

Disability Knowledge and Research Programme

**Facilitating the establishment of an advisory group:
Report and recommendations**

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1. Introduction

This mission has been charged with the responsibility of defining the composition, mandate and responsibilities of a proposed Programme Advisory Group (PAG) that will advise and provide strategic direction to the Disability KaR Management Team. The methodology took the form of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders that have already had involvement with the programme to date. Confidentiality has remained a key and overriding principle in undertaking this consultancy. Therefore, within this report, no individual is quoted directly.

The process was undertaken by two independent consultants, both with physical disabilities, who have extensive experience of working on disability issues in the South. It is important to emphasise that there is unanimous agreement between the mission members in the recommendations that follow.

Furthermore, at this stage, it is important to state the values and opinions that are held by both consultants. Firstly, the overriding and principal objective of the Disability KaR Programme is to provide innovative and original research, of a policy-orientated nature, that will have a direct beneficial impact on the lives of disabled people living in the South. Given this overriding objective, the consultants also hold the following beliefs:

1. The emphasis of the Disability KaR Programme should be on high-quality, policy-orientated research that has a direct impact on policies and quality of life of disabled people living in the South. Advocacy/lobbying does have a place within the parameters of the programme, but the primary emphasis is on innovative policy-orientated research.
2. In order to be effective, the 'voice' of disabled people living in the South needs to be substantially strengthened within the decision-making process of the Disability KaR Programme.
3. The respective roles, responsibilities and powers of the Management Team, the Programme Advisory Group, and the other stakeholders involved in the programme need to be formally clarified and explicitly defined. Furthermore, they need to be transparent and open, and perceived as such.
4. All members of the Programme Advisory Group have an equal and legitimate status, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability.
5. There is a legitimate role for disabled peoples' organisations (DPOs), international non-government organisations (NGOs) and universities working in the field of disability and development.
6. A clear distinction between executive and advisory functions should be drawn. Executive authority lies with the Disability KaR Programme Management. The Programme Advisory Group has consultative and advisory status, but nevertheless is perceived to be more than a rubber stamp of the Programme Management, having 'credibility and teeth'.
7. The possibility of the Disability KaR Programme being extended into a third phase is dependent upon whether the aims and objectives of the second phase have been achieved.

2. Roles and functions of the Programme Advisory Group (PAG)

An effective Programme Advisory Group (PAG) is crucial for the success of a programme such as Disability KaR. The establishment of the PAG should be considered a sound and effective investment, as it maintains the quality and rigour of all programme activities and outputs, as well as ensuring that the programme is at the cutting edge of policy development. This report defines the important role that PAG members should play, both individually and collectively in the programme.

The primary function of the PAG is to provide strategic direction and critical advice on policy issues associated with the programme. Although the PAG has advisory status, it should nevertheless have 'teeth'. Members of the PAG should ensure that issues are being adequately addressed and the programme remains under control.

In practice these responsibilities involve four main roles:

- A. Approval of the programme's overall strategic direction, and of significant changes to its aims and objectives
- B. Monitoring and review of the programme
- C. Assistance to the programme when required
- D. Peer review of programme outputs

A. Approval of programme's strategic direction, and of significant changes to its aims and objectives

The PAG has responsibility for major programme documentation. Specifically, the PAG will:

- Approve the prioritisation of objectives and outputs
(Where the PAG is required to approve an activity, this will preferably be by unanimous vote – but failing this, by simple majority.)
- Review management reports and peer review policy and research papers
- Ensure that outputs generally reflect the needs of disabled people in the South
- Monitor programme implementation and provide quality assurance

The PAG is also responsible for commenting and providing advice on any major changes to the programme at goal, purpose or output levels. Consequently, the PAG should be provided with the following information in support of any proposed change:

- Nature and reason for the change
- Envisaged effect of the proposed change
- Revised logframe and action plans if appropriate
- Suggested actions for the PAG to consider

Changing or emergent issues in the external political and policy environment may require the programme's scope to be adapted, so that the programme is in a position to meet the modified aims and objectives. The PAG is responsible for approving and recommending amendments to these changes, and, as requested by Programme Management, for lobbying to ensure that additional resources are provided for the effective implementation of these changes.

B. Monitoring and review of the programme

The PAG will review the status of the programme twice over the remaining 18 months of the programme. The review will focus on major programme documentation and any variations in the key components, such as budget allocations, tangible outputs and intended outcomes.

C. Assistance to the programme when required

The PAG will assist the Programme Management in the execution of the programme by ensuring it has the backing of disabled people, particularly those living in the South. PAG members should be active advocates for the programme's activities and outcomes and help facilitate broad support for it.

D. Peer review of programme outputs

The PAG will formally review programme outputs. All research papers and outputs generated by the programme will be submitted to PAG members before being circulated to a wider

constituency. This process will be managed on an ad hoc basis by email. To achieve this function effectively, PAG members must have a broad understanding of programme management concepts and the specific approach adopted by the management team.

3. PAG membership

The PAG should comprise individuals who have the requisite portfolio of skills and expertise necessary to provide strategic advice and direction to the Disability KaR management team. It is recommended that disabled people with the requisite skills and expertise should comprise the majority of the PAG.

