

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS and their role in the Disability Sector

Lecture Notes/ Presentation by J.M. Camilleri (September, 2003)

Definition of traditional charities

- non-governmental,
 - non-for-profit, and
 - concerned with charitable aims and objectives as defined by law.
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Beginnings

- shared interest
 - need to socialise with peers
 - dissatisfaction with present service provision
 - need to: feel understood; feel valued; find an identity.
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Structures

- informal
 - Formal
(that is, statute provides a legal identity, legitimates recognition, attracts more funding)
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Statute identifies

- aims
 - identifies officials on main committee
 - identifies sub-committees
 - explains how meetings are to be structured (minute keeping, quorum, etc)
 - identifies mechanism for AGM, extraordinary meetings, dissolution of organisation
 - how funds are to be collected, maintained and disposed of.
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Meetings

(according to statute)

- informal
- formal

Activities

- social activities (*sport; entertainment; religion; drama; hobbies*)
- educational activities
- service provision
- peer counselling
- peer support
- pressure group

Funding

- membership fees
- service provision
- government grants
- fundraising

Accountability

- to members
- to federation
- to government

Traditional charity - I

- impairment based (medical model)
- based on the idea of philanthropy
- disabled people occupy the majority of seats on the management committees
- run by non-disabled people *on behalf of* disabled persons

Traditional charity - II

- based on change (rehabilitation, adaptation, cure) located within the individual
- provides a social outlet
- depends on fundraising
- insular
- isolated
- based on voluntary work

Modern NGO - I

- rights based (social model)
- based on the fulfilment of rights
- run *by* disabled persons for disabled people
- based on equal rights (changing disabling, barriers)
- social change

Modern NGO - II

- provides services
- seeks government, &/ or private funding
- outward looking
- seeks to combine with other groups (federation, coalition)
- uses more highly skilled, paid workers

Fundraising imagery

In fundraising advertising & publicity, some traditional charities portray disabled people as:

- Helpless
- dependent
- pitiable.

The end justifies the means?

- Some charities are not interested in presenting positive images
- “as long as the money rolls in, the end justified the means”.
- The concept of charity is emotionally charged.

Charity ... for whom?

People carry out charity work for different reasons:

- Public esteem & social approbation (*i.e., warm praise; official approval*)
- Public honours
- A sense that helping ‘those less fortunate’ is a valued activity
- A genuine desire to be of service to others.

Assumptions underlying fundraising images – I

Charities believe

- it is acceptable to publicise medical conditions that the majority of non-disabled decision-makers and staff may not have.
- impairments are undesirable; constitute a personal misfortune; give rise to special needs; and place a moral obligation to help upon the public at large.
- people with impairments both want and deserve public support.

Assumptions underlying fundraising images – II

Charities believe

- they are able to effect significant material change in the 'plight' of the target disabled population.
- That change is generally desirable and is specifically desired by disabled persons.
- that they are the bodies best placed to determine how public donations should be used.

Disabled people want quite different images and messages

- That they are full citizens
- Their rights are denied them
- The way non-disabled people have built society excludes many disabled people from public places and social life.

Disabled people demand

- the opportunity to acquire resources through work (not charity)
- An end to the portrayal of them as objects of pity
- An end to images which damage their dignity and social standing.
- "To boldly go where everyone has gone before."

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