



# Grassroots DPOs and the Disability *Movement?*

## INTRODUCTION

Responding to the challenges disabled people encounter—in Burkina Faso as elsewhere—requires an active disability movement. The achievements of the disability movement in western contexts demonstrate the significance of collective power and self-organisation (Oliver 1996; Shakespeare 1996). However, the disability movement in Burkina Faso, if it can be called as such, is fragmented and relies to a large extent on support from foreign partners such as Humanity & Inclusion (HI),<sup>1</sup> Action on Disability and Development (ADD),<sup>2</sup> UNICEF<sup>3</sup> (Sida 2012) and—to a much lesser extent—the state. The movement thus consists of a vast number of grassroots disabled people’s organisations (DPOs) and the international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) partnering with them. Long-standing DPOs are often supported by INGOs, support which is simultaneously ‘necessary’ for DPOs’ functioning but which keeps the same DPOs tethered to it. Furthermore, the terrain of self-organisation is rather uneven. While in the rural parts of the country, disabled people’s mobilisation is still very nascent, in more urban areas, disabled people have been creating DPOs for at least two decades. This discrepancy has resulted in divergent stances: while some disabled people have only just begun familiarising themselves with collective organisation and recognising DPOs as a valuable and effectual way to come together, others who have been involved in DPOs for a longer time are becoming progressively disillusioned with

the same process. In both scenarios, however, self-organisation and collective power in Burkina Faso are rather weak. At the national federation level, support which is expected to be forthcoming for smaller DPOs does not seem to exist, and politics at this level do nothing to solidify an already fragile movement.

In what follows, I examine the terrain of grassroots DPOs in Burkina Faso, starting from a brief overview which looks at, among other aspects, the differences between urban and rural landscapes in this regard, the different ‘levels’ of DPOs, as well as the positive elements that DPOs bring to disabled people’s lives. The chapter then goes on to explore the multifaceted organisational life of DPOs, including what motivates people to create and join these organisations, what makes DPOs work (or not), and the different attitudes of disabled people towards DPOs. It delves into the hurdles encountered by DPOs and their members, and the way that INGO intervention in Burkina Faso is intimately linked with DPO creation and functioning.

## GRASSROOTS DISABLED PEOPLE’S ORGANISATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

Data and information specifying the precise number of grassroots DPOs in Burkina Faso are scarce. Sida (2012) reports that the national federation comprises 350 DPOs, while Handicap International (2010) states that the number of DPOs in Ouagadougou and in the Est region reaches roughly ninety-nine and twenty-five DPOs, respectively. I use the word ‘roughly’ because these DPOs consist of a variety of organisations: firstly, most of these organisations are, in reality, associations, as indicated in the individual French names of the DPOs.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, one finds quite a degree of variability in DPOs’ functions, activities and sizes. In rural settings, the tendency is to set up one DPO per municipality, encompassing people with different impairments. These municipal DPOs are usually found at the bottom level of the ‘DPO pyramid’, while the second level is made up of coordinations formed at the province level, comprising municipal DPOs. The third level of the pyramid comprises regional coordinations (composed of provincial coordinations). These are, in turn, members of the national federation, or federations: since 2012, there have been two national federations of DPOs in Burkina Faso. Until then, the only one in existence had been the FEBAH<sup>5</sup>; however, following in-house disagreements, the ReNOH<sup>6</sup> was

created. Notwithstanding, the ReNOH has a much smaller membership than the FEBAH, and its reach outside the capital is minimal.

In urban areas like Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso and, to a lesser extent, smaller towns, one finds greater variety in the composition and objectives of DPOs, which vary from DPOs whose memberships consist of people with specific impairments or of disabled women, to sports DPOs. Other DPOs take the shape of cooperatives of disabled artisans who come together to produce and sell artisanal products, while still others encompass schools for disabled students (with some of them also catering for non-disabled ones). Some DPOs (at times created by parents) target children with specific impairments, such as autism, intellectual or hearing impairments. Another category of DPOs—termed here as ‘umbrella grassroots DPOs’ (‘umbrella DPOs’ for short)—is made up of a specific group of DPOs such as DPOs of blind and visually impaired people or DPOs of people with albinism. Umbrella DPOs, normally based in Ouagadougou, are usually also affiliated to one of the national federations mentioned previously.