It is proposed that the PAG should have the following members:

	No.
1. Disabled people from the South (one Activist and one Technical Advisor)	2
2. Disabled people from the UK (one Activist and one Technical Advisor)	2
3. Senior person from Department for International Development (DFID) involved with the Disability KaR Programme	1
4. Member from an NGO working in the field of disability and development (probably the Chairperson of the BOND Group)	1
5. Committed senior academic, with a development studies background, willing to chair the PAG in an effective and unbiased manner	1
	Voting 7
6. Disability KaR Programme Director (ex officio capacity)	1
7. Disability KaR Communications Manager (ex officio capacity)	1
8. Disability KaR Disability Policy Officer (ex officio capacity)	1
	Non-voting 3

A. Appointment process and orientation

In order to select PAG members, it is recommended that the following organisations are invited to nominate appropriate specialists:

1. Activist members – DPI Worldwide and British Council of Disabled People (BCODP)
2. UK Government – DFID
3. UK NGO community – BOND
4. Academic community – Overseas Development Group (ODG), University of East Anglia (UEA)
5. Technical advisors – Disability KaR Programme Management

The Chairperson will be appointed by ODG (the programme contractor).

Once appointed to the PAG, members will collectively and individually cease to represent their personal interests, but rather to promote the interests of the Disability KaR Programme and disabled people in the South. This will be undertaken in the spirit of dedication, integrity, in a constructive manner and based on consensus, or, failing this, by simple majority vote.

Under exceptional circumstances, a PAG member who is unable to attend a meeting may propose a suitable alternative to the Chairperson.

It is recommended that members of the PAG should be paid an honorarium for their participation in the group and an additional once-off annual fee for reviewing and commenting on programme documentation. In addition, travel, accommodation, subsistence and other

incidental expenses (e.g. video conferencing facilities) associated with PAG activities will be paid for by the Disability KaR Programme.

4. PAG meetings

The PAG should meet twice over the next 18 months in order to keep abreast of issues and the progress of the programme. The Programme Director, Communications Manager and Disability Policy Officer should attend PAG meetings in an ex officio capacity, to be a source of information for PAG members and to be kept informed of PAG decisions. The PAG has responsibility for the programme until the end of the current phase of Disability KaR II in September 2005. It is recommended that each meeting of the PAG should have specific themes, as follows:

1. First meeting (June 2004)

- Discussion of the functions of the PAG
- Nomination of Chairperson
- Approval of the new logframe
- Discussion on how the remaining responsive budget should be allocated
- Fix date of second meeting

Attendance at the first meeting does not commit PAG members to a continuing role and individuals are free to withdraw at any time if they wish.

2. Second meeting (January – March 2005)

- Re-evaluate the aims and objectives of the Disability KaR Programme in the light of any changes in the political/policy environment
- Discuss the strategic development of a possible third phase of the Disability KaR Programme

Papers for discussion should be circulated by the Programme Management to all PAG members no later than 10 working days prior to each meeting.

5. PAG communications strategy

In order to ensure that the voice of PAG members based in the South has a real impact upon the decision-making processes, it is recommended that PAG meetings take place in a venue that has video conferencing facilities, with a link to Southern-based members.

In addition, it is proposed that a closed email group comprising the PAG members and the Disability KaR Programme Management be established. This will facilitate ongoing dialogue and advice on programme activities and the sharing of information – in particular, the review of documents – between the Programme Management and PAG on an ongoing, regular basis.

Any formal approvals (see 2A) will be taken at the actual PAG meetings.

6. Advisory status of the PAG

The purpose of the PAG is to provide the strategic direction and informed advice on key policy issues associated with the Disability KaR Programme. The PAG's role is crucial to the

programme's success. It is responsible for recommending strategy, defining and critiquing outputs, and monitoring their relevance, quality, and timeliness. Those directly responsible for running the programme and managing its stakeholders rely on PAG members for guidance and expertise in their endeavours.

Where potential conflicts may occur within the PAG over resource allocation, output quality, and the level of commitment of programme management/stakeholders and related programmes, the Programme Director will generally be the first reference point for resolution of problems and should be able to solve most internal difficulties. The Programme Director should generally be allowed two weeks to consult and resolve such problems.

Where the issue concerns the performance of the Programme Director him/herself, PAG members may raise their concerns with the Programme Director's contractual line manager, namely the Chief Executive, ODG.

7. Functions of the PAG

Collectively, the PAG's role is to:

- Provide advice regarding the programme's feasibility, business plan and achievement of outcomes
- Ensure the programme's aims and objectives are in alignment with the needs and requirements of disabled people in the South
- Provide projects commissioned by the programme with guidance on programme policy and strategic issues, where requested
- Ensure effort and allocations are fairly distributed to innovative and cutting-edge projects relevant to the needs of disabled people in the South
- Address any issue that has major implications for the programme
- Keep the programme's aim and objectives under review as key emergent issues need to be considered
- Present reports on the programme progress to stakeholders, at the request of management.

It is the authors' considered view that, without an effective PAG, the programme is unlikely to succeed.

