Advocacy Needs Assessment of Organizations defending the Interests of Persons with Disabilities

Research Report

Yerevan 2023

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of Organizations defending the Interests
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Foreword

Within the frame of the programme conducted by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF), research on the rights and social inclusion of persons with disabilities was conducted by the United Nations Office in Armenia. This research report[1] summarizes a situational analysis of the rights of persons with disabilities in Armenia. According to one of the main findings of the report, the beneficiaries have a strong lack of capacities to implement and monitor the activities ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

In light of this, at the initiative of "Creating enabling environment and ecosystem for CRPD implementation and disability mainstreaming in Armenia" programme conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Disability Rights Agenda NGO has taken the responsibility to support the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and/or NGOs representing and defending the interests of persons with disabilities. The support is aimed at the capacity building of OPDs in terms of advocacy to enable them to effectively and meaningfully participate in the design and implementation of the disability inclusive policies by-laws and regulations. Within the scope of the programme, it is planned to develop a three-year action plan, monitoring and evaluation measures, as well as a two-day training aimed at supporting OPDs in regards to evidence-based advocacy.

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1. Available at the following link, accessed on 01.04.2023
https://www.unprpd.org/sites/default/files/library/2022-11/Situation_Analysis_CountryBrief_Armenia.pdf.

For this purpose, a needs assessment of OPDs in terms of evidence-based advocacy was launched by the United Nations Population Fund and carried out by Disability Rights Agenda NGO. Research findings are aimed at providing a more targeted, thorough, and fact-based position for the conduction of the actions planned within the scope of the programme.

The fieldwork of the current research was administered between February 10 and 28, 2023. The present report is prepared based on primary data analysis. The results of needs assessment, more particularly the main findings of quantitative and qualitative data analysis, are summarized here. The report begins with a detailed description of assessment methodology, which is followed by combined data analysis complete with figures and direct quotations. The report closes with a section of concluding thoughts, where key research findings are synthesized, followed by data-driven hints for potential future actions towards the capacity building of organizations in terms of advocacy.

Methodological strategy

2

● Scopes

The purpose of the study is to explore the evidence-based advocacy needs of the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and/or NGOs representing and defending the interests of persons with disabilities.

The research focuses on the following main points regarding the OPDs:

1. self-definition and role perceptions,
2. perceptions on advocacy,
3. advocacy experience and positioning,
4. degree and willingness to engage in networks,
5. capacity development priorities.

● Methodology

Mixed methods research has been conducted to achieve the purpose of the study. This research tradition, combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies has enabled to outline a more comprehensive and thorough picture of the research problem.

Mixed methods research assumes a purposive combination of different methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Combination and integration of different types of data are

the key advantages of this approach. This way, it is possible to observe the same phenomenon from various angles.

The combination of two types of data has provided the opportunity to benefit both from the detailed and contextual nature of qualitative data and the generalizing character of quantitative data ensuring external validity. Basically, the assets of two methods have often complemented one other minimizing each other's weaknesses.

Moreover, considering the practical purpose of this research, this methodology has significantly reduced the dependence on research paradigms enabling to maintain the principles of applicability and problem-centred approach.

The present research builds on **explanatory sequential** model of mixed methods research which is especially appropriate in cases when qualitative information can be used to contextualize the patterns revealed by quantitative data. As the name of the model suggests, it assumes a **sequential** application of quantitative and qualitative methods, where quantitative data outlines the general picture of the situation, while qualitative data helps to **explain** and interpret it.

Figure 1. Mixed Methods Explanatory Sequential Design

Phase I
quantitative data

Phase II
qualitative data

Phase III
combined analysis

● Methods

1. Quantitative Telephone Survey

The method of telephone interviewing was used at the initial quantitative phase of data collection. This method has provided a large coverage of systematic data within a short period of time, as it has eliminated the need for physical mobility both for the researcher and the respondents. Within the scope of this method, a semi-structured questionnaire was used (see **Appendix 1**) comprising closed questions with limited answers, as well as some open-ended questions. The questionnaire was programmed into the QuestionPro online platform, which was directly used during the telephone interviewing to register and immediately store the survey responses.

As a reasonable methodological adjustment, two of the interviews were conducted via video call with the support of a sign language interpreter due to hearing impairment of the respondents and thus the inability to take part in the interview via phone

2. Qualitative Key Informant Interviews

During the second, qualitative phase of data collection the method of key informant interviews (KII) was utilized. These individual interviews aimed to complete and "colour" the quantitative findings attempting to construe the meanings or causal explanations behind them. As a result, the collected qualitative data has enriched and contextualized the outlined general patterns. An unstructured qualitative interview guide was used (see Appendix 2), which covered the main interview topics, at the same time ensuring sufficient structural flexibility for the interviewer to change the question sequence, ask clarifying/follow-up questions or omit those already answered. The interviews were carried out via remote video calls.

● Data Sources

The research has relied entirely on primary data collection. Within both quantitative and qualitative methods, data was collected from OPDs and NGOs representing and defending the interests of persons with disabilities. The interviews were mainly conducted with the heads of organizations. In case of their unavailability, the interviews were carried out with project coordinators or persons of such positions that assume a thorough understanding of the organization and its overall activities, allowing to participate on behalf of the organization. Access to the sources was ensured through an extended list of organizations (see Appendix 3) agreed upon with the client.

● Sampling and Selection Criteria

1. Quantitative Component

The quantitative component builds on total population sampling. Namely, all the units of the sampling frame were included in the sample population. This means that the findings based on the analysis of the collected data are representative of the OPDs and NGOs representing and defending the interests of persons with disabilities in Armenia.

The targeted size of the quantitative sample was 40 (see Appendix 3). It is the number of all OPDs and NGOs representing and defending the interests of persons with disabilities in Armenia. The only selection criterion is the engagement in activities related to the interests of persons with disabilities.

Out of planned 40 interviews, 35 were successfully conducted. Interviews were not conducted with 5 organizations: one of them was the author organization and as for the other 4, it was not possible to make an appointment with due to their unavailability or unwillingness.

2. Qualitative Component

Stratified purposive sampling was used in the qualitative research component. This sampling strategy has enabled dividing the population of observations into typical subgroups/strata

according to certain criteria and make a purposive selection within each subgroup/stratum. This type of sampling is not random, and it does not assume representativeness. On the contrary, it is strategic, and it assumes data collection from such units which provide saturated information.

The sample size in qualitative component was 9. Three selection criteria were applied: advocacy priority within the scope of the implemented project[2], sphere of operation and territory of operation. The selection was carried out in two stages.

In the first stage, the organizations included in the sampling frame were categorized into three subgroups based on advocacy priority. The subgroups were distinguished based on the following logic:

Primary	active organizations led by persons with disabilities;
Secondary	organizations providing service to persons with disabilities and having advocacy impact, or passive organizations led by persons with disabilities;
Tertiary	organizations not engaged in advocacy and or passive organizations.

In the second stage of sampling, three organizations were selected within each subgroup ensuring their diversity across spheres and territories of operation.

● Ethical and Quality Considerations

The current research is of high ethical sensitivity. This is because the data is collected from OPDs, thus mainly from persons with disabilities. Considering the social vulnerability of the target group, the research design and methods were designed in a flexible and reasonable way, excluding any discriminatory or restrictive approaches towards persons with disabilities and their organizations. At the same time, the ethical sensitivity here is relatively lower compared to other similar studies, since this study is focused on organizational rather than personal needs. Although this fact has already eliminated the possible depth of ethical problems, the research team, relying on many years of research experience and the continuous consultations with the client, has managed to find reasonable solutions in every situation, and no serious ethical challenge has been registered throughout the study.

Data quality has been ensured through several mechanisms.

The quantitative data has been collected and checked via an automated system. This has addressed the possible discrepancies in the technical accuracy of the data. The internal substantive accuracy of data has been ensured by the heads of organizations who are assumed to be well-informed and have good understanding of the needs of their organizations.

