

**PUTTING
THE WORLD
TO RIGHTS**





People with disabilities in the developing world – their successes, their needs and how you can make a difference

Cover pic: Z.mo is one of Burkina Faso's leading reggae singers. Read his story on Page 44. (Photo: Karim Sawadogo)

Things you need to know about Putting the World to Rights

- There are about 650 million people with disabilities in the world. That's about 10% of the population on the planet.
- Four out of every five people with disabilities live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of people who live in poverty.
- Only 45 countries around the world have passed anti-discrimination and other disability-specific laws.
- In developed countries, about 19% of less-educated people have disabilities, compared with about 11% of better-educated people.
- According to UNICEF, 30% of street children have a disability.
- About 90% of children with disabilities don't go to school. Studies show that the global literacy rate for adults with disabilities is around 3%. For women with disabilities, it's around 1%.
- According to the UN, for every child killed in warfare three more are injured and permanently disabled.

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Design by: Red Dog

Terminology: Some groups use the term 'people with disabilities'; others use 'disabled people'. We have used both throughout this publication.

Images: We have given due consideration to the use of all images and have adhered to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.

Burkina Faso is the second poorest country in the world. Over 13% of the population (that's at least 1.5 million people) have some form of disability, much of it preventable.

Bolivia's disabled people represent 15% of the population or 1.35 million people. It is estimated that 70% of them live on less than €2 a day.

Brazil is a country with very high levels of inequality. There are approximately 25 million Brazilians with disabilities, of whom 80% live in poverty. In the north and north east of the country alone, there are almost 9 million people with disabilities. That's about 16.8% of the population. In these regions, almost two-thirds of people live on less than US\$1 a day.

Ireland is the 4th richest country in the world and is a respected donor to developing countries. It has had anti-discrimination legislation since 1998 and a Disability Act since 2005.

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Alexander Arcani Mamani,
La Paz, Bolivia, talks about love
on Page 27. (Photo: Jorge Silva)



Foreword

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. People with disabilities are no exception to this rule. However, ensuring that people can enjoy their basic rights is a complex and difficult process. It requires political will, international norms and standards, as well as national and local action.

On 12 May 2008, the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** entered into force, representing a historic milestone for the global disability community. This Convention cements an international commitment to the realisation of universal rights for people with disabilities.

To celebrate this commitment, International Service Ireland partnered with the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) and the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA) to bring you **Putting the World to Rights**.

By telling the real-life stories of people we work with in Bolivia, Brazil and Burkina Faso, we hope to show you the reality for people with disabilities in the developing world, their triumphs as well as what they need. We want to encourage you to play your part and support people with disabilities in developing countries. You can make a difference, either on your own or by joining forces with friends in your community or colleagues at work.

You have the power to put the world to rights. Get involved now!

Donal Toolan
Chairman

Aidan Leavy
Director

**The main thing is
to keep at it, not
to lose courage.
No matter how
difficult the
situation, the
trick is to keep
going and to
fight for the
recognition of
your rights.**

Salam, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Waiting for Etienne

A story from Burkina Faso

In early July 2008, in a compound 4km outside Fada N’Gourma, a dusty town in the east of Burkina Faso, near the border with Benin, fifty people with disabilities are patiently waiting. Aged six to sixty-seven, they’ve travelled on buses and mini-vans on unmade roads for up to 30km to get here. The day is hot, like every day.

But today is not an ordinary day. On this day, something new will happen. Etienne, a Regional Director of Action Sociale, a government agency, is due to arrive. He’s coming nearly 700km from Banfora, a journey which takes an entire day, changing buses twice. He’s coming to run a programme on human rights that is due to last for five days. No-one knows what to expect. Nothing like this has ever happened before at the Disabled People’s Association of Gourma (APHG). Everyone’s going to stay at the APHG compound, sleeping on mats where they can, for the duration of the course. Nobody wants to miss it.

Things don’t go according to plan. Etienne is delayed. He ends up travelling through the night – not a wise thing to do in Burkina Faso. People wait calmly. Anticipation intensifies. In the end, more than a day-and-a-half late, Etienne is here. Everyone sits on chairs or benches or on the beaten earth floor of the ‘hangar’, a shelter made of fronds under a tin roof. Etienne stands in front of a blackboard, and begins.

Etienne explains that because of UN Conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people in every country have equal rights. Burkina Faso, a ‘least-developed nation’, is no exception. The same rights apply to everyone, whether they live in big cities, like Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, or in far-flung villages in the province of Gourma, such as Nagre or Bougi, where many of the participants have come from. Everyone in the room is entitled to the same rights as the President of Burkina. “But women, children and people with disabilities are known to be the most vulnerable groups in the world. This means that the most relevant, needed and used parts of human rights law are dedicated to protecting them...”



Michel Youma, Fada N’Gourma, Burkina Faso, (right, with Tambardja Bamboïdo) had a 3km crawl to school each day. Find out more on Page 29. (Photo: Aidan Leavy)

Here Etienne stops. He can't go on just yet, because the group has erupted into spontaneous applause. Everyone is clapping in recognition of the sheer justice of the fact that the most vulnerable groups are the ones who are most protected. This is exciting and vital news. The world recognises that we have rights!

That's not a scene that you'd see in Ireland. Here, we openly discuss our rights, even if they are not always fulfilled just the way we'd like. As we should, we take a lot of our rights for granted; we don't even think about them.

But it's different in Burkina Faso. Of the fifty people in the room, only thirty were registered at birth. The others are non-people, from an official point of view, with no relationship to the State, and no formal rights at all. They can't vote, go to school, open a bank account, travel... They're not even a statistic. It costs money to register a birth; you may have to travel a long way to do it. And if your child has an impairment...

Understanding about rights, including learning that you have them, is a vital part of asserting your personhood. It's a crucial step on the road to self-esteem and self-actualisation.

Many countries see disability as a curse, and people with disabilities are routinely denied many basic rights: education, free movement, independent living in the community, employment (even when well-qualified), information, health care, political rights such as voting, and the right to make their own decisions. In such countries, almost every mention of disability rights to non-disabled people is met with the question, "But what can they do?". In countries such as these, understanding and exercising rights is a vibrant element of change.

For the rest of that five-day course in Fada, the participants are engaged, asking lots of questions, eager to learn. This is vital information, because with it comes the possibility of changing everything. The course is repeated five times, so that 250 people with all kinds of impairments get a chance to learn about their rights.

**People just
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because we too
are Bolivians and
human beings!**

Feliza Alí Ramos, La Paz, Bolivia

It changes everything

The best and most comprehensive statement of disabled people's rights forms the content of the brand new **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**.

The first UN Convention of the twenty-first century, it passed into force in May 2008. By the middle of September 2008, it had been ratified by thirty-seven countries, from Australia to Hungary, from Jamaica to Thailand. In every country that ratifies it, whether rich or poor, developed or developing, the CRPD is legally binding. The CRPD has the legal and moral force to bring about real and positive changes in the lives of people with disabilities. While Ireland has been very supportive of the development of the CRPD, we haven't ratified it yet.

The CRPD is simply the most important event in global disability rights ever. Until the CRPD came along, people with disabilities were included with everyone else in all UN Conventions (such as the **UN Declaration of Human Rights**, and the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**), but little attention was paid to their concerns.

The new CRPD contains no new rights, but it restates existing ones in a way that brings the concerns, entitlements and responsibilities of people with disabilities to the foreground of human rights thinking and activity worldwide. Like all UN Conventions, it is legally binding on the countries that ratify it.

A couple of aspects of the CRPD literally change everything. To start with, this is the first UN Convention that wasn't put together just by governments. In a stunning example of the international disability rights movement's slogan "Nothing about us without us", people with disabilities and their organisations worldwide were actively involved in the drafting of the CRPD. Interestingly, that meant that the job was done far quicker than is usual for international legislation of this kind.

