

DISABILITY RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

# P&O Common Approach

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On behalf of the contributing organizations and agencies  
Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic  
Reintegration

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**A collaborative effort of 35 organizations and agencies**

**Endorsed by the  
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## Introduction

Over the past 25 years, many aid projects have aimed at improving the situation of persons with disabilities in low-income countries. With substantial amounts of international assistance having been channelled into this area, it was hoped that the support would have a decisive impact on the performance of rehabilitation services, and that the gap between the number of people in need of rehabilitation and the number of persons assisted could be significantly reduced. Though efforts have been impressive and always well-intentioned, few projects have managed to provide the local counterpart with the capacities needed to continue the activity on its own when the project-phase is over.

In early 2003, a group of international organizations, meeting informally in the margins of the

**The Need**

- P&O services in a stagnant or declining state in low-income countries
- A lack of substantial coordination, cooperation and long-term planning among the key international non-governmental organizations that are the main supporters of P&O services in low-income countries

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implementation process of the Mine Ban Treaty, initiated a discussion on how to address some of the issues that have kept prosthetics and orthotics (P&O) services in a stagnant or declining state in many low-income countries. The group agreed that the collective knowledge and experience of the members and of other P&O implementing organizations (both international and local) could be used as a basis for developing a common approach to address many of the problems that P&O implementers constantly face. By developing a *common approach* for project implementation at the *international* level, it was believed that collaboration between the organizations could be facilitated and strengthened at the *country*

level. It was felt that such a step could reduce many of the negative effects of supporting organizations' competition that are seen in certain countries and provide a common base for national planning with relevant authorities and local counterparts.

The development of this document began in June 2003 with the aim of describing essential and generally accepted elements for the implementation of P&O projects. The process included the following steps:

- Preparation of a draft document on the basis of a review of some milestone documents from the P&O field with the addition of some elements of more philosophical and less technical nature
- Review of the draft by the original group and subsequent revision of the document according to comments provided
- Circulation of the draft to a wider group of identified P&O project implementers for their review and revision of the document according to their comments
- Circulation of the draft to representatives of local P&O programmes and international organizations working with the broader issues of disability and rehabilitation for their review, and revision according to their comments
- Discussion of the draft in a 2-day meeting in June 2004 with the presence of most of the agencies involved, and subsequent revision of the document, including dividing it into two; one document describing the features of sustainable local P&O programmes (the *Programme Guide*); and one dealing with the issues of the supporting organization's project, i.e. the present document – the *common approach* that the first group had originally set out to produce
- Circulation of the new draft documents, final revision, printing and launch (September 2006)

**The Response:  
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- In 2003, in the margins of the Mine Ban Treaty meetings, a small group of organizations initiated a discussion to address this need
- A preliminary draft document was prepared after extensive review of literature and studies related to P&O, which was submitted to a larger group
- A new draft was subsequently reviewed by an even larger group (35 organizations and agencies)

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**The Response:  
P&O Common Approach**

- In June 2004, after a two-day meeting the draft document was divided in two:
  - *The Programme Guide*: dealing with issues that are of importance for any local P&O programme
  - *The Project Guide*: dealing with supporting organizations' projects


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P&O Common Approach

The *Project Guide* is intended for organizations that provide support to P&O programme in low-income countries, while the *Programme Guide* is intended for local implementing programme organizations and institutions. While the Project Guide sets forth the approach of a project, the Programme Guide sets forth the end goals by presenting the features of a local P&O programme ideally in place when the project phase is over. Thus, the Programme Guide is an important tool for supporting organizations to use when planning and implementing projects. Each document has a primary audience, but both audiences will benefit from reading and discussing both documents.

## The Programme Guide

### Characteristics

#### It presents topics on which consensus has been reached

This document seeks to present some fundamental and generally accepted principles for the provision of P&O services in low-income countries. It summarizes the views of many individuals and organizations with extensive experience and expertise in this field.

#### It presents *ideals* that a P&O programme can strive to achieve

The description of P&O work provided in this document is limited to a *general* presentation that, as such, could be said to represent the “perfect situation”. It is acknowledged that realities may be very different and make the ideals presented difficult to fully achieve. Nevertheless, by having the “perfect situation” as a reference, and by setting aims according to this, it can be made sure that a good direction can be set for a programme, and that this is not lost in the midst of the many challenges that are encountered in the daily work.

#### It does not claim to be complete

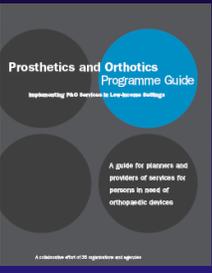
Many important issues remain to be discussed, developed and documented to a complete picture of a P&O programme. This document does not claim to present a final guide for the provision of P&O services, nor should it be regarded as a “law” for doing this work. The content should instead be seen as a *starting point* for a broader discussion on P&O (at service level as well as at the national, regional and international levels) so that the development of more detailed and programme-specific guidelines can be prepared according to individual country contexts.