The qualitative data has been collected and analysed by experienced researchers. Interviews have been recorded (upon initial consent of respondents) and used as a basis for data quality check.

It can be established that no reservations as to data quality in both quantitative and qualitative parts, and no omissions or errors are to be reported.

2. This criterion was applied based on the priority classification suggested by the client.

Analysis

3

● Analytical Strategy

In the present research, the analysis began from the quantitative data. Data collection and processing were followed by descriptive analysis, i.e., the main patterns for each question were summarized in frequencies and percentages. This was followed by a deeper analysis, with data cross-tabulated to identify correlations[3] and potential causal links between two or more variables. In the analysis, we have mainly drawn on those cases where statistically significant relationships between variables (questions) have been identified. The analysis was conducted entirely through SPSS software.

This was then followed by the qualitative data analysis. Summaries were prepared for all the conducted qualitative interviews comprising the main answer points for each of the questions. Subsequently, the common/recurring themes were identified across summaries, as well as findings were highlighted in cases when they facilitated deeper interpretation and contextual analysis of already outlined statistical patterns and differences. The qualitative data analysis was based on conventional methods.

Essentially, the analysis was primarily based on quantitative data which was complemented and contextualized by the qualitative material. This has resulted in combined data analysis which aims not only at describing but also explaining the problems the research is focused on.

Hence, the main research findings are presented in the next subsection. The subsection consists of four thematic parts which address advocacy awareness and experience of the organizations,

....

3. Correlation is a type of interrelation between two variables, in which a unit of change in the value of one variable happens simultaneously with the same amount of change in the value of a second variable.

their attitudes towards advocacy, their relations to the external environment such as policy and network community, as well as their organizational and advocacy needs.

● Main Findings

Advocacy Awareness and Experience

First off, we attempted to determine the organizations' awareness of the term "advocacy" and its Armenian equivalent (i.e, "ջատագովություն" [djatagovutyun]). As **Figure 2** shows, 29 of the 35 interviewed organizations are familiar with the term, while 6 organizations answered "no" to this question.

**Figure 2.
Are you familiar with
the term "advocacy"?**

no
6

yes

29

yes ■ no ■
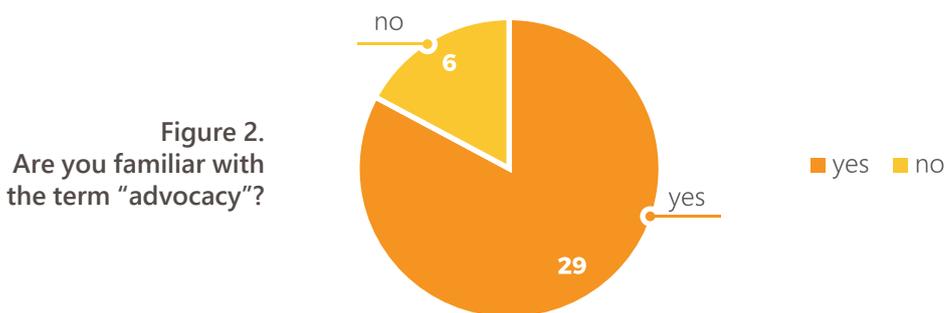
Before reflecting on the organizations who answered "no", it is relevant to discuss the interpretations given by organizations that mention they are familiar with the term. The organizations answering "yes" were asked to clarify how they would explain the term. As a result, the majority of respondents defined advocacy mainly as interest defence based on purposeful actions, and its Armenian equivalent term was interpreted as promotion of ideas and lobbying aimed at social change.

At the same time, it is important to note that 6 organizations out of 29 found it difficult to interpret the term. Besides, it is noticeable that while interpreting either advocacy or its Armenian equivalent they mainly focus on the explanation of root word's meaning or its translation. This may imply that the term is not sufficiently clarified among a number of organizations since, although the word is in fact familiar to them, they cannot easily describe and interpret it in the context of their activity.

Many of the organizations have made sense of advocacy through the use of various advocacy tools over the years. Some grant projects have involved advocacy goals including, for example, actions fostering accessibility.

» *When nobody was talking about it and there was no institutional solution, we tried to come up with such institutional solutions to have legislative, sub-legislative changes. And we had some success working with the National Assembly, its members, and fractions at that time. But I repeat, that specific project was conducted 15 years ago.*

Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Yerevan

During the quantitative survey, testing of advocacy awareness was followed by the respondents, regardless of their answers, being informed on how the terms are defined within the framework of the current research[4]. With the following question an attempt was made to find out whether the organization has ever engaged in advocacy. **Figure 3** illustrates that 6 organizations out of 35 have never had such an experience, however it is important to note that 5 of those 6 organizations have mentioned that they are not familiar with the term.

The organizations answering "yes" to the first question were asked two additional questions to figure out their experience in advocacy (see **Figure 4** and **Figure 5**). 20 organizations out of 29 have mentioned that they do not have an employee who coordinates the advocacy activities in the organization, while 22 have noted that they do not have advocacy action plan or strategy.

Figure 3.
Has your organization ever implemented advocacy/interest defence?
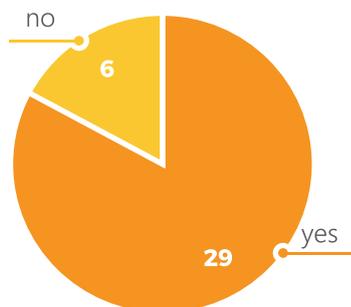
Figure 4.
Is there an employee who specifically coordinates the advocacy activities in your organization?
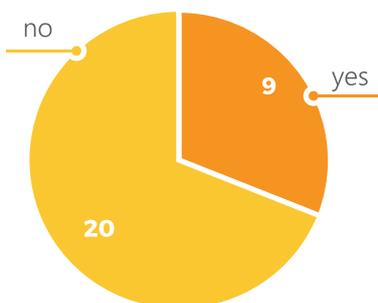
Figure 5.
Does your organization have an advocacy action plan or strategy?

no 6
yes 29

no
yes 9
20

no
yes 7
22
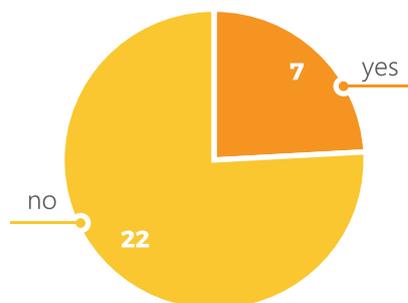
■ yes ■ no

> « *If we had an employee and there was time available, we could do a better advocacy, make recommendations to promote the inclusiveness of the whole legislation etc.* »
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Shirak

Some recommendations in terms of advocacy have been identified from qualitative interviews. Among them it has been noted that the organizations have themselves launched the process on the adoption of RA law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, they have worked with specific beneficiaries to build their capacities, as well as they have tried to make some change in society eliminating the widespread stereotypes.

4. The definition presented to the respondents was as follows: The terms "advocacy" and its Armenian equivalent, as well as "interest defence" are used synonymously. Namely, we refer to actions aimed at representing or defending the interests of specific persons or groups.

> *They came to Armenia, we took our government members to America, then there were some meetings with different government cycles, different ministries, the problems of persons with disabilities in Armenia were under discussion, also we reviewed the law and introduced recommendations.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Shirak

> *Along with that, you inculcate in society that hey, you know, if I am a person with disabilities, it does not mean that my rights can be violated or, I don't know, you may feel sorry for me, or I don't know... I mean when you are strong inside, you feel that you are powerful, strong, and psychologically prepared, you educate the society in the same way to be very respectful towards you and towards persons with disabilities in general.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Yerevan

Regardless of how advocacy-aware the organizations were and what experience they had in that regard, we tried to deepen our understanding of their advocacy experience in terms of different advocacy actions. Several actions were listed, and the respondents were asked to note whether they engaged in each of them or not.