Another reason why the CRPD changes everything is that it once and for all knocks on the head the traditional medical model of disability. This now-outmoded way of thinking saw people with disabilities primarily in medical terms. According to the medical model, it was not up to society to change so that people with disabilities could join in.

Integration was seen as something that people with disabilities could achieve if they could be cured, or 'become normal', or if they themselves made huge efforts to 'overcome' the disadvantages they face. Non-disabled society was taken to be the norm, and people with disabilities either tried to fit in or were left out.

Instead, the CRPD is based entirely on the rights-based model of disability (also known as the social model of disability). This asserts that people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else, and must have equality of participation in mainstream activities. The rights-based model is about inclusion, and ensuring that everyone can join in with all that society has to offer. It requires governments and service providers to change the perspectives, strategies, policies, systems, processes, procedures and practices which prevent people with disabilities from taking part fully in everything that goes on in a society, on a basis of equality with others.

The CRPD complements existing international human rights law by clarifying that countries must respect and ensure the equal enjoyment of all human rights by people with disabilities. Ratifying countries are expected to make the changes necessary to enable people with disabilities to exercise their rights. Countries are also expected to reinforce protection for disabled people where their rights have been violated.

The CRPD also names universal minimum standards that should apply to everyone, and which provide the basis for a coherent framework for action. Under the terms of the CRPD, ratifying countries also agree to consult with people with disabilities, through their representative organisations, when developing and implementing laws and policies which put the CRPD into practice, or which affect disabled people's lives.

The CRPD marks a very significant change in attitudes and approaches to people with disabilities. Disabled people can no longer be viewed as 'objects' of charity. Instead, people with disabilities have become 'subjects' with rights, capable of claiming those rights and making decisions about their own lives based on free and active consent.

In this way, the CRPD claims disabled people's rightful place as active members of society, and gives universal recognition to their dignity.

The CRPD is based on eight principles and contains seventeen explicit rights (see Page 53) and several other important provisions. In countries like Ireland, where people often talk about rights, they may seem dull and dry. But it's very different in Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Brazil and other developing countries. Viewed by people in the APHG compound outside Fada N'Gourma, every right and clause in this Convention could be a fresh start. Every one contains the real chance of meaningful and positive change in their lives.

What are those lives like, and what do people with disabilities in developing countries want to change? Some share their real-life stories in **Putting the World to Rights**. And you have the chance to play your part; find out on Page 48 what practical things you can do to help people with disabilities in developing countries to transform their futures, to fuel their hopes, to shape their lives.

**I would love for
him to be able to
write. That's what
I want most for
him – to be able
to read and write
and be able
to live.**

Javier Pinto's Grandfather, Bolivia

Ours by right

Stories from the Convention

Behind each right expressed in the **UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)** there are thousands of stories.

Some are stories of injustice, neglect and betrayal; others are stories of optimism, success and affection. People with disabilities in Burkina Faso, Bolivia and Brazil claim their rights and illuminate some of the Articles of the CRPD with their stories to show how a right on a page can change a life. See Page 56 to find out how you can get the text of the CRPD.

Article 4 General obligations

Countries which ratify the Convention will make sure that human rights apply to all people, without discrimination because of disability.

Among other things, they will:

- do what it takes to put the rights in the CRPD into laws, policies and practices in their countries,

- adopt new laws and rules, change old ones where necessary, and scrap those which discriminate against people with disabilities,
- make sure that the human rights of people with disabilities are included in all policies and programmes,
- stop individuals, businesses and other organisations from discriminating on the grounds of disability,
- provide information in ways that people with disabilities can understand,
- provide disability equality training for non-disabled people whose work brings them into contact with people with disabilities.

Countries will put into practice laws and rules which relate to economic, social and cultural rights as much as they can with the resources they have got. If need be, they can co-operate with other countries to put these rights into practice. All other rights must be put into practice straight away.

When taking action related to the CRPD, countries must talk to and involve people with disabilities, including disabled children, through the organisations which represent them.

Article 5 Equality and non-discrimination

People with disabilities are equal before the law. They are protected by the law without discrimination. Discrimination on the grounds of disability is not allowed, and countries must protect people with disabilities from discrimination.

“**Feliza Alí Ramos**, La Paz, Bolivia: “It makes me mad – sometimes you get a lot of attention, and sometimes nothing. I really notice it because I lived twenty-seven years walking normally and I have always fought for what I believed in, but now I feel I have to fight doubly hard. People just assume that you can’t do things when they see the chair. But we have rights because we too are Bolivians and human beings!”

Article 6 Women with disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities often face double discrimination.

Countries will support the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities, and will make sure that they can enjoy their rights.

Women with disabilities face extra discrimination in Bolivia, even in organisations which work on disability issues. Feliza Alí Ramos is a thirty-eight-year-old social worker who has used a wheelchair since 1997, when she was injured in a bus crash. A few years later, Feliza tried to apply for a job with a disability organisation in Ecuador. “When I looked for information, it said that they were looking for men with disabilities and a third-level degree. I couldn’t believe that they were asking for a man, when I had a disability and a third-level degree. My friends and I were really mad about this, so we decided to find out more. We finally discovered that it was here in Bolivia, not in Ecuador, that they stated that only men could apply. We couldn’t believe it! We made people aware of what had happened so that, finally, women were able to enrol.”

Feliza Alí Ramos, La Paz, Bolivia, understands how being a woman with a disability can mean double discrimination. Read how she dealt with it on Page 14. (Photo: Jorge Silva)



Later, Feliza became National Executive Director of the same organisation in Bolivia. “I fought really hard to prove to the other seven directors – all men – that I was as good as they were. They thought that I could not do such a good job because I am a woman. Women with disabilities really do face double discrimination, it’s true.”

“ Personal life is equally important to disabled women in developing countries. **Marie Dominique** says, “I want people in Burkina Faso to accept that women with disabilities have the same needs as non-disabled women. Here in Burkina, as a woman without children, you have no value, you are nothing – we also have the right to have children.”

“But on the other hand, disabled women are often sexually exploited”, explains **Nadège**. Nadège, who is mobility impaired, lives in Gaoua, in the south of Burkina Faso. “A man will have sex with a disabled woman but he can’t be seen with her”, she explains. “Once she gets pregnant, he refuses to acknowledge the fact. He’s gone.”

Exploitation is all too familiar to **Miabala**, who lives in a village near Fada N’Gourma in Burkina Faso. “A very rich man, from Ouaga” offered to marry her. He said he’d set her up with her own shop, and that she wouldn’t have to cook. “My mother wasn’t happy, as Ouaga is so far away”, says Miabala, “but I went with the man anyway.”

What she thought was going to be a fairy-tale ending turned out to be just that – a fairy tale. The man mistreated her, gave her no food or clothes or money for her health care. “Every day I had to ask for food for breakfast, for soap. I asked him what the problem was, but he didn’t answer. I said, ‘if you love me, you must love me fully – you must not see my disability as a problem’. But although he had a lot of money, he also already had a wife. We had to live, each in her own hut, in the same compound.”

After three years, Miabala couldn’t stand it any longer, and she went home to her mother. But when she found out she was pregnant she knew she couldn’t stay.

“Our tradition is that a woman can’t give birth in her natal home if her father is dead”, Miabala explains, “so I had to go back to the man’s house. But the baby died inside me. Things were terrible. The man was careful with me in the mornings, but in the evenings he drank and there were lots of arguments. Perhaps because of the baby, I don’t know.” He started to beat her, and the attacks continued even when she became pregnant again, and after the child was born.

