MODULE 14 Transcript

RICHARD: Hello everyone, it's Richard Rieser here, General Secretary of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, I would like to welcome you to this our last Module 14 presentation film, Influencing Government, and really all of what we have done before leads up to this point, because if you can't influence government, you can't actually change the material circumstances of disabled people very much.

To help me present this is Sarah Kamau our acting Chair, from United Disabled Persons Kenya.

We have got recordings of Thandi Mufulo about South Africa one of our Vice-Chairs, we have got Steve Estey from Canada, we have got Professor Michael Stein from Harvard Law Centre, Baroness Jane Campbell and representatives of Direct Action Network in the UK, all speaking on this programme.

So it's full of information, over to Sarah for the introduction.

SARAH: Thank you Richard.

Hello everyone and welcome to this final module and we thank you so much for being part of up to now.

I want to introduce it by saying how we should influence Government or how governments have been influenced to be able to accommodate issues of disability.

The world and 195 governments have committed to the Sustainable Development Goals with the slogan "Leave no-one behind", and the 182 governments have committed to implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with a slogan of "Nothing about us without us".

Yet, progress has been painfully slow towards disability inclusion.

Reducing amounts of financial and material aid, increasing international debt, and an ongoing impact of financial inequalities and COVID pandemic are in danger of derailing these ideas.

For disabled people, the best way of influencing government to positively improve our position, is by building strong grass roots, democratically accountable organisations, able to support and hold to account elected representatives who are trained to have an understanding of advocacy at all levels and representing our issues in a clear and achievable way.

The opportunities to achieve these goals require power to influence positive outcomes at all levels from local district through to regional levels to national and international levels.

The clarity of the message and its success will depend on the empowerment of the mass of disabled people in all their diversity.

How many disabled people and their diversity in terms of impairment, gender, ethnic diversity, geographical localities, and age range is vital to winning unified policy objectives.

The strengths and empowerment of disabled people to implement the improvements in our lives as outlined in the SDGs and UNCRPD, depends on how much the social model/human rights approach has been generalised and forms of organisations developed to influence Government.

RICHARD: I think that's it, right thanks.

SARAH: Thank you.

RICHARD: So at the centre of this is power.

What is power? Power to influence Government.

Well one definition of power is often defined as the 'ability to make one's will felt'.

Here will talking about the collective will of organisations of disabled people.

So we have to come to decide what it is we want to achieve that's our will.

But there are many different sources of power in the world.

Wealth power, and ownership of assets.

We know that rich and the super rich control most of the world's assets and that's a real problem and they're mainly outside of Government and outside of control of Government, so they are a real issue to achieve any sort of equality.

Democratic power.

Holding power in an organisation or Government because those entitled to vote, based on your principles have voted for you.

That's both in our organisations at local municipal level, but also at national Government level.

Autocratic power is an alternative to that, as we have seen in places like Myanmar at the moment where the police or the army seize power undemocratically and force their views on everybody else.

It's the opposite of democracy.

Protest power, using peaceful mass means to challenge inequities, and we have seen that with Extinction Rebellion, starting from one young girl in Sweden moving right through to now having the big climate summits which are hopefully going to control global warming.

There's revolutionary power, uniting a mass of people who feel injustice to take power.

That's really about changing the status quo and moving things on, and certainly what happened in South Africa was a form of revolutionary power, where the majority population took over from the minority.

But there will be many others, the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the English Revolution, all of which have and the Russian Revolution, all of which have changed the status quo.

Disabled people have done better or worse in those situations.

Moral and religious power is also something, I mean when the Pope speaks or the Mullahs of Muslim religions speak, millions of people listen and go by what they say, what they consider right.

On the other hand when the UN speaks we're talking about the non-religious world we're talking but morality of human rights, and that's different worlds collide between this two things and what the UN does is try to balance these things out.

Influencing power, we have seen more in more recently in the last 20 years, prominent people culturally influence thinking through arts, literature, journalism and the media, celebrity and social media.

All forms of influencing, making one's will felt.

This is the territory in which we, as DPOs, operate.

We operate on all of these levels to actually try to influence to win our goals.

Now, this is Professor Michael Stein from Harvard he is going to tell -

MICHAEL: Sessions, it was a working group which included states representatives, NGOs, prominently people with disabilities, and a few academics that came out with draft treaty articles and from the 3rd ad hoc session through the 8th hoc session, all we had were both formal negotiations and informal negotiations.