Figure 6 illustrates that all 35 organizations have engaged in media or public events at some point in time. The majority has mentioned having an experience of contacting a public/political figure or their office (77%), conducting research and analysis of a specific problem (71%), as well as taking part in the work of advocacy committee or coalition (63%). Meanwhile, about half of the organizations has never conducted policy analysis introducing improvement recommendations and has not taken part in public demonstrations or protests.

Figure 6. Frequency of actions implemented to carry out advocacy (N=35)

Used social media (including social networks) orpublic events	100%
Contacted a public/political figure or his/her office	77%
Conducted research and analysed a specificproblem	71%
Took part in activities of advocacy committee orcoalition	63%
Conducted policy analysis and came up withrecommendations	51%
Took part in public demonstrations or protests	51%
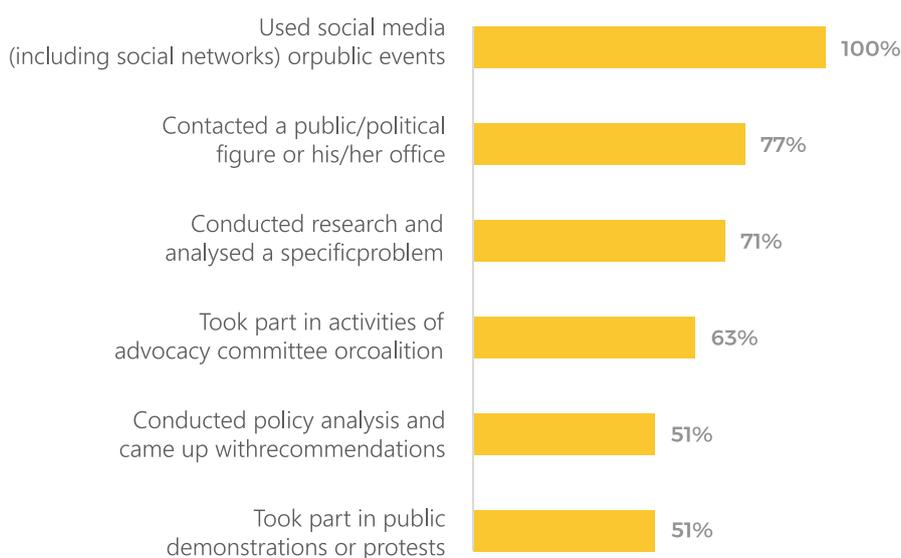
All the above-mentioned mainly outlines the advocacy awareness and experience of the OPDs. Meanwhile, it is important to mention and discuss those organizations who are not familiar with the term advocacy.

The first question (see **Figure 2**) focused on the term advocacy. Evidently, this would not be a sufficiently reliable measurement if observed in isolation. Thus, it is critical to consider what answers the organizations responding "no" to that question have given to other questions on advocacy awareness and experience. So, the quantitative data illustrates that out of 6 organizations answering "no":

- 5 also never took part in advocacy committee or coalition activities,
- 5 also never conducted policy analysis or introduced improvement recommendations,
- 4 also never took part in public demonstrations or protests,
- 3 also never carried out research or analysis of a specific problem.

Combined observation of this data implies that the first measurement if considered together with other questions is mostly accurate and it possibly gives an illustration of the level of advocacy awareness close to reality.

Advocacy Attitudes and Disability Conceptualization

Experience in advocacy can actually be explained by the level of awareness of it. Meanwhile, this does not provide a complete and broad understanding of advocacy needs. These are not merely organizational needs which the organizations are able to articulate; some advocacy needs may be conditioned by the approach an organization takes towards the interest defence of persons with disabilities in general.

Although the respondent organizations completely or at least moderately agree that OPDs should focus on advocacy and interest defence of persons with disabilities (see **Figure 7**), it was also important to find out whether the organizations share similar views on the conceptualization of disability advocacy.

Figure 7. Advocacy and interest defence of persons with disabilities must be at the core of OPD activities
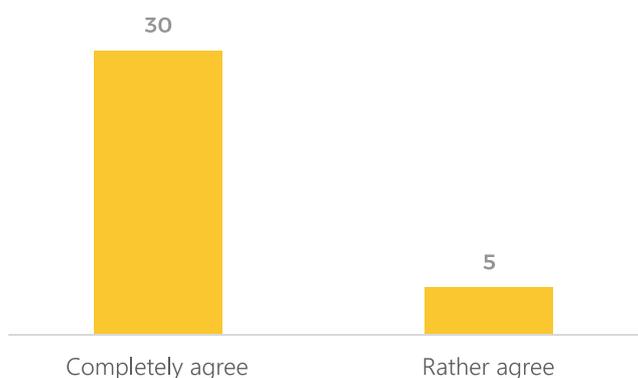
From this point of view, different authors identified some gaps in the actions of organizations or activists in regard to the realization of disability-inclusive ideology. Such gaps may be hindering the development of effective advocacy agenda, instead spreading and deepening some misconceptions on inclusiveness both among those who carry out advocacy and among the general public.

Researcher and inclusive policy analyst Priva Haang'andu states[5] that one of such misconceptions is the conception that the heart and soul of disability-inclusive development is for purposes of benefiting persons with disabilities. While it is true that persons with disabilities do benefit from an equitable society, designing disability-inclusive development programmes for the sole purpose of benefitting persons with disabilities may be problematic in terms of the general inclusiveness of society and the strengthening of justice ideologies.

Taking this into consideration, we attempted to ascertain the extent to which organizations in Armenia agree to such an exceptional policy. **Figure 8** makes it clear that only 10 out of 35 organizations completely disagree with the statement that inclusive policy should be aimed at the sole purpose of benefiting persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the organizations, approximately 70% of them rather (19 organizations) or completely (5 organizations) agree to this approach.

Figure 8. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities should represent and defend only the interests of persons with disabilities.
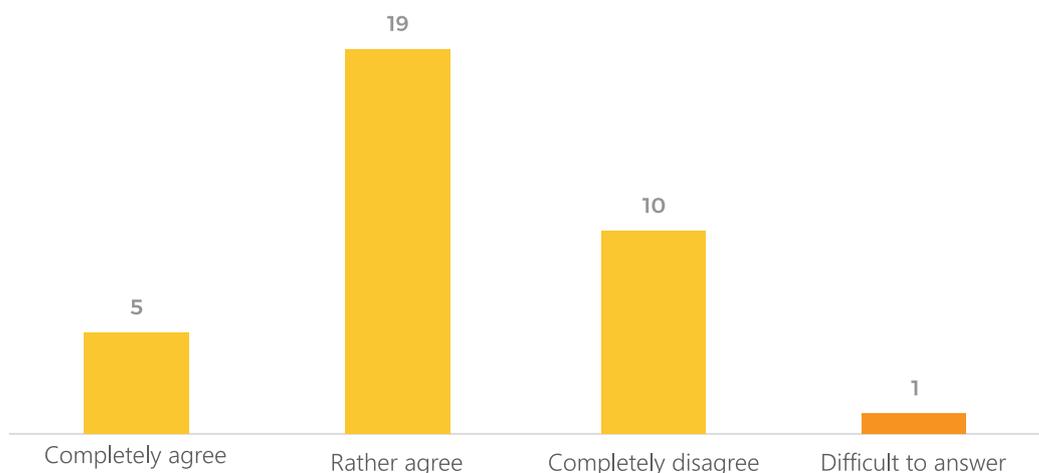
This exclusive approach is logically related to another misconception, the medical and charity models of disability.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities building on the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us" has offered an alternative approach to the wide-spread perception that persons with disabilities need sympathetic "redemption" from the rest of the world. The alternative approach put forward by CPRD came out as the social model of disability whose key statement is that persons with disabilities should be regarded as active social agents who are able to proactively represent and defend their own interests.

