

Persons with Disabilities' Self-Initiative to Development (PSID)

A Concept Paper

PSID is a consumer-driven, rights-based approach that encourages people with disabilities (PWDs) to initiate, participate in and take ownership of the development process. It recognizes that PWDs can and should contribute to the mainstream development process, and believes that the advancement of PWDs brings positive changes for the entire community. Under this approach, PWDs are directly and democratically involved in the planning, decision-making, implementation and on-going management of their own programs and organizations. PWDs' involvement in these processes spans from the grassroots level to the national level. PSID facilitates an accessible service system which enables PWDs to contribute to their development through their own initiative and, in the process, to actualize the nation's development for all.

PSID was born from the realization made by a Bangladeshi disabled peoples' organization (Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity), whose experience demonstrated that traditional service delivery models were not effective, holistic or sustainable. From this realization, PSID was developed with the vision of a barrier-free, rights-based world for all. To actualize this vision, PSID is a rights-based, consumer-owned development approach that enables persons with disabilities to improve their lives, be active members of their communities and contribute to national development. PSID strengthens the individual, the organizations of PWDs (Disabled Peoples' Organizations - DPOs), and the wider community. These three audiences are addressed as follows:

Individual

The first and foremost focus of PSID is the individual, the PWD him or herself. S/he is not only the recipient of the initial services of PSID, but also will ultimately become the provider, the change agent, the leader, the contributor to the community and national development.

For this vision to be realized, each PWD acquires the necessary skills and knowledge and has the opportunity to put these skills into practice. PSID is not intended to replace existing services that are available to PWDs as well as the general public, but to expand those services and carefully craft them to the needs of the individual PWD. Through its membership system, PWDs identify, often for the first time in their lives, a sense of group belonging, a collective spirit, the feelings of importance and the confidence that all find in such dynamics. In essence their humanity and their human rights are validated. Necessarily, PSID offers equal opportunity to all members, regardless of religion, age, disability, gender, socio-economic status, or any other identifying characteristics.

From PSID, individual members are able to develop their individual potential, knowledge and skills so that they can maximize their own development and growth as well as contribute to that of the DPO. PSID empowers PWDs as valuable

resources for themselves and for the community as a whole. Complementing the skills and knowledge development for PWDs, financial opportunities are available and easily accessed. The PSID savings cooperative and potentially other income development and investment mechanisms, involving all members, create a financial base that allows member and group loans and even the possibility of dividends to the members. Marketable income generating skills, as well as cooperative economic ventures, are a valuable part of the offering of PSID. All of these factors are accessible through a system that is built, owned, managed and sustained by PWDs themselves.

Organization

Strength in numbers is realized by building a strong DPO through PSID, one that stands alone in the area of service, with informal ties to the initiating organization, but no formal organizational, including managerial, linkage. However, during an initial development stage, the initiating organization provides the newly-forming DPO the required capacity-building services. At the proper time, the initiative is fully localized. Appropriate financial mechanisms are positioned and overseen by the DPO, guiding the PWDs in their choices, the investment of assets, the identifying and building of income generating activities, in collective initiatives, and the participation of all stakeholders.

Decisions as to viable income generating activities and the provision of loans are made in a democratic, collective manner. True ownership of the DPO by each of the members is assured through their elected representatives on the DPO council, a minimum of 50% of which are women. Through the equal involvement of women, who further secure their position through the formation of a women with disabilities committee within the DPO, they share equally in every facet of the DPO and its activities. Children with disabilities are also inherently involved in the DPO's structure, with PSID's membership system transferring to them the necessary skills as they mature; thus future PWD leaders are being prepared.

The service spectrum is holistic, based on the inherent philosophy of PSID that the basic needs must be fulfilled and the potentialities of each member realized. The dues structure, savings, loan, investment, collective entrepreneurship, and fundraising activities of the DPO, as well as the development of its members' organizational skills and knowledge, solidify its sustainability. PSID is a holistic approach that is implemented in its entirety, with appropriate cultural requirements easily embedded into each DPO. As an organizational culture develops each PWD is fully validated and shares in the collective spirit of the DPO, including its planning, management and service activities.

The community, which has watched and felt the DPO's development in its midst, also shares in the ownership and benefits from its activities. Located within the community it is accepted as a resource, that includes an accessible facility, for all citizens, disabled and non-disabled. As unmet needs are identified by the PWDs and their collective strength is developed, they are able to advocate effectively with the appropriately responsible entities, including government bodies, to provide such

services and provide them under the guidance of the PWDs themselves, thus ensuring the desired availability and quality. The structure of PSID begins at the grassroots level and builds to the national level, giving voice to the individual PWD and ensuring true representation at every level.

Wider community

Since its formation PSID has focused on national development and its contribution to improve the nation as a whole. Built-in features and activities address all levels of development, from the individual to the entire nation. PWDs become true contributors to national development, are perceived as such, and old stereotypes of their being burdens upon society evaporate.

Constantly, awareness building and advocacy are priority activities of PSID. Networks are sought to involve the DPOs and, where none exist, the DPOs themselves initiate such networks. These associations are excellent vehicles for expanding awareness, education and advocacy, at every level of the nation's infrastructure, whether governmental, economic, private, health-related, educational or representing any other sector.

Infectious in the excitement generated from the positive results, the PSID approach mentors the wider community to shares in the benefits, the collective spirit and feelings of power, ownership and potential for positive, holistic results. Through this process the goods and services offered by all sectors of society are accessible to PWDs. This sense of ownership, utilizing community resources, facilitates PSID's becoming a true community-accepted, development approach, recognized as culturally appropriate by the entire community.

This paper is intended to give the reader a brief conceptual overview of the PSID approach only. For more in-depth information, including details regarding background and history, implementation, strategy, impact, results, etc., please visit the BPKS website (www.bpkssbd.org) or contact:

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