



DISABLED PEOPLES' INTERNATIONAL

North America and the Caribbean

Capacity Building 2006-08

Mid-Term Narrative Report: January 2007

Project Title

Health Education and Poverty in the North America and the Caribbean Region

Commencement of Project

The project was to be launched with the staging of a Regional Assembly, a requirement of the DPI Constitution that had been originally slated to take place in July 2006, but had to be rescheduled to December 2006 because of a lack of funding to meet the initial date. The Disabled Peoples' International North America and the Caribbean (DPI NAC) Regional Executive Council asked regional national assemblies (NAs) to propose for hosting the event. The Combined Disabilities Association (CDA) of Jamaica, the Dominica Association of Disabled People (DADP), and the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International (TTDPI) were short-listed to host the event. After interviewing the executive of the respective national assemblies, the DPI NAC Regional Executive Council selected TTDPI based on its proposal in preparation for hosting the Regional Assembly 2006.

Project Activities

According to the original work plan and timeline, consultations between the Regional Executive Council, the National Executive of TTDPI and the DPI NAC Regional Development Officer (RDO) began in May 2006. Under the rescheduled work plan, the following activities were undertaken and completed:

- 1. The Commonwealth Foundation financial support of the capacity-building project was deposited into the regional account on June 27, 2006 under the original work plan and timeline.*
- 2. The suggestion of the national executive of TTDPI to petition the National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC) given the subject areas of HIV/AIDS, STIs and substance abuse to be addressed during the project proved to be fruitful. NACC accepted the responsibility of fully sponsoring a facilitator they identified in the person of Selwyn Lewis of BARCAM for the health education seminar. Therefore, by the time of proposed rescheduled dates, negotiations with NACC had been concluded pending a signed agreement.*
- 3. Consultations between Mr. Lewis, the National Executive of TTDPI and the RDO as the Project Coordinator intensified to completion that resulted in a theme for the project, "**D**iscovering the **P**otential **I**nside: Claiming Our Right to a Healthy Lifestyle," as well as a list of topics to be addressed.*
- 4. Confirmation of funding support for the Project by the Abilis Foundation under the rescheduled work plan and timeline was received on 14th September, 2006.*

5. *Within a week, the host national assembly received final confirmations of local contributions and funds. By 15th September, 2006, materials for the Assembly and an evaluation guide were developed; trainers for the Regional Assembly and a program of activities for the week were identified and confirmed.*
6. *Throughout the month of October, the host national assembly and the RDO coordinated the venue, accommodations, and international, regional and ground transportation for the event. Much additional research and coordination was necessary to ensure the accessibility of all types of transportation for the delegates.*
7. *By 17th November, 2006, the host national assembly and the RDO coordinated all necessary preparations to ensure the physical and communication accessibility for all participants at the event. This preparation included securing the technology and labour for closed captioning and sign language interpreters for the deaf and hearing-impaired delegates. For those participants requiring additional assistance, a team of volunteers was on hand throughout the event to attend to logistical needs that arose. In total, the volunteers for this event provided 403 hours of service.*
8. *17th November, 2006 was also the final date for late registration, including public participation at the plenary events. By this date, all documentation was prepared, as were the registrant packages.*

This completed the preparatory stage of the project.

2 delegates from 12 member national assemblies began to arrive for the event on 2nd December, 2006 including the DPI World Chair, Venus M. Ilagan; the DPI World Information Officer/DPI NAC Regional Chair, Mary Mitchell-Coombs; and Chair of DPI Korea and the Korean Organizing Committee (KOC) for the DPI Seventh World Assembly 2007 to be held in Seoul, South Korea, Dr. Ick Seop Lee; and their accompanying attendants. The host national assembly arranged the reception and transportation of all delegates from the airport to their hotels.

The health education seminar and regional council meetings started and completed the next stage executing the following activities:

Delegates participated in 3 days of very interactive discussions and information dissemination on HIV/AIDS, STIs and substance abuse among persons with disabilities, particularly women facilitated by Mr. Selvyn Lewis of BARCAM and several other presenters.

With the focus of women in mind, the majority of the seminar participants were women with disabilities between the ages of 18-45. The 3 days included the following activities:

DAY 1 - Mon., 4th Dec.

Ravi Latchman Singh chaired the Opening Ceremony. He began by introducing George Daniel, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International (TTDPI). Mr. Daniel introduced Mrs. Mitchell-Coombs who introduced Mrs. Ilagan who introduced Dr. Lee. Mr. Ernesto Kesar of the Trinidad Youth Council was the guest speaker. The local media covered the event. The day continued as follows:

- * Overview of the Regional Assembly*
- * Getting to know each other*

- * *STIs & HIV/AIDS: The Global Scene - The Regional Context*
- * *Rap Session: Man having Sex with Men (MSM), Commercial Sex Workers (CSW) and People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)*

DAY 2 - Tue., 5th Dec.