At that point, the man’s aunt, fearing that her nephew would kill Miabala, took her to her house. But the man followed and soon his elder brother had to step in and take her to his house, where she stayed until the child was three. Then she went back to her mother’s house. “Anyway, now I am at home for good. My husband took another wife, but she, too, ran away”, Miabala says.

Miabala earns a little money as a weaving instructor at APHG, and also does a little trading to support her children. “Sometimes, when I was with my husband, I cried all day. Now I come in here every morning and everyone is cheerful, so I am happy; my mind is free and I am emotionally stable. I just worry about ordinary things, like getting enough money for the children for school.”

“**Amzeta**, Ouagadougou: “I work with a group of women with disabilities. Only one of us is married. Her husband has mental health difficulties and does nothing. His wife must do everything in the home and for their four children. She is the breadwinner. It’s very hard.

Still, she is the lucky one, to be married. It’s difficult, because if a woman who is married becomes disabled, perhaps through a disease, she will be thrown out. Her husband’s family may say, ‘She is a useless daughter-in-law, she can’t do anything’. In the countryside they say, ‘She can’t fetch wood or draw water. She can’t sow’. Things are changing here in the capital, but everything stays the same in the villages.”

Article 7 Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities have the same rights as other children. They have the right to give their opinion, and for that opinion to be taken into account. The best interests of the child are the main priority.

Javier Pinto is seven years old, and he is looking for cows. They are somewhere here on his grandfather's small homestead near Yotala in Bolivia. But what he's really doing is showing how well he can run. This is an exciting thing to do, especially as he only began to walk at three years old. And after some running, it's good to come back and sit beside his grandfather, who tends the smallholding.

Javier doesn't talk. "Most of the time", says **Javier's grandfather**, "he acts or shows what he wants to say. He's very expressive without words. He also has picture cards which he can use to ask for things he wants."

Javier has lived with his grandparents since he was born. His mother was only fifteen or sixteen when she gave birth. "She found it hard to cope with Javier, and at that stage wasn't interested in being a mother", her father explains. After Javier was born, she moved away and now has two more children. "She visits Javier about once a month", Javier's grandfather explains, "but he doesn't really understand that she is his mother."

When Javier was six, he went to a centre in Sucre, the nearest city, to get therapy and to start his education. He stayed in the centre during the week and went home to his grandparents for the weekends. His grandfather was heartbroken. "It made me so sad. I cried over it a lot. And I noticed that Javier didn't eat when he was at the centre. He was so used to eating with us, he just stopped eating. So, when the time came for enrolling Javier for a second year, I did take him back, but I couldn't bring myself to leave him there any longer. Anyway, I am not sure that they had a place for him. So we took him out of there."

Now Javier goes every day to a kindergarten in Sucre. "It costs us a lot more to go there and back every day", says Javier's grandfather, "but he is so happy. He can come home. We would like him to go to the local school one day. I would love for him to be able to write."

That's what I want most for him – to be able to read and write and be able to live.”

Javier's grandfather is thrilled with everything that his grandson has achieved. “Javier brings us overwhelming joy. I am delighted with everything that he can manage, especially when he tries to help us with the things he can do. Every time he does something new, it is a bonus for us. He is so full of life, and very active.”

But Javier's grandfather worries about him, too: “I get a lot of pain from knowing that he is not like the other children, and I worry about what he will do when he grows up.”

Article 8 Awareness raising

Without delay, countries will make families and society in general aware of the issues affecting people with disabilities, and the need to respect their rights and dignity. They will combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices which impact on people with disabilities, including those related to gender and age, while also promoting appreciation of the capabilities and contribution of disabled people to society.

Countries will do this through means such as public awareness campaigns, programmes in schools and colleges, through the media and via disability equality training.

“**Yara**, Goaua, Burkina Faso: “That we people with disabilities can do anything at all really astonishes non-disabled people.”

Natalina Silva Nunes, a polio survivor who lives in Parintins, a remote city on an island in the middle of the Amazon River in Brazil, believes that family relationships are the most important aspect of a disabled person's life. “I was nine years old when I got polio, and everything changed. I stopped going to school, and spent most of my time at home. I got physiotherapy from a German doctor, but when he wanted me to go to another town to continue my treatment, my parents refused”, says Natalina.

She continues, “For me, the biggest problem that people with disabilities face is prejudice. But the worst form of prejudice is that which happens in your own family. It limits sons and daughters by transmitting low levels of hope, and in that way it prevents the development of a rights-based culture and consciousness.”

Marina Huarachi Collo is twenty-two and is in her final year of university in La Paz, Bolivia. She was registered as blind about five years ago. “When I was diagnosed with a degenerating and irreversible eye condition, the doctor was very blunt with my parents”, Marina recalls. “He told my father that he should take me out of school, that I should stop studying, and that I should never have children because my condition is hereditary. I think that’s why my parents have never accepted my disability.”

With her dream of becoming an architect now shattered, Marina’s parents’ reactions compounded her distress. “My mother blamed herself, believing that my vision impairment was a curse for some mistake that she had made in her own life.”

Marina’s parents wouldn’t let her use a white stick, and hid her impairment even from the neighbours. “At school, when my grades went down because I couldn’t see, I had to say that I was being lazy. My parents are scared that I will blame them for what has happened to me, so they don’t want to face up to the truth. My dream is that one day they will accept my disability. It bothers me that my family won’t accept the fact that my condition is progressive and that one day I will be completely blind. They even say to me, ‘you are getting better’, but it is all a lie – on the contrary, I see less every day!”

Marina has learnt to read Braille, and has had mobility training. She still dreams of the future. “I want to have a career”, she says. “And I would like to have a child myself. I’m just going to ignore what the doctor said. And I want to tell my parents that I love them, and that I am going to resolve this problem. They are so important to me – I want to help them so that together we can accept what is really going on.”

Marina Huarachi Collo,

La Paz, Bolivia, found her
parents' reaction hard to take.
Read her story on Page 20.
(Photo: Jorge Silva)



Article 9 Accessibility

Countries which ratify the CRPD have to make sure that people with disabilities can access buildings, roads, outdoor spaces, transport, communication, services and everything else that is happening on a basis of equality with other people. Countries have to set and implement standards of access to buildings and services which are open to the public, whether they are state-run or privately owned. They also have to make sure that information is easy to understand and is made available in accessible formats, and that appropriate forms of assistance, such as sign language interpretation, are provided for people who need them. Promoting access to new technologies is a particular priority.

Article 10 Right to life

Every human being has an inherent right to life. Countries which ratify the CRPD will make sure that people with disabilities can enjoy their right to life on an equal basis with everyone else.

“ **Hyppolite**, Fada N’Gourma, Burkina Faso: “The most important right is the right to live. No-one has the right to take away a person’s life”.

Article 11 Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

Countries which ratify the CRPD will protect people with disabilities during armed conflict, during natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies.

Article 12 Equal recognition as a person before the law

People with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to be recognised as a person before the law. Countries which ratify the CRPD recognise that people with disabilities have legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of their lives. These countries will make sure that people with disabilities get the support they need to exercise their legal capacity. They will also make sure that people with disabilities have the right to own or inherit property; control their own money and financial affairs; have the same opportunities as others to get loans, mortgages and credit; and cannot be deprived of their property without good reason.

People with disabilities have the same right as others to access the legal system. Countries which ratify the CRPD will make sure that procedures are adapted so that people with disabilities can be involved in the legal process at all levels, including being called as witnesses. Police, prison staff and other legal personnel will receive disability equality training.

“I love justice”, says **Henri Kone**, a wheelchair user who works in the HR department of the parliament of Burkina Faso. “When I left university, I wanted to be a judge. This was during the 1980s, during our revolution, when everything seemed possible. However, it turned out that I was too old to get into the training programme. But, as it worked out, I am now in this job, helping to solve internal disputes involving staff, so it’s not too far from what I originally had in mind.”