This assembling of smaller DPOs into larger ones is an aspect of collective organisation which is encouraged by INGOs and their funders. Typifying this, Joe, the International Programmes Director of an INGO intervening with disabled people in Burkina Faso, explains that funders:

would not wish to subdivide the funding they have.... They will want to focus in one area.... They will not want to fund a motor disability organisation here, a visually impaired organisation there, an auditory impaired... and they will want to focus it in one place that can cover all [aspects].

In the Comoé province in the Cascades region, for instance, the DPO coordination at province level—encompassing municipality DPOs found in the same province—was created at the behest, and with the support, of an INGO.

The other side of the coin—the ‘decentralisation’ of DPO structures—has certain advantages. The fact that there are grassroots DPOs at municipality level, for instance, means that they are able to reach people from remote villages in that area. Paradoxically, however, the same factor that groups people together in distant villages also hinders them from participating in the disability movement at national level, due to the existence of the higher strata of DPOs which represent them. For instance, when the FEBAH calls a meeting in Ouagadougou, it is generally attended by the

coordinators of regional DPOs, rather than disabled people from remote areas of the country.

Evidently, DPOs in urban areas, particularly those in—and closer to—the capital, benefit from greater prospects and enjoy higher access to resources, including support from INGOs and donations by the government (which occasionally donates wheelchairs, three-wheel motorcycles [see Fig. 3.1], other assistive equipment and funding for small income-generating activities). The same cannot be said for rural DPOs, which usually contend with various elemental difficulties, including challenges in grouping members from remote villages, finding literate members to lead and deal with bureaucratic aspects of DPO life, accessing training opportunities and funding for DPO activities and day-to-day running and renting/buying a meeting place. In spite of this urban–rural contrast, a large number of non-operational DPOs can be found in both contexts. As will be discussed in the next section, various factors contribute to this. Before going into these challenges, however, it is worthwhile taking a brief look at the usefulness of DPOs.

DPOs have valuable functions in the lives of disabled people. Becker (1980, 68) observes that “[v]oluntary associations are based on common interests... [t]hey provide social nurturance to their members”. She states that:

When the individual is continually reminded of his or her variance from others this increases the level of stress.... Stress can best be minimized by playing down the overt differences of the disability and thus its importance. Among a tightly knit reference group... the problems of coping with the disability are forgotten or dealt with by joking. (ibid., 78)

Becker’s observations—albeit referring to an association of deaf individuals—are applicable to other contexts where disabled people come together, including the Burkinabe one. For instance, a number of physically disabled people in Ouagadougou gather almost daily at the Disabled People’s Centre where they either work, play, eat, drink and, most of all, socialise. Humorous comments abound: jokes about contaminating each other with their own impairment, wanting to become disabled like each other and calling each other ‘handicapped’<sup>7</sup> are regularly made. Disability scholars observe that where disability humour is shared among a group of disabled people, it promotes a shared identity and solidarity between the group members (Albrecht 1999; Shakespeare 1999) and may help people cope



**Fig. 3.1** The three-wheel motorcycle

with more serious issues (Moran 2003). In this sense, DPOs provide a haven (see Chapter 5) and enable a sense of commonality:

The objective of the organisation was first of all to create a setting so that all disabled people can meet up to share ideas, their joys, their worries and their sorrows; because by staying alone at home, you are isolated: you are sitting around, you don't go out, you are lost. So the aim was to get disabled people to come out, group them, train them, educate them and integrate them in society. (DPO Executive Committee Members, Dakoro)

