SUPPLEMENTARY EVIDENCE ON DISABLED PARLIAMENTARIANS

FURTHER WRITTEN EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY ADD INTERNATIONAL TO THE IDC INQUIRY ON DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT (2014).

There is a general problem with MPs being excluded from oversight roles on World Bank projects. A report by the Bretton Woods Project in 2005 stated that ‘MPs on Uganda’s Committee of the Economy have expressed concern about the way they are asked to approve loans that have already been approved by the World Bank board, making it difficult for them to have any meaningful input. For example, in November 2004 the committee was asked by the government to approve a loan that had been approved already by the board two months earlier. One MP was quoted as saying: ‘we are told it is too late to change anything so you just endorse “for the good of your country”.’ The World Bank as a body has been challenged on this (this report is a good example), but not as far as we are aware specifically on inclusion of disabled people.

In Uganda there is a system of reserved representation for disabled people, featuring 5 MPs for People with Disabilities elected by Disabled People’s Organisations. However, these MPs are not on all key committees – for example no MP for PWDs is on the Committee on National Economy, which has to approve all loans including those from the World Bank. One disadvantage of the system of having MPs for PWDs is that there is a tendency for other MP’s to say that the issue is already covered in response to disabled constituents raising their problems. This means that without direct representation of an MP for PWD on the relevant committees, disability is unlikely to be considered. Given there are only 5 MPs for PWDs, their presence on the Committee is not guaranteed. We need much greater sensitisation of mainstream MPs on disability issues for the Committees to be effective for disabled people. This work is challenging and tends to be under-resourced, as few funders are willing to support it. ADD country offices and others working with the disability movement do work closely with parliamentarians, but given our restricted budgets for this work it has tended to focus on work directly with MPs for PWDs and MPs who have already expressed an interest in disability. An example is below:

A report on the PEAP/PRSP process in Uganda in 2000 narrates the deep involvement that the national disabled people’s union NUDIPU and other DPOs (supported by ADD, among other organisations) had with the process. This engagement did have a significant effect on the final PEAP document. Several MPs for PWDs were involved in the consultation process as leaders of the disability movement.
In Uganda there are regular reports to parliament on World Bank-funded projects like NUSAF II, but MPs were not necessarily engaged in the initial processes for establishing these kinds of program, which are largely carried out locally (the PEAP/PRSP example is something of an exception). Local councillors, on the other hand, are involved. Without early involvement in projects, there is a danger that the parliamentary scrutiny process won't work effectively for disabled people because MPs are unlikely to follow up specific recommendations that have been made regarding inclusion of disabled people.

At ADD we are working with MPs with an interest in disability in several countries, notably in East Africa (Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya). We are seeking to extend this work and would welcome the opportunity to speak with Mr Lefroy about it.

1 Kept in the Dark: a briefing on parliamentary scrutiny of the IMF and World Bank, April 2005, p8

2 Andrew K Dube, Participation of disabled people in the PRSP/PEAP process in Uganda, 2005 (DFID)