



# **Non-Government Organisations**

and their role in the  
Disability Sector

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# Definition of traditional charities



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



# Beginnings

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

# Structures

- ◆ informal
- ◆ Formal

*(that is, statute provides a legal identity, legitimates recognition, attracts more funding)*

# 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.



# 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
  - *Office of the Commissioner of Voluntary Bodies (Malta, 2007)*
    - *Registration; Support; Auditing; Regulation*

# 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
- ◆ Pitiabile.

# 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 such as the MQR.
- ◆ 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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