

DPI and the CRPD: a short history

Introduction

Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) is the umbrella cross-disability organization mandated to promote the human rights of all persons with disabilities through full participation, equalization of opportunity and international cooperation. DPI is controlled and directed by persons with disabilities through their National Assemblies in over 130 countries worldwide. DPI and its National Assemblies have been at the forefront of international advocacy on the human rights of people with disabilities for the past quarter century, and continue this role in seeking effective implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). ***This guide examines the role that DPI played in the drafting, adoption, and entry into force of this historic international human rights treaty.***

Was DPI involved in earlier attempts to secure a human rights treaty for people with disabilities?

Yes! DPI was founded in 1981 – the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP). Follow-up to the IYDP prompted the UN's adoption of the World Programme of Action in 1982 (a document drafted with DPI's participation), and two calls for the adoption of an international treaty on the human rights of people with disabilities: first by Italy (1987) and then by Sweden (1989). DPI was fully supportive of these endeavors. Although initially unsuccessful, these initiatives laid the groundwork for the adoption in 1993 of the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities – a document which was drafted with the participation of DPI members. In 1994, a founding member of DPI – Bengt Lindqvist of Sweden – was appointed as the first UN Special Rapporteur mandated to monitor implementation of the Standard Rules. Although the Standard Rules were groundbreaking in their incorporation of a social model approach to disability, they remained non-binding upon UN Member States. DPI therefore joined with other disability organizations in calling for a new human rights treaty for people with disabilities in the Beijing Declaration, which was adopted at the World NGO Summit on Disability in 2000.

How did DPI participate in the process to create the CRPD?

The CRPD was drafted in a UN General Assembly process that spanned from December 2001 – December 2006, when the treaty was finally adopted. The CRPD was opened for signature in March 2007, and entered into force (ie. became legally operative for States Parties) on 3 May, 2008. The CRPD is one of the fastest negotiated core international human rights treaties ever, and DPI members participated at every stage, having been mandated to do so during its World Assembly in Sapporo, Japan, in 2002. At that meeting over 3,000 people from over 100 countries adopted the "Sapporo Declaration," which called for:

- Adoption of a specific international human rights convention that is reflective of the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and that includes a strong convention monitoring mechanism informed by the unique perspective of people with disabilities to ensure the credibility, legitimacy and efficacy of the convention
- A voice of our own in the development of this instrument – disabled people must be consulted at all levels on all matters that concern us

In collaboration with other representatives of the global disability community, DPI representatives met and exceeded both of these goals. DPI representatives attended all meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee (the General Assembly body which negotiated the CRPD) both as members of civil society and as members of government delegations. DPI representatives were also official members of the Working Group – the body mandated to produce the first draft of the treaty in a precedent-setting process in which civil society and government delegates participated on an equal basis.

In anticipation of the CRPD's opening for signature, DPI created an online Ratification Toolkit to support the efforts of its members to ensure rapid ratification of the CRPD at the national level. Although the CRPD has now entered into force, DPI National Assemblies across the globe continue to engage in national ratification campaigns to promote the ratification and implementation of the CRPD in all countries.

Will DPI continue to support the CRPD?

Yes! The theme of DPI's World Assembly, held in Seoul, Korea in September, 2007, was ***“Our rights, our convention, but for all.”*** As noted in the Seoul Declaration, which was adopted at that World Assembly, this theme ***reflects DPI's belief that the CRPD is not just about people with disabilities: it is “by us and for us and all of humanity.”*** In the “Seoul Declaration,” DPI members further committed to continuing to work towards ensuring that the CRPD is the foundation for all laws, policies and practices addressing the rights of people with disabilities. To this end DPI has created an online Implementation Toolkit, and continues to engage in capacity-building activities with National Assemblies, governments, international development organizations, UN agencies and other stakeholders, so that ***the human rights vision reflected in the CRPD will eventually become a reality for all people with disabilities everywhere.***

Additional Resources

DPI Ratification and Implementation Toolkits – <http://dpi.org/convention-on-the-rights-of/crpd-tool-kit/index.html>

DPI Sapporo Declaration – <http://dpi.org/document/world-assemblies-declaratio/cairo-declaration/sapporodeclarationeng.pdf>

DPI Seoul Declaration – <http://dpi.org/document/world-assemblies-declaratio/seoul-declaration-september/seouldeclarationeng.pdf>