

# NFU's Strategy for International Work 2021-2024

## Who we are

Norwegian Association for Persons with Intellectual<sup>1</sup> Disabilities (NFU) is a human rights organization of and for persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. NFU works for full participation, equality and against discrimination. We work to secure the interests of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families through the government at all levels in Norway and partner countries.

## Our normative framework

It is estimated that one billion people, about 15% of the world's population, have a disability<sup>2</sup>. There is a lack of accurate statistics on the prevalence of persons with intellectual disabilities in developing countries. However, it is estimated that the prevalence globally is around 1%<sup>3</sup>. There is a higher prevalence of persons with intellectual disabilities in low-income countries than in high-income countries<sup>4</sup>.

Persons with intellectual disabilities are among the most marginalized groups in a population and face disproportionately severe barriers in society. The majority of women, men and children with intellectual disabilities face discrimination, exclusion, isolation, stigma and even abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation in institutions, within their families, in their local communities and in society. Many persons with intellectual disabilities live in extreme poverty, without access to education or employment opportunities, and face a range of marginalizing factors. They are often denied the right to vote, the right to own or inherit property, right to legal assistance, and the right to make every day-decisions as well as life-changing decisions. The discrimination they face is widespread, cutting across geographical boundaries and affecting people in all spheres of life and all sectors of society.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides NFU with a framework and an obligation to use its position, network and experience to contribute to change. Article 32 in the convention states that it is the duty of state parties to facilitate change and provide technical and economic assistance, and thus act as change agents to inspire and support initiatives and influence decision makers in Norway as well as internationally. NFU's general assembly has

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<sup>1</sup> Intellectual disability is a disability characterized by limitations in cognitive functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: FAQ)

<sup>2</sup> World Report on Disability 2011: 261

<sup>3</sup> Pallab. Maulik, Maya N. Mascarenhas, Colin D. Mathers, Tarun Dua, Shekhar Saxena (2011): *Prevalence of intellectual disability: A meta-analysis of population-based studies*. Research in Developmental Disabilities, Volume 34, Issue 2, February 2013, Page 729

<sup>4</sup> Bornstein & Hendricks (2013): *Screening for Developmental Disabilities in Developing Countries*. US National Library of Medicine National Institute of Health. December 14, 2012, Page 1 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3638080/>)

taken on this responsibility and decided to work in accordance with this article to promote the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities in developing countries.

NFU believes that international development aid will not be inclusive without including the voices of persons with intellectual disabilities and placing organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) at the forefront. “Nothing about us without us” is a guiding slogan that communicates the idea that no policy should be decided by anyone, without including the full and direct participation of members of the group that the policy is intended for.<sup>5</sup> In accordance with this principle NFU promotes self-advocacy for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Based on the above, we focus on four areas of inclusion, each with a specific goal. These goals are a part of the Atlas Alliance thematic areas for implementation

- Human Rights Advocacy and organizational development: OPD partners are strong, democratic and representative advocates for the rights of the persons with intellectual disabilities. Persons with intellectual disabilities are included in decision-making processes and the OPD partners are recognized partners for government and NGOs.
- Inclusive Health Services: Persons with intellectual disabilities access health services on an equal basis as everyone else, especially when it comes to their sexual and reproductive health care and rights. Persons with intellectual disabilities have the same sexual and reproductive health needs as everyone else, yet they are often excluded from accessing information and services.<sup>6</sup>
- Inclusive education: OPD partners take a leading role in collaborative advocacy for inclusive education and early childhood development and persons with intellectual disabilities access quality, child friendly education in their communities within an inclusive education system and life-long learning to fulfil their potential.
- Inclusive long-term and humanitarian development assistance: Humanitarian and development aid organizations include persons with intellectual disabilities in their work and Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) efforts.

## **Our Theory of Change**

In order to move towards our vision of an inclusive society, NFU applies a human rights-based approach. A human rights-based approach is about empowering people to know and advocate for their rights and increasing the ability and accountability of the duty bearers to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights.

Our experience shows that change can happen if persons with intellectual disabilities and their families meet others with similar experiences and share their concerns and hopes. By organizing into vibrant organizations, articulating their aspirations, and taking action to

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Disability: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/international-day-of-persons-with-disabilities-3-december/international-day-of-disabled-persons-2004-nothing-about-us-without-us.html>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Population Fund; <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/promoting-sexual-and-reproductive-health-persons-disabilities>

address their situation, they can claim their rights from the government and hold them accountable to their commitments and obligations.