- *The DNA of Substance Abuse: The Reality of Alcohol and Tobacco*
- *Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS: The Connection*
- *Substance Abuse: The Workplace, Gender Considerations, and Love and Relationships*
- *S.W.O.T.: Analysis of Self/Understanding Self*
- *The Importance of Self-Development for the Advocate: HIV/AIDS, STIs and substance abuse*

DAY 3 - Wed., 6th Dec.

- * *Team building: Exploring the 5 Cs of teamwork - collaboration, commitment, cohesion, challenge and creativity*
- * *Understanding the stages of team building:*

Identifying team goals

Maximizing resources to achieve these goals

Removing the inhibitions that prevent the attainment of goals

Understanding the importance of privileging will over self

- * *Group discussions:*

Examining the 5 stages in group and self development, forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning

- * *Understanding communication within groups*
- * *Comfort resolution-transformation*

DAY 4 - Thu., 7th Dec.

Dr. Innette Cambridge, Social Policy Co-ordinator in the Social Work Unit of the Department of Behavioural Sciences at the University of the West Indies (UWI) chaired the proceedings of the day as follows:

- *Presentation on Research and Persons with Disabilities by Prof. Adrienne Asch*
- *Panel Discussion on the Experiences of Research and Disability:*

Professor Richard Scotch – Disability and Human Rights

Mr. Steve Williams – Disability and Education

Professor Hutchinson - Disability and Health

Dr. Adele Jones - Disability and HIV

- *The UWI Research Programme in Disability Studies*
- *Launch of the Disability Studies Centre website at <http://sta.uwi.edu/disabilitystudies/> by Dr. Hamid Ghany*
- *Presentations of the Working Paper - "Tertiary Education: Fostering Inclusiveness for Persons with Disabilities" to Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International (TTDPI), the Disabled Peoples' International North America and the Caribbean (DPI NAC) Regional Chair and Dr. Ick Seop Lee*

- *8 Workshop Discussions on the following areas:
Human rights, technology, education, health, HIV, empowering persons with disabilities, recreation and family life*
- ☞ *Toward the close of the day, the DPI NAC Regional Chair, Mary Mitchell-Coombs chaired the opening discussions on the modus operandi for the Regional Women's Network Coordinating Committee.*

Regional Council Meeting

DAY 5 – Fri., 8th Dec.

- ▲ *Discussion and adoption: Modus operandi for Regional Women's Network Coordinating Committee continued*
- ▲ *Election: Regional Women's Network Coordinating Committee*
- ▲ *National Assemblies' Activity Reports*
- ▲ *DPI Information Officer Report*
- ▲ *DPI North America the Caribbean Regional Chair Report*
- ▲ *Regional Development Officer Report*
- ▲ *DPI North America and the Caribbean Regional Treasurer Report*
- ▲ *Review of Regional Strategic Plan*
- ▲ *Update and creation of new regional strategic plan*

DAY 6 - Sat., 9th December

- ◇ *What is the DPI International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Toolkit?*
- ◇ *How can national assemblies' best use it?*
- ◇ *Holding Regional Executive and/or DPI World Council positions: Instruction on responsibilities*
- ◇ *Election of 5-member Regional Executive Council*
- ◇ *Election DPI World Council Representatives*

Near the conclusion of the event on 8th December 2006, evaluation forms were distributed to participants and upon completion, collected by the volunteer staff.

As per the original work plan and timeline, Phase I ended with the departure of the national assembly representatives on 10th December, 2006.

Challenges-Changes

Securing the required funding was the most difficult part of implementing the project. The health education-training seminar and regional council meeting were originally scheduled to be held in July 2006 but had to be rescheduled because of a lack of funding. Abilis Foundation, Handicap International, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago were petitioned for funds but only the Abilis Foundation, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago responded favourably.

The shortfall of funding made it impossible to provide a very important aspect of access in terms of Braille material for persons who are blind. Fortunately, the volunteers were trained to relay information that could not be heard to the participants who are blind.

No changes were made to the original project plan. However, a workshop on the DPI UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Toolkit was added to the last day of the Regional Assembly.

Work Plan and Timeline Progression

DPI NAC will be going ahead with Phase II of the original work plan as initially anticipated. Delegates who attended the Regional Assembly will be required to disseminate the information acquired to their national assemblies with the support of the DPI NAC Regional Office and RDO. No changes to the work plan or timeline were necessary at this point.