5. Available at the following link, accessed on 23.03.2023 https://includovate.medium.com/nothing-about-us-without-us-4212a12e3bf0

In fact, the medical and charity models of disability contradict the disability-inclusive development ideology in some sense, leaving no room to conceptualize the importance of advocacy work. Therefore, the research has attempted to highlight what perspective the OPDs take towards traditional conceptualizations of disability.

Figure 9 shows that more than two-thirds of the organizations completely (10 organizations) or rather (15 organizations) agree that persons with disabilities are in need of medical aid and charitable support.

Figure 9. Persons with disabilities are in need of medical aid and charitable support.

Completely agree	Rather agree	Completely disagree
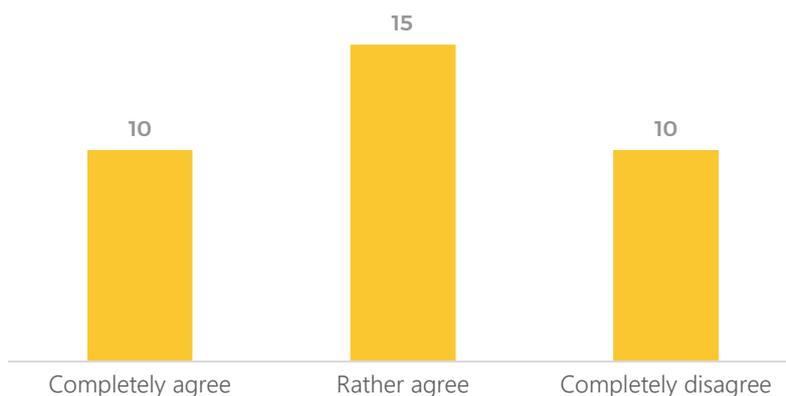
Qualitative data also confirms that organizations have different approaches towards the traditional models of disability.

Some organizations critically disapprove of charitable support and affirm that they have never engaged in such activities. In this context "Paros" system is sometimes mentioned as an initiative having negative effects in this regard. From this perspective, the autonomy of persons with disabilities is valued particularly in terms of education, employment, and economic independence.

> *I have been against it with all my heart… to serve on a silver platter and invite to eat, generally for any person and especially for disabled ones. There is no such thing. Go, make it, and then eat it. It makes the food more delicious, and the person gains autonomy.*
>
> *We have never done that.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Syunik

There are also some concerns observed among the organizations that persons with disabilities would not be able to move forward, work and study, if they just look out for help and aid. According to respondents, often times, persons with disabilities themselves expect aiding, while it seriously affects their psychological state and lifestyle.

> *You know, for example here in Armenia it is a common perception that if you are a disabled person this means you certainly need help or medical aid, but I do not agree.*
>
> *I mean, a person without disabilities may also need help. But yes, here in Armenia we face that problem quite often when persons with disabilities always anticipate some help or medical aid.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Yerevan

> *No, we are against that. They do not encourage the person to work when they do charity work. It is harmful both for the person with disabilities as one loses his/her motivation to study, find a job, and move forward and for the society.*
>
> *The stereotypes that persons with disabilities need charity are already deeply rooted in society, and they become even deeper.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Shirak

At the same time, the notion that these models should not be contradicted is also typical for the surveyed organizations. As such, the organizations note there is an opinion that the social model is progressive and the medical one is outdated, however they do not necessarily exclude each other.

> *There is no need to exclude it* [the medical model]*, as although we argue that it is a stereotype or something else, it is not a secret that according to statistics most persons with disabilities have concomitant illness more often than persons without disabilities... in certain cases, I do not mean all types of disability.*
>
> *In that case, yes, medical aid is very important.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Yerevan

In addition, several organizations highlight the needs-based approach regardless of the models. So, it is important to satisfy the basic needs, and only then turn to the satisfaction of higher-level needs such as sense of group belonging, education, employment, and self-actualization.

> *I mean, I do not want... I do not want a radical approach, to put it shortly. Though I understand it very well that the same charity has negatively affected and is still negatively affecting the main part of our population regardless of disability... But we should understand that all of those are primary needs that should be satisfied and after that we should develop the person, make him/her grow and change his/her self-perception.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Yerevan

To draw a general conclusion about our findings on disability models it is crucial to analyse this question without isolating it from others. In this regard, a noteworthy relationship has been found between the question *"Are you familiar with the term "advocacy"?" and the answers to the statement "Persons with disabilities are in need of medical aid and charitable support".*

As **Table 1** highlights, 83.3% (5 organizations) of those 6 organizations answering "no" to the question on familiarity with the term "advocacy" have also mentioned that they completely agree with the statement articulating the concept of the traditional model of disability. The statistical tests applied to these variables confirm that there is a statistically significant relationship between them (Fisher's exact test[6], p[7]=0.003). Furthermore, after the probability of the relationship was established, the variables were also put to a statistical test measuring the effect size, which has shown that the link between the variables can be characterized as a strong one (Cramer's V[8]=0.562, df=2).

Table 1. The relationship between advocacy awareness and traditional conceptualizations of disability

		Persons with disabilities are in need of medical aid and charitable support.			
		Completely agree	Rather agree	Completely disagree	Total
Are you familiar with the term "advocacy"?	Yes	5 17.2%	15 51.7%	9 31%	29 100%
	No	**5 83.3%**	0 0%	1 16.7%	6 100%

Herewith, it can be claimed with 95% confidence that the overall absence of advocacy awareness (at least at the level of being familiar with the term) is likely to be in a causal relationship with the condition of agreeing with the statement on the medical model of disability. Importantly, determining which of these variables is the cause and which one is the effect would assume some additional measurements beyond the scope of this research.

Even though no statistically significant relationship has been observed between awareness and other variables, it is worth noting that out of 6 organizations answering "no":

- 4 organizations also completely agree that organizations should defend only the interests of persons with disabilities.

- 5 organizations also have no understanding (3 of them at all , 2 of them rather) of the policymaking process in any field.

....

6. Fisher's exact test is a statistical test used to determine whether the relationship between any pair of variables is statistically significant or whether it may be observed by random chance.

7. *p* value is an indicator of statistical significance which measures the probability that there is no relationship between two variables. Thus, the lower the p value, the greater the confidence to reject that there is no relationship between the variables.

8. Cramer's V is used to determine the strength of the relationship between two variables.

Another statistically significant relationship was established between the answers to the following statements: *"The organization conducted policy analysis and came up with recommendations"* and *"Advocacy and interest defence of persons with disabilities must be at the core of our activities"*. Table 2 shows that absolutely all organizations having never conducted policy analysis have also mentioned that advocacy and interest defence of persons with disabilities must be at the core of OPD activities. It would be accurate to claim that there is a strong causal relationship between these variables too (p=0.019, Cramer V=0.420, df=1).

Table 2. The relationship between policy analysis experience and attitudes towards advocacy

		Advocacy and interest defence of persons with disabilities must be at the core of our activities		
		Completely agree	Rather agree	Total
The organization conducted policy analysis and came up with recommendations	Yes	**18** **100%**	0 0%	18 100%
	No	12 70.6%	5 29.4%	17 100%

Emphasizing the importance of organizations' relations to policy and OPD community the next section discusses another principal research question. That is, to what extent the capacities and willingness of OPDs suffice to cooperate and take part in initiatives aside from routine activities?

Relation to Policy and Community

According to quantitative survey, almost 90% of the organizations has mentioned that they completely (17 organizations) or partially (14 organizations) understand the policymaking process in any field. Only 4 out of 35 organizations have noted that they completely disagree with the mentioned statement (Figure 10). None of the organizations found it difficult to answer this question.