Henri uses his legal knowledge to draw attention to disabled people’s rights. In 1997, he wrote **A Cry from the Heart of People with Disabilities**, and now he’s hard at work on a more detailed follow-up called **Beyond Prejudice**. The aim is to inform everyone, disabled and non-disabled, about disability rights. “Our country passes laws and signs treaties but then doesn’t respect them”, Henri says. “Government and other authorities and service providers need to implement the legislation that is already there. For example, we have a law that provides for ramped access, but nobody seems to know about it, still less implement it. On the other hand, people with disabilities need to learn that it is their responsibility to know their rights, and to fight for them.”

According to Henri, people with disabilities are “more protected than others” by certain aspects of the law in Burkina Faso, but this doesn’t necessarily work to their advantage. “For example”, Henri explains, “a person with a disability who commits a crime may have part of their sentence commuted, and the rape of a disabled person leads to a harsher sentence. This emphasis on protection can be used, though, to exclude a disabled child from school because he or she ‘might get too tired’ – even though the law says that children with mobility impairments must be accommodated in local schools, and given appropriate facilities.”

Despite the obvious frustrations, Henri is determined to carry on working for the achievement of disabled people’s rights. “You could say it’s my mission in life”, he grins. “If I don’t do it, who will?”

Article 14 Liberty and security

People with disabilities have the same right to liberty and security as everyone else. In countries which ratify the CRPD, this right cannot be taken away just because a person has a disability, or without a good reason that is valid in law. If people with disabilities are deprived of their liberty for any reason, they will be protected by law.

Article 15 Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

People with disabilities cannot be forced to take part in medical or scientific experiments, nor can they be tortured, or treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way.

Article 16 Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

Through the implementation of appropriate law and policy, countries which ratify the CRPD will make sure that people with disabilities are not exploited or abused, either in their homes or elsewhere. They will make sure that disabled people and their families know how to avoid, recognise and report abuse, and will arrange for the independent monitoring of services catering specifically for people with disabilities. People with disabilities who have been abused will receive support to aid their recovery.

Article 17 Protecting the integrity of the person

People with disabilities have the right to respect for their physical and mental integrity, on an equal basis with others.

Article 18 Liberty of movement and nationality

People with disabilities have the right to move around the country they live in, to choose where they live, and to have a nationality, on an equal basis with others. They cannot be deprived of their nationality, passport or identity card, or denied entry to their own country, because of their disability or without good reason.

Children with disabilities should be registered immediately after their birth. They have rights as soon as they are born. These include the right to a name, a nationality and, as far as possible, to know and be cared for by their parents.

Article 19 Living independently and being included in the community

People with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to live in the community, to participate and to be included in whatever is going on. They must have the same opportunities as everyone else to choose where they live and with whom, and they should not be forced to live in institutions or in other living arrangements which they do not like. People with disabilities must be able to access community services and facilities for the general population, and these services must be responsive to their needs. People with disabilities have the right to access personal assistance and similar services aimed at supporting inclusion in the wider community.

Article 20 Personal mobility

Countries will make sure that people with disabilities can move around as independently as possible, by providing affordable access to mobility aids and technology, and by providing training in mobility skills to people with disabilities and specialist staff.

Article 21 Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

People with disabilities have the right to say what they think by whatever means they choose, including through ‘alternative formats’ such as Braille and sign language. Countries which ratify the CRPD must provide information which is available to the general public in formats that people with disabilities can use, at no extra cost. They must also encourage the media and other private companies to make their services and information more accessible to people with disabilities.

Article 22 Respect for privacy

No matter where they are living, people with disabilities must be protected from arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence, and from illegal attacks on their honour and reputation. Information about their health and other personal matters must be kept confidential.

Article 23 Respect for home and the family

People with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to marry, and to choose if and when to have children. Information and assistance with these issues will be provided in a way that people with disabilities can understand and use. People with disabilities have the right to adopt children. Those who need it will get help to raise their children.

Children with disabilities have the same rights as other children to a family life. Their best interest is paramount. They must not be taken from their parents without their consent unless it is clearly in their best interest. If their parents can't look after them, the next best option is someone else in their family, and after that, someone else in their local community.

“A few years ago I met the girl I wanted to marry”, says **Michel**, who lives in Fada N’Gourma in Burkina Faso. “Her parents refused to let her marry me, because I am a wheelchair user. Now, I’m the kind of guy who, if you tell him that he can’t do something, he’ll do it anyway. So the relationship continued, and she got pregnant and came to live with me.”

Michel’s girlfriend’s family reacted badly to that. They came and got her and took her home. She stayed there for two years, asking Michel to prove that he could support her. “Her family want me to do the civil service exams and get a ‘real job’, rather than putting most of my energy into the disability association”, he says. “It’s true that I work here from 9am to 3pm every day, which doesn’t leave me much time for running the business which is meant to provide me with an income, but I’m just not very materialistic”, he confesses. “I’m an optimist, I like having grand visions of the future...”

After two years, Michel's partner returned, and they had a second child. "Her mother harassed me about it. I sold some land, bought a fridge and other electrical goods, and helped to set my partner up with her own small business so that she could earn money for herself, but neither my partner nor her mother was satisfied. I said, 'Give me two years to make a go of this, and if it doesn't work, I'll do the exam'. But, in that time, the family took my partner back again, and found another man for her, and that was that." All this was a major sadness for Michel; "I really loved the girl", he says softly, "but the situation was irreconcilable."

“ **Amzeta**, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso: "My boyfriend wanted to marry me, but his family said no, and I don't want to make his life harder – his family will cut him off if he marries me. My boyfriend's aunt was for it, but his father's really against it. His father has been to school, so he has no excuse for ignorance."

Alexander Arcani Mamani lives in La Paz in Bolivia. He is nineteen years old and is deaf-blind. He says, "I had a girlfriend but she went away to another country to work. She was nice and she understood me. I know that some day a girl will love me for who I am. The girls I know now just want to be together for a little while, or else they want to be with me because I have a blind pension. Others just think I am cute, they want me as an object, and nothing else", laughs Alexander.

People with disabilities have the right to education. In countries which ratify the CRPD, the education system at all levels, including vocational education and lifelong learning, will be inclusive, offer equal opportunities for all, and be free from discrimination. People with disabilities have the right to choose inclusive education in their own communities, and to receive the help that they need in order to get the best out of their education.

Countries will provide people with disabilities with the social and life skills they need in order to participate fully in education and in the community. They will make sure that children with disabilities are educated in ways that enable them to get the most out of their education, that their individual needs are met, and that they can communicate in the ways that are most appropriate for them. Teachers and trainers will receive disability equality training and specific skills training to equip them for this work.

Education has to be delivered appropriately if children with disabilities are to benefit. **Eva Sifuentes** has multiple disabilities, including impaired vision, intellectual and emotional impairments. She lives alone in Sucre in Bolivia, and is expecting twins. “I’d like to study again”, says Eva, “but I can’t afford to. In any case, I need one-to-one tuition. I can’t read and I am really slow at learning Braille. I tried before but I wasn’t taught properly. The teachers would chat and I couldn’t concentrate. I couldn’t write and I never did homework. The teacher told me to borrow notes from my classmates. All my exams were oral, not written.”

“**Yara**, Gaoua, Burkina Faso, believes that “education is the most important right. People with disabilities need to be able to read – for work, to get out of poverty, for everything.”

Henri, who works in the parliament in Ouagadougou, agrees. “Education is the key to everything”, he asserts. “With education you can change lives, conditions; you can be everything that you can be”.

Henri’s own education was not easy. “The teacher didn’t want a disabled kid in the classroom. I was constantly being told, ‘You are not like the others, you should stay at home’.”