Well let's back up a minute and talk about the role of people with disabilities.

Until this CRPD was negotiated, the UN Treaty had never included the targeted stakeholders as representatives.

That's not to say that women were not present during the CEDAW negotiations they surely were, and it's not to say that children weren't present during the CRC negotiations, they were as well, but the idea of the representatives of the targeted groups sitting there as NGOs, as DPOs, in our case, and negotiating in the process, that is the first for this UN Treaty.

It was motivated by the theme of 'nothing about us without us'.

The goal of the international disability rights movement that no-one should talk about people with disabilities without including people with disabilities.

Their input, their wisdom, their lived experiences.

So it's come out with the best possible results.

This was also enabled by the first ad hoc chair who was Ambassador Luis Gallegos of Ecuador who said, "If we're going to consider whether there should be a disability treaty, we ought to hear from targeted group as to what their lives are like, why they feel there ought or ought not to be a treaty, and what they think a treaty ought to include".

So almost by accident but also by force of will and by the grace of the Ambassador Luis Gallegos, people with disabilities were included from the beginning.

If we look the first ad hoc session we see that 85 people with disabilities were registered, to participate in the negotiations, and if we flash forward to the end of the 8th ad hoc session, which was the last substantive negotiation - there was a 9th ad hoc session in which the Treaty text was rubber stamped - we see 850 by the end of the 8th ad hoc session.

That's quite an increase.

The idea people with disabilities being part of the negotiation from the beginning was encouraged and supported by Secretary General Kofi Annan, supported by the second ad hoc Chair Ambassador Don McKay of New Zealand and it become expected that people with disabilities would be part and parcel of the negotiations.

Now, this happened on two different levels.

There was a formal level so from the 3rd ad hoc succession through the 8th, the text of the Treaty was cycled through during each of these two week negotiations session.

At the end of every session, the UN works from 10-1pm and from 3-6pm, at the end of each of these daily sessions a representative from the International Disability Caucus, the IDC, would speak on behalf of people with disabilities, speak with one voice, and say what it was that the international disability community thought about particular provisions.

It was also the educative function that people with disabilities speaking during these ad hoc sessions about what their lives were like.

These ranged from poignant very moving discussions of what it was like to have been in an institution or psychiatric horrible, what was like to have seen people who never left the psychiatric institutions and spent their lives imprisoned indoors, to more lighthearted but very pointed discussions.

I think my favourite was that by Robert Martin of New Zealand, someone who has an intellectual disability and comes from a very progressive country, who talked about what it was like not to have been able to own a bank accoount and to be able to handle his own finances until he was well into adulthood.

He scratched his head, he said, "I don't understand because I am sitting here in the United States and there's this company called Enron that's lost $3 billion, none of them have intellectual disabilities, and yet I have never written a bad cheque in my life, I have never lost money.

Why is it that because have an intellectual disability it was assumed I couldn't handle my finances? But here you have people without intellectual disabilities, with advanced degrees, losing billions of dollars and that's considered just fine".

This was a very important function.

Most of these States Representatives, although they were very open to the idea of a disability Treaty, come from elite and privileged backgrounds, often come from countries where people with disabilities are not visible.

They're not seen on the streets, they are not seen as part of society, and the idea that on an everyday basis during the negotiations, the State Representatives interacted with people with disabilities.

Saw them, communicated with them, had to interact with them, received briefing notes from them, were lobbied by them for different provisions were educated by them as to the disability community's positions on various provisions.

This was enormously useful, and it's reflected in the ultimate text of the document.

In fact, if we were to look at Article 4, we would see that there is a general obligation on behalf of states to actively consult with, and interact and heed the advice of their civil society groups and in particular those with disabilities.

We see in the monitoring provisions that States Representatives and State Parties must interact with, seek the advice, and utilise and co-operate with DPOs, Disabled People Organisation's, at the local level.

This idea of 'nothing about us without us', of disabled persons being able to speak to what their lived experiences are like, what their priorities are, what their needs are, permeate the Convention and permeates its implementation, so that was enormously important.

RICHARD: Ok so just to underline that point, quoting from the convention, 4.3 and this is something that all disability activists should have at their finger tips.

"In the development and implementation of legislation and policy to implement the present convention and in other decision making processes, concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities.