Figure 10. Our organization has a good understanding of the policymaking process in any field.
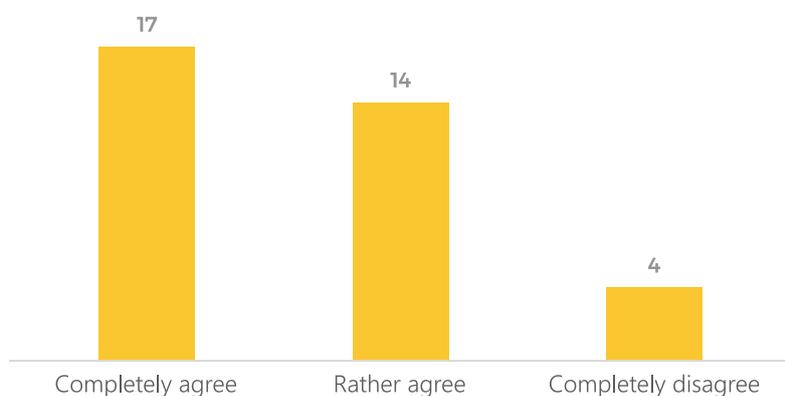
When it comes to activities related to political processes and regulations (see **Figure 11**), almost 68% of the organizations consider their activities as such. 8 of the organizations completely disagree with the statement and 3 organizations find it difficult to answer.

Figure 11. The operation of our organization is closely related to political processes and regulations.
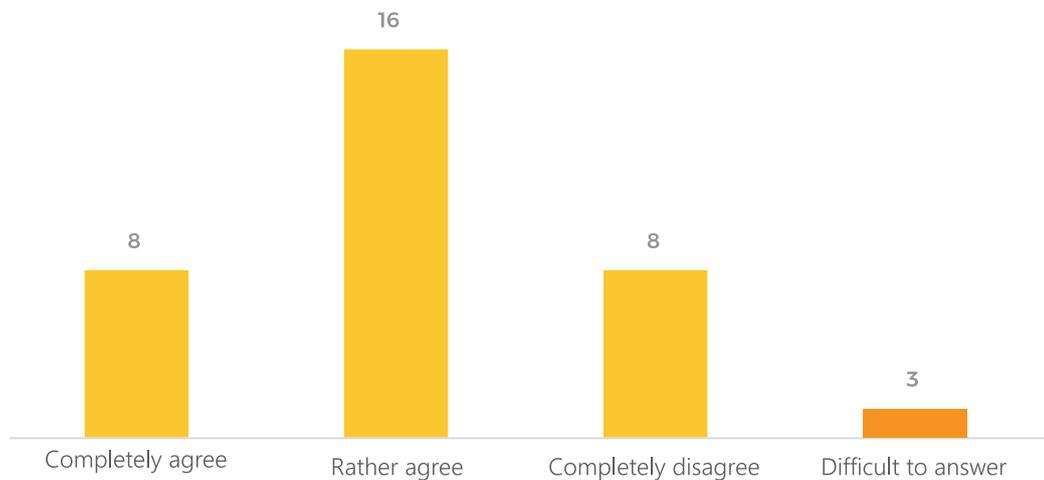
The qualitative data also confirms this. Some of the organizations do not feel confident that they have enough experience in this sphere.

> *... we ourselves neither have the experience, nor can organize that, but we join others. We are ready to join other coalitions, movements etc., we are ready to join as it is one of our problems and goals.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Yerevan

Approximately 71% of the surveyed organizations completely or rather agrees that they can influence a specific political issue (see **Figure 12**), while 7 organizations have some reservations regarding this question.

Figure 12. Our organization can have an influence on a specific political issue.
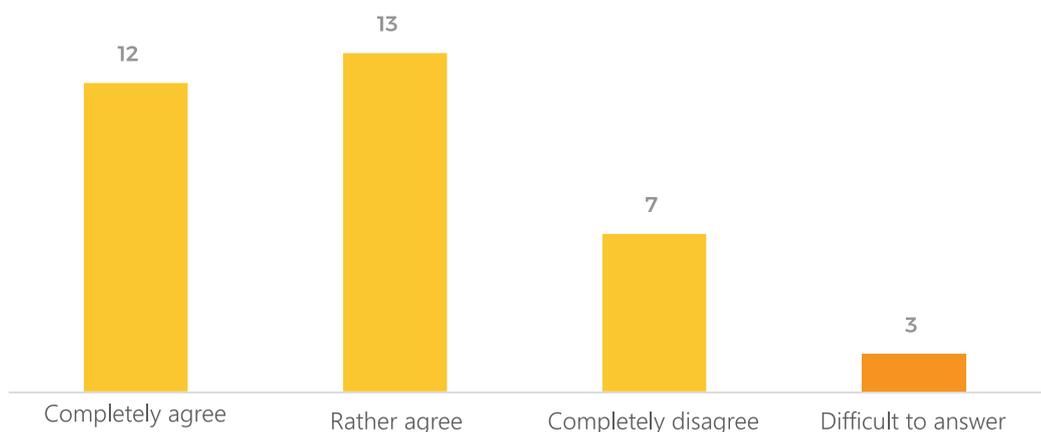
3 organizations have had difficulty answering this question. This pattern is also observed in qualitative data.

> *I don't know. I cannot say to what extent we can have an influence. But it seems to me that after all it is an organization, an organization does its job. I think in the end people will, I don't know, take it into account, they will consider the opinion of our organization.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Yerevan

Nevertheless, those who have tried to have an influence on policy have often faced the lack of "faith" among the organizations on the one hand, and the instability of state system on the other hand.

> *Every time we wanted to do something, oops... the minister changed. Then a new person appeared, "You know, I am new here, now this, then something else..."*
> *And then oops! We have another new minister.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Yerevan

It is also noticeable that the relation with politics often relies on the leaders of organizations. This is a general characteristic of the NGOs in Armenia and it comes with no surprise that it is also typical of OPDs.

> *I met all of them personally, there was no organization left in Armenia of either international or local level, and embassies.*
> *What an advocacy after that? I did the strongest advocacy by myself over the years.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Syunik

> *...I do that through my personal connections, I do that in some way, but I need professional approach in the field of interest defence. We need knowledge and wide connections with specialists so that they can guide us in future.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Gegharkunik

To measure the organizations' advocacy engagement in context of network cooperation the concept published by "Eurosis" has been utilized which provides some measurements to assess organizational needs. The concept presents some indicators to measure organizational networking capacity which are grouped into 4 levels. Some of the mentioned indicators (see Table 3) have been tested within the framework of the current quantitative survey.

Table 3. Networking capacity levels and indicators

Level 1	Indicator 1	The founders of the organization are seriously interested in making changes in our society.
	Indicator 2	The organization is part of community/local network/coalition which deals with problems of persons with disabilities.
Level 2	Indicator	The organization is part of national/international network.
Level 3	Indicator 1	The organization considers being part of networks as a prerequisite for resource empowerment.
	Indicator 2	The organization has made use of network cooperation to empower resources and achieve its goals.
Level 4	Indicator	The organization is regularly invited to join a coalition of persons with disabilities.

As it is presented in the table, each of the indicators is formulated as a statement about the organization. **Figure 13** shows the overall number of "yes" answers for each statement for all 35 organizations. Moreover, it is noteworthy that these levels are not mutually exclusive, and the organizations can be characterized by several capacity levels at the same time, in other words, they can have features (indicators) characterizing different levels.