#### It is a *working document* that will incorporate more evidence-based sections in time

The present document offers a summary of best practices as they are currently seen. Since P&O is a constantly developing area, however, views about how to implement programmes may gradually change. The present document should therefore be seen as a *work-in-progress* that needs to be regularly revisited, critically reviewed and revised. In this context, as with any documentation of P&O work, it will be important to field test the principles and recommendations presented, to develop them in more detail, to broaden the areas covered, and to make sure that the document gradually becomes more evidence-based.

**The Programme Guide**

- Presents topics on which consensus has been reached
- Presents ideals that a P&O programme can strive to achieve
- Does not claim to be complete
- Is a working document that could incorporate more evidence-based sections in time




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### **Builds on the following principles**

**That the overall aim of a P&O programme is to enable the full and effective *participation and inclusion in society* of persons with disabilities, and that this is a *human right***

Rehabilitation is the process of removing or reducing the factors that limit the activities and participation of a person with a disability, in order to allow this person to attain and maintain the highest possible level of independence and quality of life. Physical rehabilitation is not an objective in itself but, like other services in the rehabilitation chain, it is a means to ensure full inclusion of persons with disabilities

**That, to achieve this, a P&O programme must work closely with other rehabilitation services in an integrated, holistic approach to disability.**

**That a P&O programme must be built for and around the service user, who must therefore be consulted in the different phases of planning and running of services as well as have a prominent role in the monitoring and evaluation of these.**

**That a P&O programme must be planned so that the *maximum number of persons* can be assisted with P&O devices of acceptable quality, which for example requires that:**

Centres should provide the complete range of services linked with physical rehabilitation (prostheses, orthoses, walking aids, wheelchairs and physiotherapy). In addition, centres should have referral systems allowing them to refer individuals to other services (medical, etc). Services should be permanent, financially possible to sustain at a good level, integrated in the national health care structure, known and physically and financially accessible to potential users, non-discrimination principles are applied, comprehensive planning is done, both at the programme and the national level, appropriate technologies and working methods are used, staff are well trained technically and managerially, the quality of the services is monitored

**The Programme Guide**

- **Builds on the following principles:**
  - The full and effective participation and inclusion in society by persons with disabilities (a basic right)
  - Close cooperation with other rehabilitation services in an integrated, holistic approach to disability
  - The service user is at the centre of the decision-making process
  - Access to P&O devices of acceptable quality by the maximum number of people

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### **How the Programme Guide can be used**

This document aims at stimulating discussions, at country and international levels, on how to improve P&O services in low-income settings. It is hoped that it thereby will contribute to changes that result in more people who need prostheses and orthoses having access to better quality and more sustainable services.

The document may be used by **local organizations and agencies** implementing P&O programmes:

- as a reference for planning, implementation and evaluation work
- when setting aims and defining strategies
- in the training of staff, in particular at management level
- in discussions and detailed planning work together with relevant authorities and other collaborating partners
- in contacts with donors; and
- as a lobbying tool

**The Programme Guide**

- **How it can be used:**
  - as a reference for planning, implementing and evaluation work
  - when setting goals and defining strategies
  - in the training of staff, in particular at management level
  - as a tool for discussions and planning with government and other collaborating partners
  - in contacts with donors
  - as a lobbying tool

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Furthermore, it may be used by **organizations that support local P&O programmes** as a tool for planning projects jointly with the local programme and national and local authorities. The document

## **P&O Common Approach**

may also be used as teaching material at **P&O schools** in low-income and industrialized countries to give students an introduction to P&O work in low-income settings.

## The Project Guide

### Characteristics

To emphasize the consensus among the group members the paper was written in the first person, using words such as “we” and “our”. Though the “we” and “our” language still relates to duties of supporting organizations, the principles and practices described in the document are supported by all the organizations involved in the process.

#### It presents topics on which consensus has been reached

This document seeks to present some fundamental and generally accepted principles for the implementation of P&O projects in low-income settings. It summarizes the views of many individuals and organizations with extensive experience and expertise in this field.

#### It acknowledges that mandates, viewpoints and scopes of work vary among organizations

Organizations implement P&O projects in different ways and with different aims. Some focus their work on war-victims, others on children. Some keep expatriate staff in their projects throughout their whole duration, while others prefer to provide periodic technical support through regular visits to local programmes. Some organizations limit their work to the P&O sector only in order to be efficient and achieve important, tangible results. Others find it important to back their efforts in the P&O field by working in closely related sectors, such as surgical care, physical and occupational therapy, vocational training and community-based rehabilitation. Still others provide support to areas dealing with overall development of systems for social security, promotion of democracy, etc., all of which may improve conditions for work in the rehabilitation sector. Rather than debating the positions of each differing approach, this document seeks to identify, and stimulate collaboration on the features that most organizations have in common.