Furthermore, DPOs have the potential to “represent... the space where subaltern, hitherto inaudible and unarticulated views can be expressed” (Tandon 2003, 65), thus being in themselves a space where disabled people's voices, which oftentimes go unheard by the rest of society, can be heard. DPOs can also be a vehicle for awareness-raising as well as collective mobilising, as explained by various DPO members:

The DPO was created in '97... to raise awareness... to form a group, an organisation, so that [we] can be heard by the population, by the authorities of the municipality. (DPO Executive Committee, Dakoro)

When we come to the university here... I think... it's almost a duty... to take part and participate... in the organisation... to campaign in the organisation.... It's better to find oneself in a community, in a group: like that we can campaign together and it gives us more strength; we can claim our rights.... As they say, there is strength in unity.... Moreover, here we have practically the same realities... the same problems, so why not unite ourselves...? (Aboubacar, university student with visual impairment, Ouagadougou)

In Burkina Faso, DPOs are also, at times, the only means of obtaining information and resources, since advice provided by these organisations—such as health protection for people with albinism—might not be provided elsewhere:

Thanks to the organisation... [we] learnt different techniques to protect [our]selves...: to wear long sleeves... to apply the... [sun protection cream] they give [us] when [we] are in the sun; so, it helps [me] a lot .... [Before, I] went to the pharmacies and I couldn't find [the cream], and it was thanks to the organisation that [I] saw the product and started using it. (Djibril, man with albinism, Banfora)

### *LA VIE ASSOCIATIVE*

In spite of all the advantages DPOs provide, those which are well-developed, self-sufficient organisations that fulfil their roles as protectors and promoters of disabled people's prerogatives are few and far between. One factor hindering the sustainable functioning of these associations is the voluntary nature of the work carried out by the larger part of DPO members. This denotes the priority that most members are obliged to give to earning a living over making DPOs functional. Aida, a blind woman from Bilanga, talks about the DPO of which she is member:

Before, every twenty-one days [we] met to talk amongst [our]selves and all that. But... the president has his own work; and the... [General] Secretary... it was her, before, who mobilised people, and the people used to meet. But now, she, too has gained an [income-generating] activity<sup>8</sup> for herself, so she

does not have time... to [gather] people anymore, and so she does not make the effort to bring people together.

Joseph, a physically disabled man from Ouagadougou, however, focuses on the chief hindrance that DPOs struggle with in their functioning. Upon being posed a question regarding the prerequisites for disabled people's societal integration, he counteracts:

There needs to be a change in mentality... [brought about by] the organisations of disabled people.... [But], well, attaining their goals is a bit complicated, because... it's [only] the beginning... and, moreover... the organisations have not understood why one creates an organisation: they [do] not have the organisational spirit.

This 'organisational spirit'—or rather, *vie associative*,<sup>9</sup> as it is termed in French, and the term used among DPOs and INGOs in Burkina Faso—encompasses organisational life and its elements. This includes the collective and synergetic work of the members, carried out in solidarity in order to achieve the organisation's objectives. According to Joseph, many DPOs lack this crucial factor, resulting in multiple difficulties in relation to disabled people's self-organisation. The high commissioner of a province in the Cascades region concurs, stating that all disabled people do is “ask, ask, ask”, while failing to demonstrate the results of their work. She insists that disabled people need to come together and develop a strategy for the future. Like many grassroots organisations in Burkina Faso, DPOs do not engage in any activity but simply wait for financial donations. Yet, as the high commissioner stresses:

No one has 'nothing'. You have to give something in order to receive. If someone gives all the time, he will get tired, but if it's dynamic, the relationship won't end... everyone has something to give.

An INGO national director, Moussa, makes a comparable statement:

Even to gather for a General Assembly, they [DPOs] will ask an NGO for the financial means; yet an organisation shouldn't be like this: [by means of] the membership fees, donations from other people... the organisation should at least be able to meet to discuss its... common interests.