Including children with disabilities through their representatives organisations".

Not, NGOs, which are not run and controlled by disabled people, yet most governments our talking to the NGOs rather than the DPOs.

This is one of the fundamental problems about implementation currently.

Secondly, in the monitoring, Article 33, there are other points there about a focal point, within the government, and an independent human rights organisation to check it, but the third leg of the stool if you like is "Civil society in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, shall be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process".

So that's where we're meant to be.

So ways of influencing Government.

Well, set up consultative forums with Government for regular meetings is a really good point.

But not to be sidelined they need to have important people from Government there, so you can actually influence them.

Getting key disability activists co-opted into the work of Government is something that people have aimed at, but be careful that those activists don't go, if you like, turn over to being just Government spokespeople.

They are there to represent the disability movement, and so need to be under monitoring and control by the people who put them there.

Disability equality training led by disabled people, to ministers, civil servants, officers and managers so they actually understand the paradigm shift and what it means.

Creating reports, charters or shadow legislation and publicising it.

This is something we do ourselves as DPOs.

Writing motions, speaking to trade unions, political parties, civil society branches to get them to support that which is about building up the weight of the argument to persuade government.

Writing and collecting signatures for mass petitions, where we have to have the arguments with people wherever they are.

Lobbying, targeted meetings with minister or members of Parliament.

Demonstrations, which can include hunger strikes, occupations to publicise our demands, stopping the traffic as we'll see a bit later on.

Having representative disabled members in Parliament, provided that they are actually representing us and not representing themselves.

Disabled activists put pro-disability rights policies to get support from unions and other campaigns.

Through media, writing letters to the Press, TV and radio, getting interviews made.

Social media through Facebook, Twitter, to highlight injustices, and persuading media to make programmes on disability issues.

There are all ways of exercising our power as civil society organisations of DPOs to persuade and influence Government.

Here's an example then from Canada, from Steve Estey, how that actually works.

STEVE: Hi there, my name is Steve Estey, I am from Canada.

I am on the Board of Directors of CDPF, and have been since it was founded originally some 10 years ago or so.

Richard has asked me to speak briefly about influencing government, and I just wanted to share some experience that we had here in Canada about that.

I retired from a position as a National Co-ordinator at the Council of Canadian with Disabilities a year ago this May, and the last main project I did was around influencing the Government to improve legislation that had been enacted or was to be enacted around creating a national accessibility structure in Canada.

We had a new Government elected here in 2015, and one of the key campaign promises of the Government made was to enact accessibility legislation.

So what happened after the election was they embarked on a series of consultations across the country with disabled people, to find out what it was they thought accessibility legislation should look like. They met in the capital cities in every province in Canada.

There were 10 provinces across the country from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic ocean.

They met in all 10 cities with probably groups of about 100 or 150 disabled people.

Heard what people wanted legislation to look like, then with that information government took the process internal, and their lawyers and policy people drafted legislation, which was introduced into our House of Commons in 2018 and at that point in time the national disability community really began to engage, because legislation that was introduced in 2018 was really a pale shadow of what we had hoped it would be, during the consultation process in 2016/2017.

It's very often the case you know.

So what happened was there's a committee process that unfolded, over the course of a couple of months in Ottowa.

Disabled people and organisations from across the country went to Ottowa to talk with legislators about what we felt needed to be improved in the legislation.

We talked in formal committee process but we also talked many informal processes in the hallways of the House of Commons, over lunch and dinners, and even the odd drink if you really want to know.

And we had some effect on improving the legislation but it wasn't still at the point that we thought it should be, but it went back to the House of Commons, and there were some improvements made and then it went to the Senate which is the final stage in the legislative drafting process here in Canada.

In the Senate, the Senators are more independent of political parties than they are in, than the members of House of Commons are, so we put a lot of energy into working with the Senate and we had real success in terms of improving the legislation with the Senate and the Senators and the Senators really listened to and acted upon the advice that we gave, in the Senate hearings and the Senate made several key improvements and it went back from the Senate to the House of Commons, and the House of Commons listened to the Senate I'm happy to say, and what we saw was that through this sort of two-stage process, we were really able to, as a national disability community, have quite a significant impact in terms of improving the legislation so that finally when the legislation was enacted in 2019, it was really much better than it was when it had been brought back to the House of Commons earlier that year.