**The Project Guide**

- Presents topics on which consensus has been reached
- Acknowledge that mandates, viewpoints and scopes of work vary among organizations
- Presents ideals that a P&O project can strive to achieve
- Focuses on the field of P&O, but may be of interest to other sectors
- Is a working document that could incorporate more evidence-based sections in time

Prosthetics and Orthotics Project Guide  
Supporting P&O Services in Low-income Settings  
A common approach for organizations implementing aid projects  
A collaboration of 18 organizations and agencies

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#### It presents *ideals* that a P&O project can strive to achieve

The description of P&O project implementation provided in this document is limited to a *general* presentation that, as such, could be said to represent the “perfect situation”. It is acknowledged that realities may be very different and make the ideals presented difficult to achieve. Even so, by having the “perfect situation” as a reference, and by setting aims according to this, organizations can make sure that a good direction can be set for a project, and that this is not lost in the midst of the many challenges that are encountered in the daily work.

#### It focuses on the field of prosthetics and orthotics, but may be of interest also to other sectors

It is beyond the scope of this document to suggest an approach for work in any rehabilitation sector other than this. Even so, the document may be of interest to those sectors directly collaborating with P&O services, and for other fields sharing similar challenges. Indeed, *non-technical* parts – such as the project-programme relationship, the central role of the local counterpart, and collaboration – can be applied to most development projects. Portions of the document’s more *technically* oriented sections may apply to the general field of *assistive devices* – including the production and supply of wheelchairs, crutches and other mobility devices – which in fact is sometimes also addressed by P&O professionals. The document discusses those features of *physiotherapy* that are relevant to P&O work since such interventions are essential for the overall success of P&O programmes. The particulars of this field, however, have not been presented and would need to be developed separately.

#### It is a *working document* that will incorporate more evidence-based sections in time

The document should be seen as a *work-in-progress* that needs to be regularly revisited, critically reviewed and revised. It will be important to field test the principles and recommendations presented, to develop them in more detail, to broaden the areas covered, and to make sure that the document gradually becomes more evidence-based.

### Builds on the following principles

That project should result in *sustainable* local programmes, meaning that they are able to continue service provision on their own without continuous technical and managerial support. (By minimizing local programmes' dependency on external support, scarce resources can be used for more projects, which will benefit a higher number of P&O programmes and contribute to better meeting the need for P&O services around the globe.). That, to enable local P&O programmes to become sustainable, supporting organizations needs to work with *local counterparts*, who, as the legitimate owners of the services, should assume and be given possibility to assume full responsibilities for planning, implementation and day-to-day management.

**The Project Guide**

- **Builds on the following principles:**
  - Sustainable local programmes
  - Close collaboration with local counterparts
  - Understanding projects through the perspective of the local programme
  - Building on national plans and infrastructure
  - Working with governments to advance disability rights
  - International cooperation

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That project must make sure that local P&O programmes are built on, and well integrated in, a country's infrastructure. That supporting organizations need to see their projects through the perspective of the local programme; the *Programme Guide*, can be useful for this; it points out the need for local programmes – and thereby also for supporting projects – to work with a *broad range of issues*, such as service user involvement, awareness raising, measures to ensure accessibility, integration, collaboration, planning and quality management, etc.

That supporting organizations, together with the local programme, need to actively promote and participate in the process of developing the *disability field* as such – from physical rehabilitation to social inclusion, disability rights and the development of government policies and national plans. That P&O project implementation should be seen as a responsibility that is assumed *on behalf* of the international aid community, since, regardless of the efficiency or effectiveness of a project, the mere existence of a supporting organization in a particular field may prevent other organizations from providing support. This makes international collaboration and exchange among supporting organizations – and the use of a common approach for project implementation – even more important.

### How the Project Guide can be used

- as a guideline and checklist for planning, implementation and evaluation of P&O projects – at headquarters and at project implementation level
- as a reference when preparing an organization's internal guidelines for project implementation
- as a checklist for discussions and detailed planning work together with local counterparts, governments and other collaborating partners
- as a reference in discussions with donors
- as training material for project staff
- as a joint reference when collaborating with other project implementing organizations
- as teaching material at P&O schools in low-income and industrialized countries to give students an introduction to P&O work in low-income settings
- as a guide for identifying research areas and conducting research
- as a lobbying tool

**The Project Guide**

- **How it can be used:**
  - as a guideline and checklist for planning, implementing and evaluating P&O projects
  - as a reference when preparing internal guidelines for project implementation
  - as a reference for discussions and collaboration with local counterparts, governments and collaborating partners
  - in the training of project staff and P&O students
  - as a guide for identifying research areas and conducting research
  - as a reference in discussions with donors
  - as a lobbying tool

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