But Henri persisted, and then went to secondary school. “That was hard too, especially when the hand trike I got from the Lions Club needed to be repaired. Many times I just wanted to give up. The crunch time came at the end of secondary school, when I was due to do my final exams. I could see how easy it was for the others to get what they wanted, whereas everything I tried to do was so difficult. I had to give myself a big lecture, tell myself that these challenges were good for me, that I had to have real courage. I told myself that the alternative was to live in the street on just bread and water.”

The lecture worked, and Henri went to university. “In those days, there were only four people with disabilities at the university; now there are a hundred. The library was inaccessible. I got a catalogue, so I knew what was inside. I had to leave my trike outside the library, crawl in on all fours, and ask the librarian to fetch my books from the shelves.”

Michel, the president of APHG in Fada N’Gourma, knows all about the challenges involved in getting an education. Born in a village near Fada N’Gourma, Michel crawled around as a small child. A missionary priest, who saw that he was intelligent, insisted that he should be sent to school. This involved crawling for 3km there, and then 3km back, in the hot sun, although sometimes he got a lift on someone’s bike. Neighbours tried to tell Michel’s father to take him out of school, but the priest was insistent. “The teachers were astonished by me”, says Michel. “They kept saying, ‘There’s no point in coming to school, you’ll never amount to anything’, but I just kept going”.

When Michel was ten, there was famine in the district, and the rest of Michel’s family left the area. Michel stayed, and continued to go to school. He won a scholarship to secondary school, coming top in the exams for the whole region. “It was at this point that I came to Fada”, Michel explains, “and I got callipers. I was twelve or thirteen years old. After my first exams in secondary school, the revolution here ended and I lost my grant. So, on Sundays, I went to the market, traded in meat, and helped farmers with their exports to the Ivory Coast. That gave me enough money to go to my cousins in Ouagadougou. They were rich, and I thought they could help me to go to college. I had half of the money I needed, and I hoped my cousins might match it. But they didn’t. I tried to follow the classes by learning from the other students. But it was no good; I failed the exams. I went to work for a private school in Ouagadougou but the pay was terrible, so I came back to Fada in 1994, and I have been here ever since.”

For Michel, education is the most important right. “The problems of inclusion are greatly reduced if people are educated and know how to get their rights. That’s why we ran the human rights training here in Fada. Inclusive education is best, of course, because it makes communication between disabled and non-disabled people easier. We now invite non-disabled people here to our centre, as a kind of reverse integration. It works.”

Hyppolite, a twenty-five-year-old member of APHG, knows all about the stresses of staying in the educational mainstream. “Primary school wasn’t a problem, but I had to go to the head of social services in the place we were living to get documents showing that the secondary school just had to admit me.”

Getting into school is only part of the battle. Dealing with others’ attitudes is a constant pressure. “I just put up with people’s reactions”, Hyppolite says. “Some people are kind, others persecute you. That’s life.”

Right now, Hyppolite is halfway through a two-year diploma course in administration, accounting and commerce, but getting onto the course was a real struggle. “Social Services, Michel and a lawyer friend of my father all had to intervene. The school also tried saying that I was too old, but once I was in I realised that the real reason was my disability. The rest were all excuses.”

Jesús Reynaldo Calderon is twenty and lives with his family in Yotala in Bolivia. He has cerebral palsy, and attended a special school from the age of eight. “I don’t remember much of my early days in the Institute”, Jesús says. “I wanted to learn but the other children in the class would take my books and rip them up. They had different problems to me and I found them annoying, and that put me off going to class. I told the teacher that I wanted to learn and that I didn’t like the other children taking my stuff, but it didn’t stop, so after a while I stopped going. The most I learnt to do there was write my name, but that’s all that I was taught.”

Alex Rospigliozi Sanjines,
La Paz, Bolivia, has a
keen interest in the arts.
Find out more on Page 47.
(Photo: Jorge Silva)



People with disabilities have the same right to quality health care as everyone else, without discrimination because of disability.

Countries which ratify the CRPD will make sure that people with disabilities get the same variety, quality and standard of health care as other people. Countries will insist that health workers give the same quality of care to people with disabilities as they give to non-disabled people. They will give health workers disability equality training and will set ethical standards for health care. Health and life insurance must not discriminate against people with disabilities.

Marie Dominique Toe is founder and Madame la Présidente of Djigui Espoir, a food processing company based in Ouagadougou. Djigui Espoir is run by and for women with disabilities. Marie Dominique is mobility impaired and is a capable woman in her middle years. Unlike many women with disabilities in Burkina Faso, she exudes self-confidence: “My father was a teacher. He was educated. When I was young, my family gave me confidence, unlike most of the disabled women I know; their families neglect them”.

Marie Dominique’s advantages helped a lot when she went into hospital to have a baby when she was eighteen. Because of her impairment, she couldn’t get onto the delivery table, and none of the staff would touch her. Luckily, her mother was there: “She knew the nurses, and they let her help me onto the table and put my feet into the stirrups. Then she fainted so, after that, she was no more use!”, Marie Dominique laughs.

But it wouldn’t have been funny if her mother wasn’t so supportive. “Many women with disabilities have to give birth on the floor, if they can’t get onto the table”, Marie Dominique explains. “They are usually alone; there are no fathers. No-one will help or intervene. If your family doesn’t help you, no-one will. The women get infections; they die like that. Only last week, a disabled woman died giving birth in the hospital.”

Medical personnel in Bolivia are often no more clued in or helpful.

“They just don’t know how to treat us”, says **Feliza Alí Ramos**, a wheelchair user. “Once I had to have x-rays taken in Sucre, which is a city, not a village! The doctors wanted me to stand up. I told them I couldn’t, but they insisted. They lifted me up by the arms, and then wanted me to straighten my legs. I couldn’t believe that they, as doctors, didn’t understand and know that that was impossible! I cried the whole day. I couldn’t believe it.”

Countries which ratify the CRPD will make sure that people with disabilities can get the disability-related health services that they need, including services which ensure that their impairments do not get worse. These services should be available in people’s own communities.

Countries will make sure that people with disabilities are informed about their health rights, and do not undergo treatment without their consent. They will make sure that people with disabilities are not denied health services, or food or fluids, because of their impairments.

Article 26 Habilitation and rehabilitation

Countries will take action to make sure that people with disabilities achieve and maintain the maximum level of independence in all areas of their lives, and enjoy full inclusion and participation in society. In countries which ratify the CRPD, habilitation and rehabilitation services will be voluntary, community-based and individually focused, and will aim to maximise inclusion and participation in the community.

When Bolivian **Jesús Reynaldo Calderon** was eighteen, he was told that he had to leave the familiar surroundings of the institution in which he had lived since he was eight. “The Director said that I was too old to be there, and that I needed to go out and be independent”, Jesús recalls. “I felt very hurt and rejected. I felt that he had chucked me out of the home that I had known for ten years. I still resent him and I don’t want to meet him again, ever.”

Jesús' mother runs a small grocery stall. She tried to help him to find work. "It was very difficult for her. I can't read or write, so my chances of work are limited", Jesús explains. "I realised that I needed to re-start my education, so now every evening from 6.30pm to 10pm I go to the local school."

A new library opened in Yotala in May 2008, and now Jesús is working as an assistant there. "I am responsible for reshelving the books, and making sure that they are in order. The books and the shelves have coloured stickers on, which makes it easier. I also help with activities in the library, such as craft activities with children."

Jesús is happy working in the library, and is becoming more independent. "Slowly, I am learning all the things that I need to know so that I can live on my own, though my mother is worried about teaching me to cook in case I burn myself. She thinks that it would be a good idea if I were to rent a room somewhere in Yotala so that I could learn to live independently", he says.

Article 27 Work and employment

People with disabilities have the same right to work as other people. They have the right to earn a living from work which they choose, in a work environment which is open and accessible to everyone.