So that's a process that we used and I hope that's useful information for you.

RICHARD: So the Accessible Canada Act Bill which Steve was talking about there, started in June 2018, the Minister introducing it and the Bill was created.

We have heard about the consultative mechanisms and DPO involvement.

One of the purposes of the act was to prevent accessibility barriers in information and communication technologies, including digital content and technologies used to access it.

Requirements of the act include web accessibility following the WCAG guidance, and if companies don't do it there's a fine of a quarter of million Canadian dollars so that's really powerful.

On the 21st of June the Accessible Canada Act became law, and then each of the 10 provinces enacted their own versions of it and this is really important, that this types of activity leads to legislation which then changed things and then of course our job is to monitor it and make sure that the Government is actually implementing it because of course the statute book is littered with legislation that's been passed but is not enacted.

So here we are going to go on to hearing from the Pacific [video playing.

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RICHARD: So I think what is important about Angeline's contribution there is because the Pacific Disability Forum, based in Fiji and covering 14 of our member organisations, is well-organised and they had structures in place before COVID, they were much more able to actually interact with governments, and to get funding from regional funders, particularly DFAT from Australia, to develop a good strategy to deal with COVID.

As it happens there been hardly any infections in that part of world, but nevertheless they had a really good plan.

Going back in history now to the UK.

We got to a point where, after many attempts to pass anti-discrimination legislation, we were stuck and so a group of disabled people, Direct Action Network, decided that the only way that this was going to change, our Government kept wasting time when the Bill came up - there was a majority in Parliament but the Conservative government of the time wouldn't it let it be put to the vote, so direct action which was filmed on television was what changed this. [video playing] UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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RICHARD: Oops sorry.

Sorry this is the problem with fiddling round with films. [video playing].

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RICHARD: This this 25 years after it so in 2020.

Let's hear what they have to say. [video playing] UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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RICHARD: Ok.

So what happened in the UK? Well '95 Discrimmation Act, after that direct action and filibustering, on the 17th attempt it was passed in November bt it didn't include education, it applied only to business more than 20 employees.

The Labour Government elected a couple of years later had a manifesto commitment due to lodging by DPOs to strengthen the Act.

In 2001 under the Labour Government an Act was passed to include all educational establishments. In 2005 the Disability Act had 150 strengthening amendments, including the public duty to promote disability equality.

In 2010, this was replaced by the Equality Act which broadened the numbers of people who were covered but actually weakened the disability provisions.

In 2012 the Tory Government elected in 2010, declares war on benefit cheats.

Massive negative impact on disabled people, and in 2016 United Nations criticises the UK for systematic and catastrophic abuse of human rights.

And in 2021 over 60% of deaf and disabled people died from - of those who died from COVID were deaf and disabled people.

So the attack on the infrastructure which took place over the previous 10 years by the Tory Government and the sidelining of Disabled People's Organisations has actually led to an increased death toll in disabled people.

As Baroness Jane Campbell, who is one of the leaders of this movement has been in the louse of Lords as a champion says in this short little piece. [video playing].

>>: BARONESS JANE CAMPBELL: 20 years ago I stood outside of Parliament and felt the happiest girl in the world because I believed I was going to get civil rights in my life.

20 years on, I have become really jaded and sad, that actually not only are our rights not being implemented, and enforced in the way that we envisaged that day, but I am sad because people out there who can make our lives a whole lot better by implementing the Act, are ignoring it.

That makes me feel personally very sad.

I guess a bit insulted.

RICHARD: So the fight has continued over this previous period.

New forms of have developed of action, Disabled People Against the Cuts carry out and fight against austerity and the terrible toll on the lives of disabled people.

There are posters here of their demonstrations. "Dead people can't claim".

Paul Reeke suffered severe depression found fit for work by ATOS", the private company the Government put to administer disability benefits.

His benefit was stopped and he committed suicide.

He's at least one of 800, though many of the activists think there are many more than that, the government have admitted 750 deaths because of these cuts to people.

So this has been actually a serious attack on disabled people, as the UN has said and disabled people continue to resist it.

It's all about power.

In the financial crisis and so on who is attacked, having established good benefit systems, the weakest link, and so we, the price of democracy and for our livelihoods is eternal vigilance and strong Disabled People's Organisations.

Now, over to Sarah who will tell us something about how the United Disabled Persons of Kenya came about and how they influenced Government there.