Moussa's comment hits upon a factor which is significantly intertwined with the *vie associative*, that is, that the greater part of DPO members joins these organisations to benefit from external funding, mostly provided by INGOs:

People have associated the organisation with money.... [However,] it's not money which enables you to live, but good practices which enable the money to stay. (Province high commissioner, Cascades region)

[We] have an Executive Committee: a president, a general secretary, a treasurer, but it doesn't function, because people have not understood, for a start, the interests of the organisation.... For them, when one says 'the organisation', people think that it's to call them and give them money. (Dramane, DPO President, Diapangou)

At the same time, economic motives in becoming a DPO member are not always undesirable. Florence, a physically disabled woman from Ouagadougou, explains the reason for which she joined the national federation of disabled artisans:

Because... since I do hairdressing... I am an artisan too. So, I am part [of the DPO] because... when you work alone it's not good, but when you are in a group, it's better... for example, if there is a market demand... and if you can do it, they give you the work.

In the case of Florence and others in a similar position, both she—and presumably the organisation of disabled artisans—benefit from organisation membership. However, it is worthwhile noting that Florence possesses her own hairdressing salon, and therefore, the reason for becoming a member of the said DPO was not to access external funds, but rather to reinforce her already existing income-generating activity. Moreover, she also later emphasises that each of the DPO members work separately. Florence touches upon one of the obstacles encountered by many DPOs, an issue which is delved into in the subsequent chapters: the preference of many disabled people of being employed on an individual basis, rather than in a group. INGOs, however, tend to work with groups of people rather than individuals. This is the reason behind many a DPO's—and grassroots organisations in general—creation. For example, it is becoming increasingly frequent to see women in a village create an association to develop income-generating activities, for which they can benefit from grants from



NGOs who otherwise refuse to support women individually (Sidibé 2008). Hence, even if not directly encouraged by INGOs, the simple knowledge that INGOs prefer to work with groups leads to the creation of DPOs aimed solely at accessing external funds and support. Jean, a blind man from Ouagadougou who formed his own DPO, highlights this issue:

The reason for which I created the organisation:... I approached many... [INGOs] who told me ‘If you have an organisation, we can help you; but if you are on your own, we cannot help you’. If I create an organisation and approach them [INGOs], if your dossier is good, they will finance you.... So... it’s for this reason I thought of creating the organisation.

As Kamat (2004) observes, international development agencies have today come to rely on grassroots organisations due to their effectiveness in implementing social and economic programmes such as literacy programmes and small income-generating activities. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, the ever-increasing number of INGOs gave rise to “the emergence of a new breed of indigenous” organisations which INGOs require as “partners through whom to implement their projects” (Sharp 1990, 40). In certain cases, therefore, INGOs “were instrumental in creating local organisations for the purpose” (ibid.).

Fostering partnerships with INGOs is also cited by the same INGOs as one of the reasons for which the disability movement should unify:

I think that for DPOs, there must be... unity... cohesion, because when we have an organisation that groups together all the DPOs... it’s even stronger:... when... there is one structure that coordinates all this, it gives them strength.... Even with the partners, when they feel that there is one structure... they can help you; but when it’s [divided]... it’s two, it’s three, each one fights for their school of thought, it’s very difficult. (Denis, INGO national director)

Incongruously, the anticipation of INGO partnership—rather than leading to DPO unity—is giving rise to the *proliferation* of DPOs, which, although not a necessarily negative occurrence per se, does not automatically strengthen the movement. In a disconcertingly similar fashion to the “increasingly dysfunctional” international aid system (Woods 2008, 1218)—which “has led to a system that is fragmented and duplicative” (ibid.)—INGO intervention has occasioned an increasingly fragmented disability ‘movement’ with multiple DPOs competing for the same scarce

resources. For example, ADD observed that DPO memberships in Burkina Faso rose by twenty-one per cent in 2002 (Albrecht 2006). And, while grassroots organisations are perceived to be accountable to the people, like INGOs they have also been subject to the criticism that they are more accountable to their funders due to their heavy reliance on external funding (Hulme and Edwards 1997). Evidently, this then hinders the DPOs' *vie associative*:

There isn't anyone who has taken the initiative to create [an organisation] and make it function... because... in this region there is the idea that when one creates an organisation, there will be [financial] support. But what if there is no such opportunity? People create and then they wait... There isn't an organisation which has a clear policy which says 'we will do this, we will do that'. (Serge, regional DPO coordinator<sup>10</sup>)

The absence of strategic planning that Serge notes is coupled with the lack of motivation of DPO members, both in the case of failure on the part of the DPO in securing funds and also in the case of securing INGO funding for a limited period of time. In the latter scenario, when the DPO works with an INGO and benefits from financial support, the subsequent forfeiture of such advantages is felt more keenly by the members. Many DPO presidents comment on the fact that members fail to attend DPO meetings when there is no other benefit forthcoming:

With the partners, people got used to having food, and so on, when there is a meeting..., so [now] we cannot... organis[e] big meetings, and so on. (Serge, regional DPO coordinator)

The fact that DPO members would have become accustomed to certain standards during the INGO partnership period that are no longer available upon termination of the INGO's support—mainly because most DPOs are not able to monetarily sustain such habits—often leads to the DPO's demise or, at the very least, long periods of inactivity:

Handicap International came to help us with financing: when we had this, we did awareness raising in the villages... When we had the money, we went to the villages to raise awareness among the population, for example... the traditional chiefs, the religious chiefs, civil servants... so they support disabled people everywhere.... At present we have almost stopped the plan, because we have nothing with which to travel. At present it's the money that counts:

if you don't have the money... to travel with a bicycle it's complicated; if you have a motorbike, you can put petrol if you have money, but if you have nothing, what will you do? Without money... (Salif [DPO President] and Estelle [general secretary], Bilanga)

At that time, apart from the different quarterly meetings... there was nothing that disabled people did to promote... their autonomy. We were quite idle and... were waiting for [a particular INGO] to come to our rescue. (Zakaria, DPO President, Banfora)

Today, Zakaria's DPO is inactive once more, following an interlude during which two INGOs were supporting the same DPO for a number of years. Serge, the president of a DPO in Fada N'Gourma, also recounts how the organisation "experienced some dead times up until... the arrival of [two INGOs]", when the DPO members "started to work, go out in the different localities". As Serge comments, "when they [INGOs] stop, everything stops" (Email to Author, January 16, 2012).

The dissolution of DPOs upon the termination of INGO support is not exclusive to the domain of DPOs. Writing about international organisations and grassroots development in Burkina Faso, Atampugre (1997, 62) refers to:

the extent to which groups quickly form in order to take advantage of opportunities in their external environment, disintegrating as soon as that objective has been met. It shows too that credit or financial support does not necessarily facilitate organisational development. On the contrary, it can undermine the ability of rural communities to organise in order to solve their own problems.

Similarly, Kajimbwa (2006) maintains that when INGOs implement their own programmes, there is a tendency for their beneficiaries to have a diminished sense of responsibility and of there being less probability that these beneficiaries will be proactive (an issue discussed further in the next section). This seems to confirm the contention that development organisations possibly create dependency (Power 2001), and suggests that the continued dependency of DPOs on INGOs in Burkina Faso is hindering the development of long-term disability activism and advocacy.

*The Pitfalls of INGO Dependency*

The consistent thread that emerges from the research, then, is the deep dependency between DPOs and INGOs. Diop (2006, 15) observes that:

African civil society is often discretely controlled from the outside, by those who, in the North, have the means to finance these activities. If nothing is done in Africa itself to reverse this tendency, civil society will become a new, particularly effective, instrument of domination of the continent. It might also have the function of bringing out of its flanks new elites, accomplices of an endless colonial pact. (My translation)

Diop's portrayal of African civil society as a puppet whose strings are still being pulled by western NGOs seems to apply to DPOs in Burkina Faso. As seen in the previous section, nearly all of these organisations are dependent on (mostly foreign) partners to function. None of the DPOs encountered—not even those with whom INGOs have been working for long periods of time—are financially independent.