Countries which ratify the CRPD will outlaw discrimination against people with disabilities in relation to work and employment, and will protect their right to equal opportunities, equal pay for equal work, safe and healthy working conditions and to a complaints procedure. These countries will also outlaw harassment of people with disabilities in the workplace. They will make sure that people with disabilities are not held in slavery or servitude, and that they are protected, on an equal basis with others, from forced or compulsory labour.

People with disabilities have the right to join trade unions, just like everyone else. They also have the same rights to career counselling, vocational guidance, training, promotion, work experience, self-employment and so on.

Countries which ratify the CRPD must make sure that public sector employment is open to people with disabilities, and that reasonable accommodations are provided in the workplace. They also agree to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector, by introducing initiatives such as incentive schemes and positive action measures.

Marie Dominique and **Amzeta**, the assistant head of production at the food company Djigui Espoir (both words mean ‘hope’), are talking about the benefits of running an enterprise in Ouagadougou just for women with disabilities. Before she met Marie Dominique in 2002, Amzeta was working as an embroiderer. “I learnt to do embroidery and make baby clothes at the Cathedral, but no-one buys handmade items like those anymore. They’re too expensive, especially now that we can get cheap second-hand clothes from Europe, so it wasn’t working out. Anyway, at that time, I couldn’t even write my name. But then I came here, and it works well for me. It’s geared to the needs of women with disabilities. For example, I work from 8am to 3pm, so it’s easy to get home on my hand trike, and I have four hours after that to do things before it gets dark. It’s pressured, but every woman has to be organised!”, Amzeta laughs.

Marie Dominique has seen big changes in the women who work at Djigui Espoir. “One woman came to work here. Before that, she didn’t leave home, ever, not even to go to church. When she came here she got her independence, she got money to spend. She would spend hours each morning putting on nice clothes, ear-rings, even lipstick. It made a big difference to her confidence. When we women with disabilities dress well and are clean, then people respect us.” Amzeta agrees; “It’s good for morale to get ready for work”, she says.

Nowhere on Djigui Espoir’s products does it say that it is an enterprise run by women with disabilities. “People wouldn’t buy the products if they knew who made them”, Marie Dominique explains. “They would think the products were contaminated. Most people think that people with disabilities are dirty. They associate us with the gutter, with sitting and crawling in the dust at the side of the road”.

Being with other women with disabilities helps everyone to cope with prejudices like this. “When we meet together we laugh, we forget our problems”, the women agree. “It’s good to work here.”

Amzeta, Ouagadougou,
Burkina Faso, appreciates
the need to be organised.
Read about her on Page 35.
(Photo: Karim Sawadogo)



Siaka was twelve years old, and at school near Gaoua in the south of Burkina Faso, when he lost his hearing due to meningitis. “I wasn’t allowed back to school, so I started doing odd jobs – construction, making furniture, things like that”, he says. “But after a few years, I wanted to do more. My young brother was still in school, so I started teaching myself from his books. I entered the exams as an independent candidate, and I passed.”

At this point, Siaka decided to sit the civil service entrance exam. He applied, but there was a problem; if they found out he was deaf, he wouldn’t be allowed to take the exam. “I was really frightened that they would find out”, Siaka says, “but, thanks be to God, I got through the exams without anyone knowing.”

Passing the exams meant that Siaka could now go to the civil service college for two years, in order to qualify for administrative and financial work. Knowing that he wouldn’t be able to follow the classes, he made an arrangement with the teacher and another student. “The student made notes during classes, and I copied what he wrote. Then I did my own assignments, independently. I was twenty-eight years old when I went there. I qualified as an administrative assistant when I was thirty.”

Things have worked out well for Siaka. He has a good job, and gets on well with his colleagues. But he knows he has hit a glass ceiling. “My colleagues can do extra duties, but I can’t”, he says. Brightening up, Siaka says, “My experience shows that if people with disabilities use their resolve and get out there, they can be part of society.”

Siaka is the treasurer of the Provincial Network of Disabled People’s Organisations in Gaoua. **Yara**, the president, lost his job as a tax inspector when he lost his sight in 1997. Through a French contact, he went to Ouagadougou and learnt to read Braille and to do upholstery. He now teaches Braille through a second-chance education scheme. “At the moment, I have ten students, aged seven to fifty-two”, he says.

Finding a paid job again has proved impossible. “On paper everything looks possible”, Yara explains, “but out in the street it’s different. I’ve been trying for five years to get back to work. Even if you have diplomas, you can’t get a job if you have a disability.”

Knowing all this, their colleague **Nadège**, who didn't go to school, has started up her own small business from home, baking small cakes. "They are a kind of cake that people like but not many people actually bake", she explains, "although I find them easy to make. It's a matter of pride for me to make something that other people like, and it brings in money which I can use to keep my child in school. Through my business, I have met more of the women who live locally. When they come to buy cakes they also tell me their problems, and it feels really good to be trusted and useful in this way."

In his small, neat, air-conditioned room at the rambling main hospital in Ouagadougou, **Salam** is taking notes, dealing with all the people who drop in looking for this and that, and routing every telephone call that goes in or out of the compound. His calm competence is palpable. "I was very lucky that 1977, the year that I lost my sight, was the year a Catholic Sister started the first Braille classes in Ouagadougou. We had Braille class in the morning and learned crafts in the afternoon. Afterwards, I did upholstery and things like that, and I taught Braille for a while, but I wanted more opportunities. These days, you can go to university if you have Braille, but at that time you couldn't do much."

With the help of a Swiss benefactor, and some support from Social Services, Salam spent two years in the Ivory Coast, learning to be a switchboard operator. "I made sure that I learnt to use standard switchboards, not adapted ones", says Salam. "In the Ivory Coast, when the adapted machine broke, it wasn't replaced. If you only know about adapted machines you'll get no work, or you'll lose your job when the machine breaks down, and a non-disabled person will get your position."

During holidays from the course, Salam applied to the hospital in Ouagadougou to work temporarily "for no pay, as a trainee. The hospital here said yes, but I was a big novelty. Even the Director of the hospital came by to see if I could actually do it!"

After two months, Salam went back to the Ivory Coast but returned to Ouagadougou when he finished his course and, for eighteen months, worked at the hospital for no pay. "I'd work there in the mornings and then do craft work in the afternoon. I tried to get into the public service but it didn't work out. I was married with a daughter by this time. It was hard, but I was determined to keep my place in the hospital."



Salam, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, had to fight for his rights at work. Learn about his experience on Page 38. (Photo: Karim Sawadogo)

Slowly, through a long and tortuous process, Salam got a full-time paid job in the hospital. “I found it very hard to work every day from morning until night. The sighted switchboard operators were working a different schedule, with ten hour shifts and more time off. I wanted to have the same conditions as the others.”

Salam had to fight every inch of the way to get those conditions. “I had to make an appointment to see the Director himself. He told me that he didn’t want me to work on the night shift, as the sighted switchboard operators do. Other disabled employees in the hospital don’t work nights. But I wanted to be autonomous, and I worked out my own schedule – one day on, one day off.”

Since then, the job has worked out well for Salam. “All the hospital’s calls come through here”, he explains. “I note down messages and numbers in Braille. I eat here, while I am working. If it’s quiet during the night shift, I can rest on a bed in my office. This job means that I can support my three children. My eldest daughter just passed important exams this year”, he says with pride.

Salam is philosophical about how he has managed to achieve so much. “A man is born with his own character, and mine is not to depend on anyone. Even when I was a child, I wanted to be independent, and my character didn’t leave me with my sight! People told me that I should stay working for the association of blind people, but I didn’t want that; I’d have lost my autonomy.”