Figure 13. Networking capacity levels of the organizations.
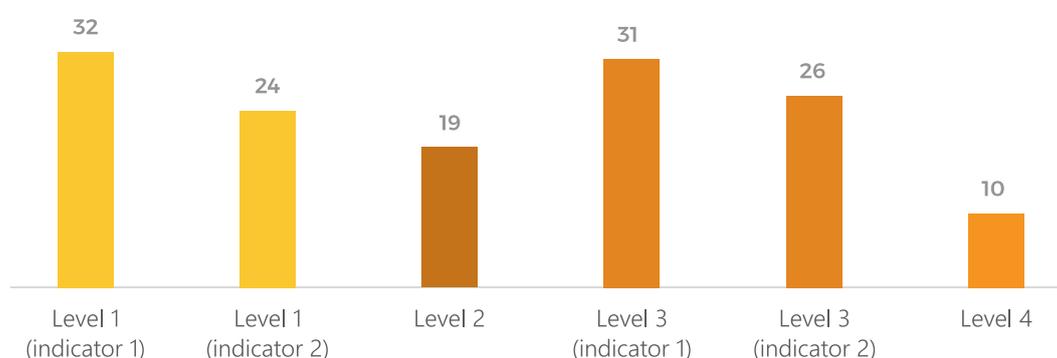
The data implies that just less than the 1/3 of the organizations (10 organizations) are on the 4th capacity level, which refers to the organization being regularly asked to join a coalition of persons with disabilities. The 2nd level of network capacities also scores comparably low: only 19 of the organizations are part of national or international networks.

The figure also shows that the 1st indicators of the 1st and 3rd levels have the highest scores, registering 32 and 31 "yes" responses respectively. It should be pointed out that these two indicators are measured by relatively declarative statements (i.e. the founders are interested…, the organization considers…). The same pattern is also highlighted by the qualitative data.

> *It is definitely preferable to unite and consolidate the strengths and recourses: we become more powerful, and we are able to do more. Cooperation is always very important; one does not accomplish many goals alone.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Yerevan

Thus, these indicators measure not the networking capacity but rather the willingness to cooperate, which is, in fact, quite an important condition as well. Meanwhile, the 2nd indicators of both 1st and 3rd levels measure networking capacities on the level of more practical experience; the results here are comparably lower reporting 24 "yes" responses for the 1st, and 26 of them for the 2nd level.

When it comes to networking capacities or their appropriateness, two problems are evidently highlighted during the qualitative interviews. The first one is the fact that networks are situational and inconsistent which is assumably related to the second, ideological problem, i.e., organizations do not unite for the sake of solving problems, their motivations vary.

> *I do not see that we are united to solve problems. We are united around projects, ideas, and money. Then we start to spend the money, do small projects, and I also have doubts in terms of efficiency assessment, ummm…*
> *I have some doubts that the targets are defined correctly.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Yerevan

> *As soon as the funding ends, the network ends too.*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Yerevan

> *Either the mechanism should be changed… there should be a responsible body or person… well, let me put it this way, a drive is needed to make the network operate. Otherwise, I bet, many networks were launched during my thirty years, we signed them, but it ceased after we went home. I do not know.*
> *Whose fault? Is it the money or people?*
>
> Service Provider Organization, Syunik

In summary, we can conclude with some reservations that the majority of organizations is ready and willing to cooperate with communities, however as opposed to the level of willingness, a lower level is observed in terms of networking capacities and network accessibility.

Organizational and Advocacy Needs

Although the previous subsections of analysis have indirectly outlined the needs of OPDs in terms of advocacy capacity building, within the scope of quantitative survey we have also directly tested the importance of several organizational and advocacy needs. The relevance of each of the needs has been evaluated by organizations with a scale consisting of the following answer options: "considerably", "moderately" and "not much/not at all" (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. The needs of OPDs, response option "considerably" in descending order
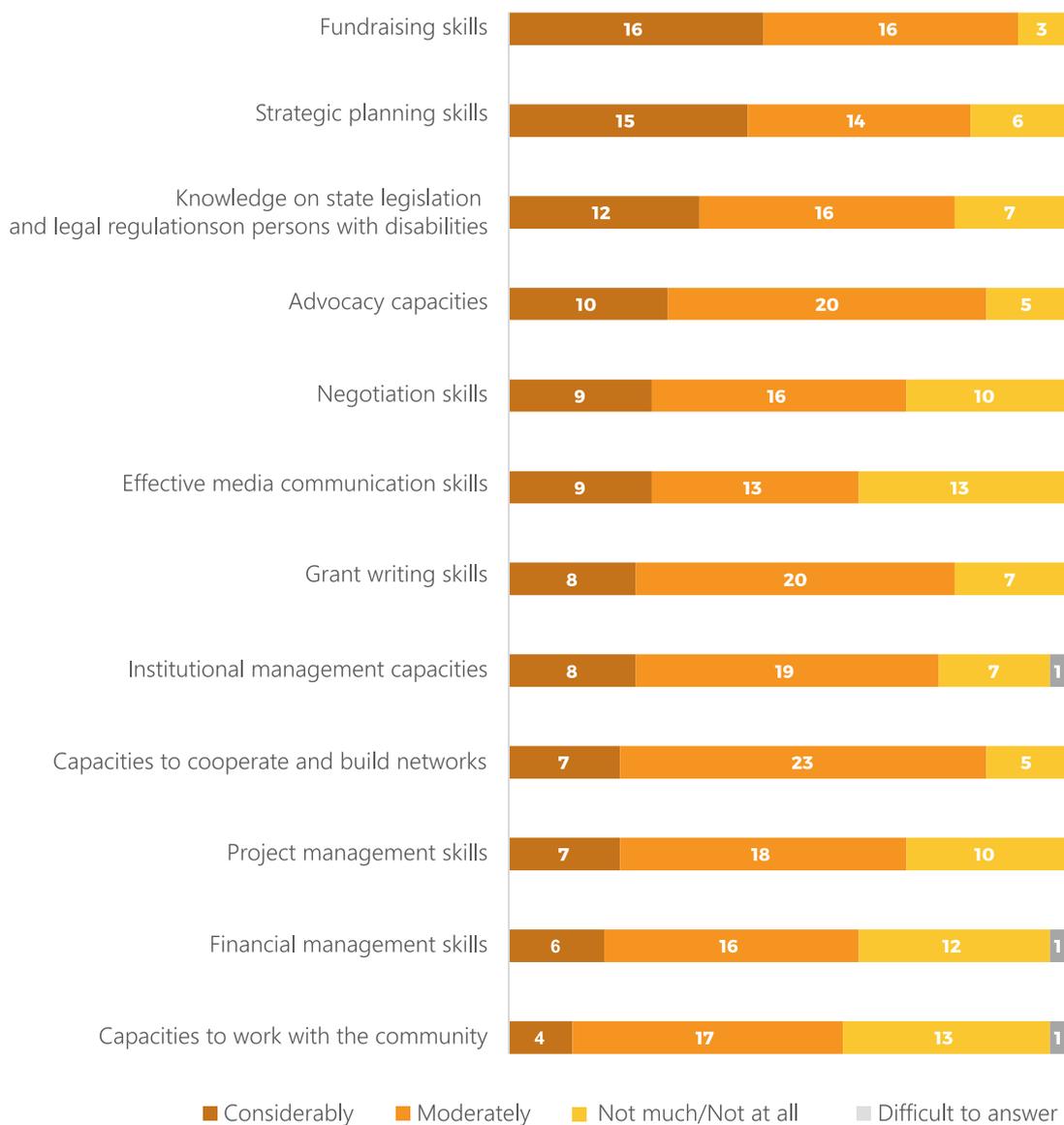
Accordingly, "fundraising skills" is the absolute leader on the needs list; only 3 of the organizations have mentioned that they have little or no need of such skills. The next capacities in the list which the organizations "considerably" need to develop include strategic planning skills, knowledge on respective legislations, as well as advocacy capacities. Data also illustrates that the needs least receiving the response "considerably" are the capacities to cooperate and build networks, project management skills, financial management skills and capacities to work with the community.

To make the picture clearer, we may "read" the same results from another angle too. **Figure 15** presents the same results, but the answer options "considerably" and "moderately" are combined, as are the options "not much/not at all" and "difficult to answer".

