organized by CDPF, and also ensures that it participates in any events and functions that may have an impact on the lives of their constituents.

Advocating for a rights-based approach

Each component of the project has highlighted the rights-based approach to development. In the training workshops and through the dissemination of the publication, UNDP has advocated for a paradigm shift in the characterisation of persons with disabilities, enacting the change in focus from the medical aspects of disability to a rights-based approach. Through interactions with partners, UNDP has been able to learn first hand about the needs of rights protection workers, which enhances its capacity to support and empower them and their organisations. Additionally, the publication, in highlighting the importance of the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities in societal life and development, calls for society to treat persons with disabilities as not mere receivers of help but as partners and catalysts of development.

The essence of the rights-based approach is to encourage empowerment and participation. In training activities, the rights-based approach was introduced to the rights protection workers, encouraging them to:

- give a voice to and engage the disabled;
- build the bridge between persons with disabilities and the government;
- provide consulting services and other direct support to the disabled, and;
- plant seeds for civil society participation.

These projects and partnerships, and similar projects around the world go some way to realising UNDP's goals of achieving equality and full participation in life and development for persons with disabilities in China.



Representatives of persons with disabilities presenting and participating the discussion in the launch of a publication entitled Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: International And Comparative Law And Practice, December, 2003.

"No society can claim to be based
on justice and equality without
persons with disabilities taking
decisions as full-fledged members."

*Kofi Annan, Secretary General, United Nations
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