Two DPOs, both based in Ouagadougou, have received support from an INGO for years. At the time of meetings with these two DPOs, one of them had eight INGO volunteers (four Burkinabe and four European) placed with it, and the other one had ten. Neither of these two DPOs, however, has become independent: both still depend heavily on the INGO. One of them, for example, obtains its operating funds from the INGO and also has significant help from other international organisations. Edwige, the president of the second DPO, confirms that their DPO's headquarters were built and furnished by an INGO, while two other INGOs provided computers and training and funded the start of the activities; while Safiatou, the coordinator of the first DPO, points out that the little funds their DPO has put aside so far will not go far if the partners terminate their support. This is part of a larger occurrence that is not only particular to DPOs. As Sharp (1990, 41) contends, one of the problems faced by Burkinabe grassroots organisations in general is that western partners provide funding for the projects but rarely provide the technical assistance needed for them to become "fully-fledged development agencies".

Ironically, this seems to indicate that dependency does not exist solely on the DPOs' side, but that INGOs too are dependent on DPOs for their existence. The objective of the INGO is to eventually render the partner DPO self-sufficient and able to function without external support:

We work... so that the [partner] organisation can be durable. We don't want the organisation to be dependent on us.... We want the organisation to be able to, one day, fly with its own wings.... [One of the DPOs we support] has really accepted the reinforcement of capacities... they have really wanted to learn from the volunteers and make progress... this is what we ask of our partner organisations: because at a certain point, the programme will end. (Olivia, INGO field office director)

Seemingly contradictorily, however, Olivia then continues by saying that “If... [the DPO] is a partner of [our organisation], it's forever”. This comment, rather than meaning literally that the INGO will support a DPO forever, means that once a DPO is supported by an INGO, it has a strong chance of continuing to be the recipient of that support as long as it remains feasible for the INGO. This unveils the problematic aspect of INGOs repeatedly working with the same DPOs. As Edwige, the DPO president mentioned above, observes, INGOs are encouraged to work with a particular DPO if other INGOs are already supporting—or have previously supported—this DPO. The fact that INGOs already support a DPO is ‘proof’ of the DPO's trustworthiness and ability to demonstrate results. Binta, the president of a DPO in Ouagadougou, observes that INGOs “want to work with those they know already”. This creates an ‘inner beneficiary circle’ of—usually bigger and established—DPOs who have the INGOs' trust, which is difficult to permeate:

There are other organisations which are larger than [ours], so if the partners already support these organisations, it means that they can [not]... support small organisations like [ours]. So it's difficult. (DPO Members, Ouagadougou)

Help comes... and it's not those who need [the most]... that receive help.... Support is always given to the same organisations.... I don't know if it's through having relatives or if you need to have connections... it's always the same organisations who receive help. (Jeanne, DPO President, Ouagadougou)

In addition to trust and the size of the DPO, Bebbington (2004) argues that demonstrating impact is an increasingly important factor in INGOs obtaining further funding. Ironically, this has led to these INGOs moving their focus away from those who are “chronically poor” and towards those who are “better-off” and “would probably show impact more quickly”

(*ibid.*, 737). This has implications for the smaller DPOs who are ‘chronically poor’ and are unable to show ‘impact’ quickly enough, since they are not as developed as the bigger DPOs who receive ongoing INGO support.