SARAH: Thank you Richard.

I will talk about the UDPK which is a United Disabled Persons of Kenya, an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities in Kenya.

Thanks Richard.

It was established and registered in 1989 under Section 10 of the Society Act by the Registrar of Societies.

UDPK is the reference Civil Society Organisation for persons with disabilities in Kenya.

And the organisation exists to advocate for equal access to opportunities and active participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream development processes.

UDPK has a mandate which is to play a critical role in advocating for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, during the formulation of 2010 constitution.

It played a very key role in ensuring that issues of disability were included during the Constitution formulation.

UDPK has also continued to ensure that laws and policies developed are inclusive as well as ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in governance processes.

Some examples of the laws that have been influenced include, one the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003 which paved the way for the establishment of a national council for persons with disabilities, and this is a government parastatal that co-ordinates service delivery to persons with disabilities within the country.

It also has influenced closely the process to enact the Persons With Disabilities Act of 2020 which has been reviewed in line with the UNCRPD, which once it comes to course it will repeal the earlier Act of 2003 and this has been done with a lot of support from DPOs who have given their inputs and UDPK has submitted the same to the government agencies to be able to include them.

There is also the Elections Act that was heavily influenced also by the organisation, which allowed, saw many persons with disabilities now going into government positions, being elected and being even nominated to represent persons with disabilities in their local counties and even at national level.

This act, UDPK played a very key role in ensuring that persons with disabilities are now decision makers, even when it comes to policy making organs like the Assembly, the County Assembly and the National Assemblies.

UDPK has also worked closely with the Directorate of Special Needs Education on sector policy for learners with disabilities.

On this policy, UDPK participated by giving input into the policy and during its launch, which was done by the President of Kenya, in 2018.

This has been used now to ensure inclusive education in schools and even ensuring that people with disabilities are taken care of, their needs are part of what happens in the inclusive set up that is coming out now.

UDPK has also played a role in negotiating the formulation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Kenya ratified in 2008 and it has lobbied to include this framework in the constitution of Kenya and subsequent implementation policy and legislative framework around the UNCRPD.

It has also involved and supported forums on the review of the Social Protection Policy.

These forums for the protection policy, have been organised by the Social Protection Actors Forum in Kenya and this, all these have brought about positive impacts in the way policies have been made in Kenya to include persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

RICHARD: Thank you Sarah, and I well remember the comrades from both Kenya, Uganda and South Africa who were the main voices of disabled people when we were making the Convention, and particularly also from Uganda, James Mwanda who was the founder of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum.

So there was a direct link from the links made between us as we were co-making the Convention and the setting up of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum in 2008.

Another organisation that was represented there at the beginning when we set that up was the NCPEDP and Javed Abidi and his vision was to not only have an organisation fought for employment rights for disabled people in India, but to actually set up a disability network that was cross-disability rights movement, equally across the entire country and there is an environment of empathy towards disabled people, was their mission.

They brought together and now have representations in 36 territories and states across India.

Objective were to promote local advocacy groups and build leadership, the disability sector.

To facilitate local advocacy groups to join hands with the state level groups, to eventually form national network which they have.

From village to block, districts, state national regarding persons with disabilities to empower disabled people and organisations to sensitise other concerns through sector information.

To closely monitor and lobby with government and co-operate other allied sectors and advocate the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies.

To bring issues related to disability to the forefront of the national development through a network and representatives from all territories, and to build a common cross-disability platform for sharing of concerns, and this issue of cross-disability is really important.

Yes, we have had blind and deaf organisations for 120 years but that has not actually progressed things for other disabled people who are in the majority.

Until we have cross-impairment organisations which represent all, and are accessible to all, we can't really move forward and so that was one of the models of the National Disability Network in India.

And it was put in practice in their 7 year struggle for the Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act to inorporate the UNCRPD into Indian legislation, and the Bill finally, after a working group that started 5 years before, defined for the first time the meaning of disability for 21 different categories of impairment.

Based on vital amendments, the Bill, for the first time represented rights-based legislation it focused on transforming the meaning of disability, expanding it's definition from existing medical to a social work and the amendment included hiking the quota for government jobs from 3 to 5% and putting measures in place in the private sector.

And also, putting in place Commissioners in each state who had the power to actually challenge judicially what was going on, discrimination.