“ For **Salam**, work and employment is the most important right. “To put packs of biscuits in a box, you don’t need either sight or education, but people won’t employ you to do it. As President of the organisation which co-ordinates associations of vision-impaired people, I lobby Government to give better access to jobs. I tell them that vision-impaired people should not be exempted from contributing to the development of our country. At the same time, because the majority of vision-impaired people are jobless, they think the only way to get money is to beg. So it’s my task to get them to change their way of thinking. Structures are weak and it’s hard to satisfy everyone. But the main thing is to keep at it, not to lose courage. No matter how difficult the situation, the trick is to keep going and to fight for the recognition of your rights.”

Article 28 Adequate standard of living and social protection

People with disabilities have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families. This includes adequate food, clothing, housing, clean water and the other basics of life. They also have the right to social protection by their government, free of discrimination on the grounds of their disability.

Countries which ratify the CRPD will make sure that people with disabilities get necessary services, equipment and help to meet their impairment-related needs. They will ensure that they have access to social welfare assistance, public housing programmes and retirement benefits, and to programmes which can help them out of poverty. This is especially important for disabled women and girls, and to older people with disabilities.

Around nineteen years old now, **Petit Jo** was about thirteen, he thinks, when he came home one day from playing football, had a shower, felt tired, got an overwhelming pain in his legs and lost the ability to walk. “My parents couldn’t afford an operation, traditional medicine didn’t work, and so that was it”, he says.

Things were hard. Some of the time, he had an old wheelchair; at other times, he had to crawl on the ground. “I was incredibly sad”, Petit Jo says, “I thought I would never be able to get around by myself, still less be able to get a job or support myself. I spent a lot of time hanging around parking areas in Ouagadougou, waiting for people to come out of restaurants, getting chased away by parking attendants. It was no life.”

Then, one day, Petit Jo met someone in a market who told him about a Swiss man who was setting up some workshops to provide employment for people with disabilities. “And that’s how I came here, to this soldering workshop where we make and repair wheelchairs and hand trikes.”

Some non-disabled people are employed in the workshop, too. “There are some jobs we just can’t do, lifting heavy equipment, and stuff like that”, Petit Jo explains. “In any case, I think inclusive workplaces are better. People can complement each other’s skills and abilities, and the attitudes of non-disabled people can change.”

Petit Jo, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, believes inclusive workplaces are better workplaces. His story is on Page 41. (Photo: Karim Sawadogo)



Petit Jo doesn't intend to stay at the workshop forever. "One day, I want to be my own boss, have my own business and employ other people", he says. "I'm happy now, but that would be even better."

Nemesio Apaza Tola lives in Sucre in Bolivia. He lost his sight during a routine operation when he was in his twenties. Prior to becoming vision-impaired, Nemesio had had hardly any schooling, but during his rehabilitation, he was able to finish secondary school by studying at night. "I wanted to go to college, perhaps to become a teacher, but I couldn't afford it, so I decided I had better earn my own living."

Petty trade seemed the obvious thing to do. "At the beginning, I sold things like toilet paper or dental products", says Nemesio. "Then I switched to seasonal goods, like umbrellas and items for Christmas. But now, I sell newspapers. I have a stand on a street corner, but business isn't great there, so I deliver papers to various businesses: hairdressers, hospitals, lawyers' offices. I drop the papers off in the morning and collect the money in the afternoon."

Article 29 Participation in political and public life

People with disabilities have the right to be fully involved in political life. They have the right to vote and to stand for election. Voting should be accessible and easy to understand, and people with disabilities have the right to get assistance to vote for someone they choose. Countries which ratify the CRPD will encourage people with disabilities to be involved in the work of the government and to participate in public life, through joining political parties and civil society organisations, such as disability groups and mainstream community and voluntary organisations.

People with disabilities have the right to take part in cultural life.

Countries which ratify the CRPD will take action to make it possible for people with disabilities to develop and use their creative, artistic and intellectual potential.

The dusty street, with its children and chickens, walled compounds and dilapidated gates, looks like every other one in the district. You know you are coming to the right place, though, by the sound of a dozen musicians and singers jamming in the hot afternoon. Push open the gate, and there, under an awning between two mud-brick buildings, is a collection of disabled and non-disabled men, and a joyous rhythm and noise. It's one of the four days a week that people just drop by here, jamming, singing, bringing instruments. It's all acoustic – there's no electricity. There's a drumkit, guitars, percussion instruments, and a man constantly brewing mint tea over a tiny stove.

In the middle of it all, beaming, is **Zougrana Moumouni Orlando – Z.mo** (pronounced “Zed-mo”) for short. A wheelchair user, Z.mo is one of Burkina Faso's leading reggae singers.

“I was born into a family of musicians. My father played traditional guitar, my mother sang traditional music.” What kind of music did she sing? Cue for lots of laughter, wiggling about and slapping of backsides. “Lively music, lots of dancing”.

“I learnt music with them, I've understood it since childhood. I didn't study it at school. But then I and my brothers were orphaned in the 1990s. I was the eldest, so the most important day in my life was in 2000, when I released my first album. It meant that I could support the others.”

The album release led to a visit to Switzerland, where Z.mo sang with a ten-piece West African band. “I bought the drumkit there. Having instruments like that means that I can progress in my music. Until then, I could only do playback concerts, singing to a pre-recorded backing tape. You can't advance like that.”

Z.mo, “I’ve made everyone dance here in Burkina, including the President and his wife”. Read his story on Page 44. (Photo: Karim Sawadogo)



Z.mo's music talks of the injustice that is experienced every day by people with disabilities and orphans. "They face similar problems", he says. His lyrics draw this out. "We want to work, not to beg", he sings. "We don't want to live in the street. God gave us hands and brains, we want to work." It's not sad music, though. "I've made everyone dance here in Burkina, including the President and his wife", says Z.mo with a grin.

It's still not plain sailing for Z.mo, though. "I've lost a lot of contracts because I have a disability. Promoters don't like someone crawling onto the stage. You need your own team to get you on the stage – they're all inaccessible. I'm still excluded from a lot of events, because people see only the obstacles. Some people don't say, 'here's Z.mo', they say, 'here's a disabled singer'. That has to change. I use my music to try to bring about that change."

Z.mo firmly believes in the transformative power of creativity. Every Sunday, artists with disabilities come by Z.mo's compound and learn to play music. "Whatever knowledge I have, I want to share with disabled people. Even if they haven't been to school, people with disabilities can develop themselves using film, music and other creative means."

There's a long way to go. "When I go to the provinces to play in a concert, people leave their disabled family members in the house; they don't bring them along. When there's a celebration in the village, they're left in a corner. They don't get any opportunity to join in."

Z.mo was impressed by the pride and self-confidence he saw in European people with disabilities. "Here in Burkina, it's all about pity", he says. "I ask my fans, 'Are you happy with my music?' 'Yes!', they shout. So I come back with, 'So why do people with disabilities still face discrimination?'"

Z.mo understands the unusual situation he is in. "Lots of people want to be like me, because I am a celebrity", he laughs, "but they don't want my impairment!"

And it's not all about turning professional. **Alex Rospigliozi Sanjines** is twenty-eight and has Down Syndrome. He lives in La Paz in Bolivia. "I am really interested in lots of artistic things", says Alex. "I like painting on cloth and doing crafts. I can make greetings cards and other paper products. I can also bake and make chocolates. I love folk dancing, and I participate in different dance groups in mainstream and disability-related parades and events. I like sport, too; I have won gold medals at the Special Olympics." Which is all a far cry from his new job in Burger King.

Countries which ratify the CRPD will make sure that people with disabilities have the chance to organise and participate in sports activities and that they can get to sports venues on a basis of equality with others. Children with disabilities have the right to play activities and sports, just like other children.