8. Role of PAG members

It is recommended that the PAG should comprise seven members drawn from key stakeholders and three ex-officio members: the Programme Director, Communications Manager and the Disability Policy Officer. Individual PAG members are neither directly responsible for managing programme activities, nor represent their own personal or organisation's interests, but provide support and guidance to the Programme Management. Thus, PAG members must:

- Understand the strategic implications and outcomes of initiatives being pursued through programme's activities
- Appreciate the significance of the programme for some or all major stakeholders
- Be genuinely interested in the initiative and the outcomes being pursued in the programme
- Have a broad understanding of programme management issues and the approach being adopted

- Be committed to and actively involved in pursuing the programme's activities.

In practice, this means they will:

- Ensure the requirements of disabled people in the South are met by the programme's outputs
- Provide advice on conflicting priorities and resources
- Consider ideas and issues raised
- Review the progress of the programme
- Check adherence of programme activities to standards of best practice, both within the organisation and in a wider context
- Ensure that there is a degree of coherence between the different activities of the programme.

9. Functions of the Programme Management Team

It is the responsibility of the management to implement all programme activities with a view to achieving the agreed programme outputs. Management will also commission projects approved by the PAG according to the programme's agreed commissioning procedures.

All representations to the client (in this case DFID) are the responsibility of the management, passing, if need be, through the contract signatory – namely the Chief Executive, ODG.

10. Defining 'teeth'

During the consultation process, there was a wide and often divergent range of opinions regarding what power the PAG should have with regard to the ongoing management of the programme. What is clear is that there is a direct, legally binding, contractual relationship between DFID and the Overseas Development Group. Therefore, ODG has ultimate responsibility of ensuring that the aims, objectives, and explicitly stated outputs are delivered. Given this existing contractual relationship (which cannot be renegotiated during the middle of the second phase of the programme), the responsibility for decisions of how financial resources are allocated resides with the Programme Management.

As stated in the introduction to this report, the authors maintain an 'inclusive' approach to disability and development, believing that disabled peoples' organisations, NGOs and academic institutions all have a legitimate role to play within the Disability KaR Programme. However, it is further acknowledged that each of these has a different perspective regarding disability and development issues. It is believed that a PAG comprising all these stakeholders will constitute a critical mass of knowledge, experience and ideas that will provide an invaluable resource for the future direction of the programme.

It is possible to perceive the PAG as a 'trading zone' that generates new and innovative ideas and strategies in the field of disability and development. This concept has been recently developed by Demos, and is proposed as a means for future policy formulation within the UK. The report, in demonstrating the potential of trading zones as a useful mechanism for policy development, states:

'While specific policy measures and changes inside the structures that support disabled people are important, to achieve the kinds of step change necessary, new relationships and reconfigurations of

existing ones are vital. Trading zones are an attempt to create some sort of space in which these relationships can develop. Often they will exist between cultures and institutions, representing zones whereby people from different backgrounds can come together to participate on an equal footing. [...] Trading zones start with an assumption of difference, and intertwine process with product to create shared benefits and outcomes that can be spread widely.'

Miller, P., Parker, S. and Gillinson, S., *Disablism: How to tackle the last prejudice*, pp. 37-38
Demos, London (2004).

Given the collective expertise and knowledge, it is believed that the PAG will be in a position that will influence the future strategic direction of the programme.

Therefore, in light of the above 'teeth':

1. Any changes to the aims and objectives of the programme, as outlined in the logframe, need to be approved by the PAG.
2. All external documents published by the Disability KaR Programme need to be submitted to and critiqued by the PAG prior to publication.
3. PAG members should monitor and review programme activities on a quarterly basis.

11. Circulation of this report

This report is being circulated to all those interviewed by the review team. Any comments can be passed to the Programme Director.

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Appendix 1. SWOT analysis of the Disability KaR Programme at May 2004

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has brought disability onto the agenda of DFID. ▪ Has a portfolio of unique activities that have the potential of establishing and developing strategies in the field of disability and development. ▪ Provides funding for innovative, policy-orientated research in the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of clarity and transparency regarding the management and decision-making processes within the programme. ▪ Disabled people have not been involved in the programme's management. ▪ The discrete activities of the programme lack coherence. ▪ A widespread perception that the 'management style' is hierarchical and non-participative. ▪ The lack of trust and mutual respect among the different stakeholders currently involved in the programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the Disability KaR Programme to be at the cutting edge of setting the agenda in the field of disability and development. ▪ To influence bilateral and multi-lateral funding agencies in developing their policies in this field. ▪ To engage in a constructive dialogue with all stakeholders in the South working in the field of disability and development. ▪ To make a measurable, sustainable impact on the lives of people with disabilities living in the South. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That the past disagreements between the different stakeholders will thwart the aims and objectives being achieved. ▪ That past disagreements may result in the UK disability movement not being involved in the programme at all and may lobby against the programme. ▪ That a great opportunity will be missed in setting the policy agenda in the field of disability and development. ▪ That the quality of lives of disabled people in the South remains unchanged. ▪ That DFID loses interest in funding work in this field, and does not recognise the value in extending the programme into a third phase.