Assessment

The DPI NAC Regional Executive Council is pleased with the outcome of the project so far. Feedback from participants indicated the Regional Assembly was an overall success. 32 delegates responded to the 3-page evaluation questionnaire, and the result was overwhelmingly positive.

All surveyed respondents indicated they had attained new knowledge and skills by attending the informational sessions at the Regional Assembly. Furthermore, all surveyed respondents rated the agenda for the week, the overall quality of the sessions, and the variety of presentations and topics discussed as either “good” or “excellent”.

Other survey results were as follows:

- 97% of respondents rated the usefulness of the material discussed and the knowledge of presenters as “good” or “excellent”.
- 94% found the overall organization of the meeting and the opportunities to participate as being “good” or “excellent”.
- 84% of respondents found the length of time allotted for sessions to be either “good” or “excellent”.

With regards to accommodation and venue:

- Over 94% of respondents found the meeting room’s level of accessibility, cleanliness and comfort to be either “good” or “excellent”.
- Over 93% of respondents rated the hotel accommodations as “good” or “excellent” concerning accessibility, overall cleanliness and comfort, and amenities or services available.

Transportation was rated as follows:

- 87% of respondents found the transportation provided by the host national assembly to be more than adequately accessible
- 79% reported the transportation to be reliable.

Meals got the following reviews:

- 88% of the respondents indicated the quality of the food provided by the facility was either “excellent” or “good”.
- 84% found that the food more than adequately met their dietary needs.

However, the efforts of the organizers did not go entirely without criticism from the attending representatives. Responding delegates offered a number of suggestions for improvement, including:

- a. ensuring handouts for workshops are readily available in a timely manner
- b. ensuring all documents at the Assembly be available in Braille for the visually-impaired delegates
- c. allowing more time to delegates to share their Nation's work with their colleagues

In addition, 38% of respondents suggested other topics that they would have liked to have seen covered at the Regional Assembly such as:

- Career opportunities for persons with a disability
- Fundraising strategies
- Effective ways to interact with the media
- Coming to terms with disability

DPI NAC has documented all comments and suggestions received from this evaluation and will keep these results in mind when planning future regional events.

At this point, the Project has already reached 2 of its stated objectives: (1) the formation and launch of the DPI NAC Regional Women's Network (RWN), and (2) the outlining of the responsibility for holding an Executive and/or World Council position, and election of a new Regional Executive Council and World Council Representatives.

The positive responses indicate the project will go on to reach the other desired objectives to educate persons with disabilities (in particular, women) and to raise awareness in society with regards to HIV/AIDS, STIs, and substance abuse among persons with disabilities.

Several of the evaluation form respondents indicated they found the HIV/AIDS presentation the most useful aspect of the program. Additionally, we encouraged National Assemblies to send female delegates to this conference, so over two-thirds of the participants were women.

Revision of the event indicates that it provided the delegates with the knowledge base and support to return to their nations and disseminate the information among their National Assemblies as well as their communities. Following the work plan, National Assemblies will be provided with the resources to conduct in-country seminars on topics that will include the impact of HIV/AIDS, STIs, and substance abuse amongst persons with disabilities.

It is firmly believed that the information gained by attendants to the Assembly will have a ripple effect in each delegate's community. Awareness among the disability community and society as a whole is essential to advance each group's objectives and begin finding solutions to social problems that are endemic amongst persons with disabilities.

Awareness is also the key initial step to putting disability issues on government agendas. The host national assembly, Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International (TTDPI) exemplified this key component during the Regional Assembly when a high-level DPI delegation met with both the President and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to discuss the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UN General Assembly formally adopted the Convention on 13th December, 2006.

The enthusiasm displayed is positive evidence we will attain the project objectives.

Surprises/Good Results

1. *The DPI North America and the Caribbean Region were honoured to have Dr. and Mrs. Ick Seop Lee as guests at the Regional Assembly. The event gave Dr. Lee an opportunity to observe the activities of a Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) event in preparation for the Seventh World Assembly.*
2. *Teamwork: Individuals who are deaf assisted their colleagues anytime a sign language interpreter was missing or late.*
3. *The volunteer program developed by the Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association (TTOTA), an affiliate of TTDPI proved to be invaluable, and has been adopted as a template for future events in the Region.*
4. *The diversity of our newly elected Regional Executive Council is a welcome and pleasant result of the Regional Assembly. Comprised of 2 individuals with differing physical disabilities, 2 visually impaired or blind individuals, and 1 hearing impaired individual, our Executive reflects DPI's commitment to maintaining cross-disability, representation.*