Figure 15. The needs of OPDs, joint frequencies of "considerably" and "moderately" response options in descending order

	Considerably+Moderately	Not much/not at all+DK
Fundraising skills	32	3
Advocacy capacities	30	5
Capacities to cooperate and build networks	30	5
Strategic planning skills	29	6
Knowledge on state legislation and legal regulationson persons with disabilities	28	7
Grant writing skills	28	7
Institutional management capacities	27	8
Negotiation skills	25	10
Project management skills	25	10
Effective media communication skills	22	13
Financial management skills	22	13
Capacities to work with the community	21	14

In spite of the fact that fundraising skills are still on the top, it is evident that certain needs, though mostly getting the response "moderately" in the needs list, have overall gained considerably more importance on the scale than other ones. For instance, **Figure 15** indicates that advocacy needs have moved up for two levels. It is also apparent that capacities to cooperate and build networks have moved from 9th level up to the 3rd one. The organizations have also mentioned that they need to develop the capacities to work with the community the least; financial management skills and effective media communication skills are relatively less reported.

The qualitative study also confirms that in some cases organizational capacities are the obstacles to advocacy implementation. Not all organizations have advocacy knowledge and experience. Financial and human resources are also frequently mentioned barriers.

> *I mean both human resources and financial resources. To go, arrange a meeting, organize a conference, all of that. One may say no, no recourses are necessary to carry out advocacy, but they are necessary. Just take the example of preparing videos, or making some materials and recourses, and most importantly, doing research. All of these depend on financial resources. And if you are short of them, you cannot do such things.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Shirak

Another barrier that is mentioned in the context of doing advocacy in Armenia is the one-sidedness.

> *One of the main obstacles is the fact that the movement is one-sided, since there is no political will, desire, or knowledge, I don't know, better not to get into its analysis...*
> *Decision makers, representatives of state bodies lack that...*
> *I feel this is the main barrier, at least for us.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Yerevan

The specialists in most organizations also lack knowledge of law or advocacy. This is especially critical for NGOs in regions (marzes) as, although there are lawyers in municipalities, their experience is not considered satisfactory, given the narrow and highly specialized field of the rights of persons with disabilities

> *You know psychologists, special education teachers work in our field...*
> *These specialists, they cannot know everything, especially when it comes to advocacy.*
> *Here we need lawyers, professionals in the field who can do all of that better.*
>
> Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Armavir

Final Thoughts

4

The present section summarizes the report highlighting the main findings of data analysis which may suggest useful tips for policy improvements and action planning within and outside the programme.

	Findings	Hint-recommendations
1	A certain part of OPDs is not familiar with the term "advocacy" or its Armenian equivalent, while the organizations being familiar with them give their definitions based on linguistic rather than substantive interpretations.	Define advocacy for the organizations in a clear and accessible way. It is important that everyone understands what ideas and actions the concept represents and implies. This terminological awareness may become an important basis to take further actions to build advocacy capacities.
2	The terminological awareness of advocacy goes in parallel with advocacy experience. Most of the organizations unfamiliar with the terms have never been part of advocacy committee or coalition, conducted policy analysis, or introduced recommendations, taken part in public demonstrations or protests, conducted research, or analysed a specific problem.	Address the problem of awareness in line with advocacy experience. Organizations being able to define and differentiate their scope of actions will have a better understanding of their advocacy experience and potential. It may be useful to design advocacy potential assessment tools for organizations ensuring that they regularly define their own capacities through self-assessment.
3	Organizations' attitudes towards the conceptualization of disability models are sometimes radically different. Some NGOs believe that OPDs should defend exceptionally the needs of persons with disabilities, while others think that persons with disabilities need medical aid or charitable support. The nonuniform approach to disability models among such a limited	Regardless of disability model preferences in one or another situation, it is important to adopt the same (or similar) ideological position in order to build a community of organizations. In this regard, it may be beneficial to have platforms for dialogue among organizations to develop a universal conceptualization of disability advocacy and reach an agreement on it. It is essential to raise and systematically

number of NGOs reduces advocacy potential and the chance to have a cooperating community.

analyze the voice of especially those organizations which consciously deny or problematize the exclusivity of the social model of disability emphasizing the needs satisfaction of persons with disabilities and their organizations, instead. This can enhance the sense of community on the one hand and address the problematic or weak points of the social model on the other hand.

4	Advocacy awareness and experience are intertwined with advocacy attitudes. The attitudes towards disability models are in a causal relationship with the familiarity with advocacy terminology. Organizations showing low level of advocacy awareness are more likely to agree with the statements of the traditional model of disability. Additionally, organizations having ever conducted policy analysis consider disability advocacy as the essential part of their operation.	Advocacy awareness, experience and attitudes should be regarded as a trinity. They are mutually determined factors in one or another way, so it is important that based on a data-driven approach the actions following this research address these three factors together rather than isolated from one another. Policy analyses, research capacity building and data-driven actions to improve policy may create an advantageous environment to address the abovementioned trinity of problems.
5	Relations with the external environment including the relations to policy and other organizations are extremely personalized in many organizations namely they are mainly determined by the personality of the leader of the organization.	Raise organizations' awareness of the importance of institutional image and encourage them to direct their public image towards a less person-centered self-presentation and external communication. From this point of view, it may be useful to provide some support to organizations in annual and long-term strategic and advocacy planning.
6	The organizations are mainly ready to engage in network cooperation, however their capacities and goal setting generally do not ensure sufficient conditions for joint activities. There are also some doubts about networks: they are not considered stable since they are often situational and their actions are weakly pursued, as well as they are not able to unify organizations around the general motivation to solve problems.	Build a sense of community among the organizations through diverse platforms, discussions, and workshops. It is important that organizations realize that regardless of the type of their activities they can coalesce around one general problem. It may be advantageous to define and formulate some guidelines of network cooperation so as to ensure network stability and consistency, self-financing capacities and the potential to influence policy problems. Meanwhile, already existing organizational networks and coalitions should be encouraged to run a more open and integrating policy to include the organizations willing to cooperate in the community.
7	Overall, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities need to develop organizational and advocacy capacities. They prioritize the development of fundraising skills, advocacy capacities, as well as capacities to cooperate and build networks.	Undertake and conduct trainings addressing the organizational and advocacy needs of OPDs. It is especially preferable to emphasize the capacities of gaining financial independence, advocacy capacities and networking capabilities. It may be beneficial to design a fundraising guide which may have a special emphasis on achieving greater financial stability through advocacy.

Appendix

5

● Appendix 1

Online Survey Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Hello. My name is _____, I am an independent researcher.

I represent Disability Rights Agenda NGO which is currently conducting a needs assessment of the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.

We are conducting telephone interviews aiming to figure out the experience and needs of persons with disabilities and their organizations in term of advocacy so that our organization can provide a more purposeful support and implement capacity building in this regard.

Your and your organization's opinion, approach and experience are of high importance to understand and evaluate the situation in the field. Our interview will take us about 15 minutes to complete. I will recite specific questions asking you to answer them in due succession.

OID   Organization Identification Number[9]

<div style="border:1px solid #999; width:220px; height:60px; background:#e8e8e8;"></div>

[**INTERVIEWER**. DO NOT READ, FILL IN FROM THE LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS]

S1   Would you like to take part in this survey?
                1   Yes   →   S2
                2   No   →   S0   →   Finish the survey

----

9. All the potential participant organizations of the survey were signified with unique codes which contain the complete information on the organization in accordance with the sampling frame (name, location, priority group etc.).

S0   Well, I am sorry. Can you, please, mention the reason why you do not want to participate?

[INTERVIEWER. WRITE DOWN THE COMPLETE ANSWER, THANK THE RESPONDENT AND FINISH THE SURVEY]

S2   Can you mention your position in the organization, please?

Section 1. Relation to advocacy

K1   Are you familiar with the term "advocacy"?
            1   Yes   →   K1.1   →   E1
            2   No   →   K1.2   →   E1

K1.1   How would you interpret the term?

K1.2   What comes to your mind when you hear the term?