Here we have a picture of people outside Parliament, one of many demonstrations that were organised by the network to actually get the Indian Government to finally agree this.

The Cabinet on the 16th of December and the law became law on the last day, really, of December 2016.

There are still problems with implementation, but nevertheless, huge work done by DPOs there in India, and that is what we have to keep going at.

Now, another opportunity for us is the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have been talking about UNCRPD, but the Sustainable Development Goals also provide an opportunity for us to lobby governments for them to take part in the voluntary reviews, and then go to the High Level Political Forum that meets every July in New York, or online this year, and we have in order if countries agree to that, we can pressure them to do it, then we can advocate the national level but we can also advocate at regional meetings they have to hold if they agree to that, with UN support and then go as representatives to the Forum at the global level and put our own views.

So this is an important way of doing it, and these are some of the ways that we can do it.

The review process is voluntary and therefore we have to urge governments to actually be part of the review process.

Each year is a different theme, but it also covers the whole range of implementing the goals.

When Member States are willing to report a designate they must designate a focal point and they must hold national consultations with civil societies and that's where we can come in and really push our agendas.

As the voluntary national reporting is a process the UN has developed support for Member States to do this, so that is an important resource.

Between the period from when a country volunteers, and the High Level Political Forum takes place there are numerous national, regional and local meetings where again we can get our positions across.

The government reports at the High Level Political Forum which has themes each year and major groups and other stakeholders have the opportunity to present joint statements and to ask questions of Member States.

So this is a real scrutiny process held in the world view and recorded by the UN.

So we can gain a great deal by doing this.

But all of it will only work if we have built up strong, effective grass roots organisations, to push the policies that we want, but we can also hold side events and breakfasts and when we're at the UN with people.

Now, perhaps one of the biggest challenges for disabled people was in the apartheid years in South Africa and Thandiwe Mufulo, our Vice-Chair is going to tell us a little bit about that.

THANDIWE: Co-ordinated Committee on Disability, and the task team [inaudible] but it was just to advise the Government in policies on policies that are there but how they go about it, is about the challenges.

Instead of us talking it was then telling us what needs to happen, and all those things.

So in terms of the Cconstitution yeah we said ok, Section 9 of the Constitution should be inclusive of people with disabilities because we pick up that we cannot do that.

That's how we started.

So that we can protect people with disabilities against discriminations on the ground of disability, against all form of discrimination because we were saying as people with disability whether you are white or are black, the discrimination was the same, it was no different under the apartheid.

So we had to stick together.

1984, that's when DPSA was formed in South Africa, you know.

The reason why we had to do that, we rejected the entire choice the initiative that was done by the Government because we felt that the apartheid system was not promoting equality, it was also not promoting equalisation of opportunity, and it was not also principle to the work programmes of [inaudible], and we did not also believe that apartheid could promote equality when it was based on inequality, on the principle.

Thus that was the contravention between DPSO and the Government during that programme.

And then DPSA raised opposition to the apartheid Government and we said we also highlighted that there's between violence, poverty in the apartheid system, remember those years people were taken to and from, so there was there was this system that makes it difficult to agree with them.

And we recognise that as DPSA we need to engage strategically with the Government, to try and ensure that programmes become more relevant to disabled people will be guaranteed some say in the formulating of policy so we agreed in principle to participate in the 1986 South African Year of Disabled, so that we can start to receive grants from Government.

Remember we're not receiving any financial injections or financial grant from government.

But DPSA, we rejected this purely because we feel that the apartheid system was not in a good space to be able to assist people with disability based on discrimination inequality and all those things so we rejected it.

Then we said instead of taking money openly, we should say that money there's no strings attached.

If they give us money as Government, there's no strings attached.

They are not going to tell us what to do when or where, we should belong or where we should not belong, and then by that Government it [inaudible]. Then under the apartheid Government as disabled people we also experienced a lot of discrimination, unequal society, deeply divided society, because amongst ourselves as disabled people we were mixed.

We were talking with one voice, black and white, but inside that talking with one voice, there was also this deeply divided unequal society.

Starting from political economic, social system, and we have to be you know, black people have to be subservient to white people, where they were denied basic rights.

As disabled people we felt it, as black disabled people.

So that's how we started.

Then we came to the new Government where we insisted to participate.