NFU's development efforts are rooted in the UNCRPD and the SDGs. The UNCRPD confirms that it is the responsibility of the governments as duty bearers to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities on an equal basis as everyone else. However, our experience tells us that all over the world governments fail to fulfil these rights because they lack the competence and capacity, and because they are not held accountable to their obligations in the UNCRPD. We want to contribute to addressing this problem by 1; Supporting partner OPDs to become strong advocates for disability inclusion and 2; Support and train mainstream NGOs in disability-inclusive development.

### **Our strength and added value**

- We draw upon the knowledge and experience of our 8300 members in Norway and the lessons learnt from the international work when addressing a range of problems facing persons with intellectual disabilities. The problems include discrimination and stigmatization, social exclusion, increasing institutionalization, living and participation in the community, parent and youth empowerment, self-advocacy, and the right to inclusive education.
- We have extensive experience in running a membership-based interest organization, and we know how to overcome obstacles in terms of limited time and capacity of members and difficulties in fund raising. We invest in long-term partnerships.
- We have access to a Norwegian and Nordic network of likeminded disability organizations, which helps in creating synergies in selected programme countries. NFU has access to an international network of parents' organizations and are able to call on regional and global action in support of our work. We can facilitate in international networking, experience exchange and connecting people.

### **Values**

- **Local ownership:** We acknowledge that our partners are the experts on their situation and believe that they should take lead in setting priorities based on their experienced needs and concerns. Our support is strategic, advisory and financial, and tailor made according to needs.
- **Sustainable results in a long-term perspective:** Real societal change takes time. We acknowledge that our support is time bound. To ensure sustainability, we work through existing local structures, focus on building capacity and avoiding dependence on our support.
- **Inclusive partnerships:** We believe that openness, trust, mutual respect and a focus on mutual learning are at the heart of good development work. We cooperate with partners that have shared values and a vision of inclusion.
- **Transparency and accountability:** We strive for transparency and mutual accountability through our partners, the members in NFU, the Atlas Alliance and the general public.

- **Do no harm:** We base our work on solid analysis of local context and risks to minimize harm. We strive to use local consultants and resource persons who are aware of the context when commissioning assignments and research.
- **Harmonization:** We aim to listen to our local partners and coordinate our support to ensure complementarity, avoid duplication and minimize the administrative burden on our partners.

#### **Crosscutting issues:**

- **Gender:** Women and girls with intellectual disabilities are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, neglect and abuse – in general and in humanitarian crises. We aim towards supporting our partners’ work on addressing gender and fighting gender-based-violence. We promote gender equality in all aspects of our projects and work in a gender-sensitive manner.
- **Anti-corruption:** NFU follows a zero-tolerance approach to corruption. NFU works to end corruption by close financial follow-up of partners, helping OPDs to develop sound management systems and taking proactive measures against financial mismanagement and corruption, as well as establishing safe whistleblowing channels.

#### **Strategic choices**

- **International Peer Support:** In our national program, NFU focuses on knowledge- and experience-sharing between persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. We acknowledge the value of experience sharing, and therefore aim to strengthen peer support across borders.
- **Geographical scope:** NFU engages in countries in poor countries, mainly Sub-Saharan Africa, and will give priority to countries where we can collaborate with relevant stakeholders and make an effective contribution. Priority will be given to where Inclusion Africa and Inclusion International has presence.
- **Financial resources:** Our main source of funding is and will remain from Norad through collaborative programs within the Atlas Alliance. We rely on the Atlas Alliance to represent NFU’s financial interests in dialogue with Norad, and other potential donors. NFU currently has a framework agreement (2020-2024) and is a part of Together for Inclusion (2019-2022) consortium through Norad. NFU aims to renew the framework agreement when it ends, and apply for additional funding when opportunities open up.
- **Human resources:** NFU aims to increase the size of its international development work and aim to complement the growth in program size with adequate human resources.
- **Innovative project follow-up:** The global pandemic, Covid 19, has taught NFU to find new and flexible ways of project follow-up. NFU will continue these approaches when necessary, including online financial reviews, online monitoring meetings as well as increased engagements of local consultants.