[INTERVIEWER. BEFORE TURNING TO THE NEXT QUESTION, SPECIFY WHAT WE MEAN BY ADVOCACY OR INTEREST DEFENCE DURING THE INTERVIEW]

E1   Has your organization ever implemented advocacy/interest defence?
            1   Yes
            2   No   →   E4

E2   Is there an employee who specifically coordinates the advocacy activities in your organization?
            1   Yes
            2   No

E3   Does your organization have an advocacy action plan or strategy?
            1   Yes
            2   No

E4   Now I will list some actions which organizations undertake to address public policy problems. Please, note for each of them whether your organization engaged in it within the last 5 years.

		Yes	No	RA	DK
1	Used social media (including social networks) or public events	1	0	98	99
2	Contacted a public/political figure or his/her office	1	0	98	99
3	Took part in activities of advocacy committee or coalition	1	0	98	99
4	Took part in public demonstrations or protests	1	0	98	99
5	Conducted policy analysis and came up with recommendations	1	0	98	99
6	Conducted research and analysed a specific problem	1	0	98	99

Section 2. Attitudes towards advocacy

ATT1   Now I will read three statements about the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities. Please, specify for each of them whether you completely agree, rather agree, or completely disagree.

		Completely agree	Rather agree	Completely disagree	RA	DK
1	Advocacy and interest defence of persons with disabilities must be at the core of OPD activities	1	2	3	98	99
2	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities should represent and defend only the interests of persons with disabilities.	1	2	3	98	99
3	Persons with disabilities are in need of medical aid and charitable support.	1	2	3	98	99

ATT2   I will read three additional statements. Keeping in mind your organization, please, note whether you completely agree, rather agree, or completely disagree with the statements.

		Completely agree	Rather agree	Completely disagree	RA	DK
1	Our organization has a good understanding of the policymaking process in any field.	1	2	3	98	99
2	The operation of our organization is closely related to political processes and regulations.	1	2	3	98	99
3	Our organization can have an influence on a specific political issue.	1	2	3	98	99

Section 3. Networks and cooperation

NET1   In your opinion how important is network cooperation for the effectiveness of your organization?
            1   Very important
            2   Rather important
            3   Rather not important
            4   Not important at all   →   NEED

NET2   Now I will list some statements. Please, tell me whether each of them describes the activities carried out by your organization within the last 3 years

		Yes	No	RA	DK
1	The founders of the organization are seriously interested in making changes in our society.	1	0	98	99
2	The organiztation is part of community/local network/coalition which deals with problems of persons with disabilities.	1	0	98	99

3	The organization considers being part of networks as a prerequisite for resource empowerment.	1	0	98	99
4	The organization has made use of network cooperation to empower resources and achieve its goals.	1	0	98	99
5	The organization is part of national/international network.	1	0	98	99
6	The organization is regularly invited to join a coalition of persons with disabilities.	1	0	98	99

Section 4. Needs

NEED   And the last question. I will introduce a list of capacities which different organizations sometimes are in need of. Please, indicate how much does your organization need to develop each of them: considerably, moderately, or not much/not at all.

		Considerably	Moderately	Not much/Not at all	RA	DK
1	Fundraising skills	1	2	3	98	99
2	Grant writing skills	1	2	3	98	99
3	Strategic planning skills	1	2	3	98	99
4	Advocacy capacities	1	2	3	98	99
5	Knowledge on state legislation and legal regulations on persons with disabilities	1	2	3	98	99
6	Capacities to cooperate and build networks	1	2	3	98	99
7	Project management skills	1	2	3	98	99
8	Negotiation skills	1	2	3	98	99
9	Effective media communication skills	1	2	3	98	99
10	Capacities to work with the community	1	2	3	98	99
11	Financial management skills	1	2	3	98	99
12	Institutional management capacities	1	2	3	98	99

● Appendix 2

Key Informant Interview Guide

Hello. My name is _____, I am an independent researcher.

I represent Disability Rights Agenda NGO which is currently conducting a needs assessment of the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.

Probably, you have already taken part in our telephone survey, and you know that we try to ascertain the experience and needs of persons with disabilities and their organizations in term of advocacy so that our organization can provide a more purposeful support and implement capacity building in this direction.

Apart from the telephone survey, we also meet some of the directors of OPDs to have more detailed and in-depth conversations. We would like to know more about your experience and needs, and we are very thankful to you for taking the time and agreeing to meet with us.

During the present meeting I would like to ask you some questions. And I would ask you to answer them as thoroughly as possible keeping in mind the experience and needs of your organization. I will record the conversation upon your consent so as not to miss anything important. I assure you that the recording will be accessible only to the research team, and it will be used for no other purpose rather than the correct reproduction of your thoughts.

The interview will last 30-40 minutes. Thanks in advance for your time.

Do you have any questions regarding the interview or the research in general before we start?

Well, let's get started.

1. Can you tell me a little about your organization?
   Clarifying questions:
   - When was the organization established? Where does it operate?
   - What kind of activities does your organization carry out and in which target areas/groups?

2. What does your organization have to do with advocacy?
   Clarifying questions:
   - What kind of advocacy actions do you implement?
   - Do you have any ongoing projects where you engage in advocacy? Can you bring some examples, please?
   - Can you describe the steps through which your organization implements advocacy?

3. Probably you remember that during the telephone interview there was a question on the provision of medical aid and charitable support to persons with disabilities. I would ask you to talk a little about this approach. What is your opinion? Why?

4. In your opinion, to what extent can your organization influence such spheres of public policy which are directly related to the interests of persons with disabilities?

   Clarifying questions:
   - Why do you think so?
   - How do you see that influence?

   5. Whet benefits can advocacy bring to persons with disabilities and in general? And what are the obstacles for OPDs in terms of advocacy implementation?

   6. What should be done to make the state policy regarding the persons with disabilities more inclusive? What can your organization specifically do in this regard that it does not? Why doesn't it do that?

7. What is the approach and experience of your organization in terms of network cooperation? To your mind, is that an effective way to unite strengths and resources in Armenia? Why?

8. According to you, what are the needs of your organization which can be addressed to build its capacities to improve the effectiveness of advocacy implementation?

This is the end of our conversation. Do you have any additional insights to share with us?
Thank you for your time.

● Appendix 3

An extended list of disability organizations in Armenia

Advocacy priority	Name in English	Type of organization
Primary	RA Disabled Sports Federation	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Armenian ParaAthletics Federation	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Armenia Wheelchair Basketball Federation	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	White Cane NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Satar NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Unison NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	We Can NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Equal Rights Equal Opportunities NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Disability Rights Agenda NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Armenian Association of the Blind NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Armenian Deaf Association NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Full Life NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Ekho Disability Rights NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Agate Rights Defense Centre for Women with Disabilities NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Primary	Lusastgh Charitable NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Secondary	Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor	Civil Society Organization
Secondary	Armenian National Disabled Sports Federation	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Autism National Foundation	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Step Forward Social NGO	Service Provider Organization

Secondary	Salvation/Prkutyun Charitable NGO for children and younpersons with disabilities	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Pyunic Armenian Association for the Disabled	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Source Foundation	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Pathway to NGO	Civil Society Organization
Secondary	Inclusion Armenia NGO	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Bridge of Hope NGO	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Disability and Inclusive Development NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Secondary	Armenian Camp NGO	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Armenian Mothers NGO	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Voice of Silence NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Secondary	Caritas Aregak Foundation	Service Provider Organization
Secondary	Astghavard NGO	Service Provider Organization
Tertiary	Khariskh NGO of Persons with Disability in Syunik	Service Provider Organization
Tertiary	White Hawk NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Tertiary	Skarp NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Tertiary	Jermik Ankyun Foundation	Foundation
Tertiary	Huysi Metsamor NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Tertiary	Easy Life NGO	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
Tertiary	Khnamk NGO	Service Provider Organization
Tertiary	Astghatsolk NGO	Civil Society Organization
Tertiary	Lousé Foundation	Service Provider Organization