As DPSA we went and approached the political party which is ANC, we went and approached them and said to them and say, for us if you to be recognised as human beings this how we're going to support, but this is what we demand from you as the incoming political party.

That was 1992.

We are going to wait for you, you must agree, then we can participate.

That's how we started to participate.

If you can look there's an Act called the Reconstruction and Development Act, the RDP Act.

When you go into that Act you will find that issues of disability are captured in the Act.

Everything that we want is captured there.

Then they took it from that Act and put it into the Constitution because we said we need to be equal society.

That's how we came in.

And it was very, very powerful, it was working well because once a year we will meet with the President of the country, which was then Mr Mandela, and then after that, it became Mr Thabo Mbeki.

Where we had this relationship that was very good, because now once a year we come and sit and check, are we on the right track, you know, what is happening, and we became honest with each other those were workshops 3 days, honest workshops where we say but here you are missing here you're not missing all those things and here you are doing well, and then we started to have members of Parliament, we started to have people on boards, we started to have people on higher positions, people disabilities they were doing well.

We were starting now to see that we are moving as disabled people.

But when the new era of President Zuma [inaudible] when he came things started to fall apart.

We knew that we don't have to make an appointment, to see the President, we will ask for him, he will come.

Or he will ask for us and we will go.

You know, and after that things started to fall flat.

Issues of disability started to deteriorate, race started to come in again, and it never used to be there among ourselves as black people and white disabled people.

And it started now companies when they support they will support white organisations, they won't support black organisations, and then it became it started to become a splinter where some white organisations members would get out of DPSA because they want to form their own, but what we picked up, we've realised that they have seen that there's money in disability so they use it as, what, as their way of making money.

We needed to -

RICHARD: Ok, we'll move on we're running out of time.

Sarah is going to round up on this slide, and I will round up on the next one and then I think we have done.

Sarah.

Concluding remarks

SARAH: Thanks Richard.

On concluding remarks on influencing Government, for us to be able to influence Government effectively, national DPOs need to strive to first, have democratic consultative mechanisms to ensure they are representing the views of their entire membership.

They also have to have ongoing training and awareness raising available to their members.

So that they can understand what they are influencing the governments on.

They should have democratic structures with leaders regularly elected.

They should also publicise by having regular bulletins or newsletters to keep their members informed of what is going on.

And they should ensure proceedings and publications are available in different accessible modes to meet members' needs.

RICHARD: Ok thank you.

SARAH: Thank you.

RICHARD: Then we would expect from the Government because after all those 182 governments including 51 of the 55, 54 Commonwealth countries have signed up to this, that they will actually work to develop the representative organisations, the voice of disabled people.

So this means setting up a timetable for implementation of legislation and measures, to implement the UNCRPD and the SDG and to monitor these.

Regularly gather disaggregated data based on the Washington Group Framework.

Set up regular meetings with representatives of DPOs.

Ensure DPOs have sufficient funding to function as representative organisations, and this is something that in many countries is not happening.

How can you consult with representative organisations if those organisations cannot function because they have no funding to have an office, to provide the accessible communications and the consultations with their members.

So there's a duty on Government from 4.3 and 33.3, to actually fund DPOs.

Make information available to all disabled people on the progress of implementing disability rights.

This is something the government needs to do.

It's part of Article 8 awareness raising, and ensure that disabled people are members of Parliament and senior civil servants.

So they need to find some ways of getting the voice of disabled people into their legislature.

Ensure ministers are under regular scrutiny, including taking account of DPOs' views, and promote disability equality and inclusive development in all of their policies because this is what they signed up to.

So we can see that how Government responds to their requirements under the SDG and the UNCRPD, they need us as organised DPOs.

They may not like us all the time because we ask awkward questions, but they need to also facilitate to us do that process because other after all we're representing between 15 to 20% of the population, more with older people, and they need to take account of what we're saying.

This would include under the UNCRPD General Comment No 7, families of disabled people, where they cannot represent their views themselves.

So we would always support as as the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum wherever possible, the development of self-advocacy amongst people with autism, learning difficulties, mental health issues or dementia.

So that's where we are, but we think it's really important that we go forward for this course, for those of you have been on it, to take these ideas back into your local areas, and build your DPOs to have the strength we have demonstrated can actually lead to results.

So I would like to thank everybody for supporting this event, and particularly to the signer and to Gemma and Sarah for that.

Thank you very much and goodbye.