"Before I became disabled, I played football", **Petit Jo**, now nineteen, says, "but afterwards I didn't do anything. When I started working with other people with disabilities who were members of Handicap Solidaire, a disabled people's organisation in Ouagadougou, I saw what they were achieving. I realised that I should take the opportunities that were on offer. So I tried everything: table tennis, lawn tennis, basketball. And I found that I was really good at them. Lawn tennis is my favourite, though, because it requires the most creativity. And I am best at it!", he winks.

You can put the world to rights

Some easy ways for you to get involved

Article 32 of the CRPD addresses international co-operation, and deals with the partnership between international organisations and governments. It refers to the need to make sure that “international co-operation, including international development programmes, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities”.

If you belong to a disability group or other organisation, you could make a twinning arrangement with a disability group in a developing country. You'll be able to exchange information, experiences and expertise. It's a great, enriching experience for both parties.

If you make donations to international aid and development agencies based in Ireland or elsewhere, you could ask them to make sure that people with disabilities are equal beneficiaries of their work overseas. You could also ask them to make sure that disability is no barrier to volunteering.

You could become an e-volunteer. E-volunteering involves supporting a disability organisation in a developing country by contributing your expertise for a couple of hours a week or month via e-mail. See more on www.onlinevolunteering.org

Your organisation could host an exhibition or a development education workshop, which would help you to understand more about the lives of people with disabilities in developing countries.

You could contact Irish Aid, and ask them to make equal benefit and participation for people with disabilities a feature of all the projects that they fund.

You could set up a small fund in your workplace or organise a fundraiser in your community, and use it to support organisations of people with disabilities in developing countries. Sums of money which seem tiny in Ireland go a very long way in most developing countries.

You could lobby your elected representatives to make sure that Ireland ratifies the CRPD very soon. This will benefit people with disabilities in Ireland, as well as showing solidarity with disabled people throughout the world.

To find out more about any of these ways of getting involved in putting the world to rights, contact Aidan or Orla at ISI on 01 - 874 6007 or info@is-ireland.ie

International Service Ireland

Putting the World to Rights is an initiative of International Service Ireland (ISI). ISI is an Irish development organisation that primarily works with disabled people and their organisations to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. Our focus is long-term development and we have three strategic priorities: Disability and Development, HIV/AIDS and Development Education. ISI works hand-in-hand with International Service in the UK, which was established in 1953.

ISI's mission is to combat poverty and oppression by strengthening the organisations of the poorest groups and by increasing awareness and understanding of critical development issues in Ireland. ISI have placed over 100 experienced professional development workers with local partner organisations in developing countries in order to help those organisations to become effective and self-sustainable. ISI also provides basic seed funding for improving services and for income-generating activities, so that people with disabilities can play an active part in their community and improve their quality of life. We have helped an estimated 300,000 beneficiaries through our programmes so far.

ISI's success in its projects is due to an understanding of what works at local level. Our work includes a focus on women and children and we have had significant achievements with the following projects:

- Strengthening the management capacities of local grassroots organisations,
- Providing advocacy training for partners and local government organisations,
- Providing business start-up funds and training for real income-generating activities,

- Working with local schools to get children with disabilities enrolled and involved,
- Helping people with sensory disabilities and their families to communicate through teaching Braille and sign language,
- Teaching parents and carers how to do basic rehabilitation exercises with their children who have disabilities,
- Raising awareness of HIV/AIDS issues among vulnerable groups including sex workers in Brazil,
- Training local health workers in running HIV/AIDS services.

Where we work

ISI works with local partners in five countries: Brazil, Bolivia, Mali, Burkina Faso and Palestine, spanning three continents. Bolivia is the poorest country in South America, while Brazil experiences one of the highest levels of inequality in the world. Mali and Burkina Faso, both in West Africa, consistently figure among the poorest countries in the world, while for Palestinians, the ongoing conflict results in the continued deterioration in living conditions and human rights abuses.

Our Partners in Putting the World to Rights



Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)

DFI is the national support organisation and advocate for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities and disabling conditions. DFI works to ensure that Irish society is fully inclusive for people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise fully their civil, social and human rights.

For further information: www.disability-federation.ie



The Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA)

Working as a national organisation, DESSA's mission is to support the inclusion and active participation of disabled people in Irish life through community development. Underpinning DESSA's strategic plan is an inclusive equality framework setting out areas of action within which support is given to community development organisations to facilitate inclusive actions.

For further information: www.dessa.ie



Centre for Disability Law and Policy, NUI Galway

The Centre for Disability Law and Policy forms part of NUI Galway's School of Law. The Centre carries out research and provides broad comparative courses on a wide range of topical issues on disability law and policy. It endeavours to open up access to these courses to the broader community and continually explores ways of making educational resources on disability law available over the internet.

For further information: www.nuigalway.ie/cdlp

More about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The CRPD principles are:

- Respect for inherent dignity, autonomy, independence, freedom to make your own decisions,
- Non-discrimination,
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society,
- Acceptance of people with disabilities as part of human diversity, and respect for the diversity of people with disabilities,
- Equality of opportunity,
- Accessibility (to the environment, and also to services; to whatever is going on),
- Equality between men and women,
- Respect for the evolving capabilities of children with disabilities and for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identity.

The explicit rights set out in the CRPD are:

- Equality before the law without discrimination,
- Right to life, liberty and security of the person,
- Equal recognition before the law, and legal capacity,
- Freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,
- Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse,
- Right to respect for physical and mental integrity,
- Freedom of movement and nationality,
- Right to live in the community (and to live independently),
- Freedom of expression and opinion, access to information,
- Respect for privacy,
- Respect for home and the family,
- Right to education,
- Right to health,
- Right to work,
- Right to an adequate standard of living,
- Right to participate in political and public life,
- Right to participate in cultural life, leisure, recreation, sport.

The CRPD also has provisions relating to:

- raising awareness, so that people with disabilities and non-disabled people understand their rights and responsibilities,
- accessibility,
- situations of risk and humanitarian emergency; these can bring about disability, and also in these situations people with disabilities are often more vulnerable than others,
- access to justice, so that people with disabilities can claim their rights,
- personal mobility,
- habilitation and rehabilitation,
- statistics and data collection.

The CRPD makes the inclusion of people with disabilities and the mainstreaming of disability issues essential in all development activities. Article 32 requires countries, between and among themselves and “as appropriate, in partnership with relevant international and regional organisations and civil society” to take appropriate and effective measures in the field of international co-operation which supports national efforts “for the realisation of the purpose and objectives” of the CRPD. Included among suggested measures is a clause aimed at “ensuring that international co-operation, including international development programmes, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities”.

Another clause concerns “facilitating and supporting capacity building, including through the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices”.

How to find out more

The ISI website www.is-ireland.ie has more information about **people with disabilities in developing countries**.

To find out more about the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, you can read the whole text on www.un.org/disabilities. A plain language version of the CRPD is available at tinyurl.com/360fsl. Through www.un.org/disabilities you can order a free copy of a Handbook for Parliamentarians on the CRPD. It's a good guide to what the CRPD will mean in practice for the governments of ratifying countries. Also, check out **Ratification toolkit: disability rights = human rights** at www.icrpd.net. This practical toolkit has information about the CRPD, ratification and why we need it.

To find out more about **how Ireland supports developing countries**, check out Irish Aid, the Irish Government's programme for assisting developing countries, and Dóchas, which provides a forum for non-governmental development organisations.

There is also a wealth of information out there about how to **make development inclusive of people with disabilities**. For more on this, contact ISI and we'll provide a list of useful reports and publications.

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ISI is grateful to the following for their support:



Family Support Agency



Putting the World to Rights is available on the ISI website and can be made available on CD, on tape, in Braille or in large print on request. Ring ISI on 01 874 6007 or email: info@is-ireland.ie

www.is-ireland.ie

DFID Department for
International
Development