The fact that development agencies work with the same DPOs that they know and trust helps to develop a vicious cycle, which is demonstrated by the example of the headquarters conundrum: in order for DPOs to receive support, Olivia, an INGO field office director, says that their INGO requires DPOs to have headquarters. However, many DPOs, in particular the newer ones, do not have an office of their own. For a DPO to have headquarters, it needs funding, which generally comes from INGOs:

With regard to [my] plans... it’s to have a place to present as [our] head office, in case they tell [us]: ‘We want to help you but, where are you [situated]?’... Once [we] have an office, [we] will look for... financing, NGOs, projects.... (Adama, DPO President, Ouagadougou)

It is not only the newer DPOs—or those who have never had external partners—who risk not gaining INGO support. Although the largest number of disabled people (in Burkina Faso as in other developing countries) lives in rural areas (Campos 1995, 82), almost all the INGO country representations intervening with disabled people in Burkina Faso are based in Ouagadougou, and many of them operate in the regions close to the capital:

[The programme] is primarily focused around Ouagadougou. Our office is in Ouaga; we have a project in Ziniaré, which is just... an hour and a half maybe outside Ouaga. (Sarah, INGO CEO)

For the moment... we focus on supporting the schooling of disabled children, and therefore we intervene... in the province of Kadiogo [where Ouagadougou is situated]. We also intervene in the Oubritenga,... in Zorgho [in the Ganzourgou province].... We also have Fada, in the Gourma province... and there is also Boulgou.... So these are the 5 provinces<sup>11</sup> in which [our INGO]... intervenes. (Denis, INGO national director)

These statements support the contention that most development agency workers “are urban-based and urban-biased”, with “many of them [based] in capital cities” (Chambers 1983, 9).

The reasons for “[t]he proliferation of NGOs and civil societies in urban over rural spaces” and “the tendency for NGOs and civil societies to be stronger in ‘development hotspots’ over regions neglected by develop-

ment agencies” (Mercer 2002, 13) are various. Development workers often “have the familiar problems of paperwork, meetings and political and family pressures which tie them there” (Chambers 1983, 9). Bebbington (2004, 736) also argues that the “forms taken by aid flows in the nongovernmental sector have much to do with the structure of underlying social and institutional relationships”. One such underlying structure is “the historical geographies of religious institutions” (ibid., 733) influencing the geography of INGO interventions. This is the case with such INGOs in Burkina Faso as one who, as Moussa, its national director explains, historically based their regions of intervention according to church institutions, which still influences the geography of intervention today:

[We work in these regions]... because [our organisation] originally worked with the church. And the divisions of the church are not the same divisions as the administration (regions, provinces). So, historically, we wanted to follow where the old OCADES<sup>12</sup> partners used to work, when we put together this project. So the OCADES makes these dioceses: divisions. They have dioceses per region.... So when they did the project in 2012, they followed this, also to facilitate the follow-up by the CBR [Community-based Rehabilitation] agents who worked for OCADES.

Besides historical geographies, another factor influencing the geographies of intervention of INGOs is donor funding. Bebbington (2004, 739) argues that in a context where financial donors play

such an important role in NGO financing... the reduction in resource availability from... Europe... has significant effects on the overall funding base of... NGOs.... In response, NGOs have to reduce the scope of their coverage unless they find alternative sources of funding.

Bebbington’s observations relate to what is happening in Burkina Faso today. One INGO, for example, used to place specialised development workers with grassroots DPOs all over the country for a minimum of two years, but they now place volunteers (aged between eighteen and twenty-five) with DPOs for a period of ten weeks, through a scheme funded by the government of the (European) country in which the INGO has its headquarters. These volunteers, whose tasks are helping the DPO with such skills as marketing, communications and advocacy, are then replaced by another group of volunteers once their ten weeks are up. The DPOs with whom these volunteers work are based in Ouagadougou and the two

neighbouring regions.<sup>13</sup> The field office director, Olivia, explains that one of the reasons the INGO cannot operate in regions farther away from the capital is because of the young age of the volunteers (imposed by the donor) and the lack of vehicles currently possessed by the INGO:

You see, development workers<sup>14</sup> are not like the volunteers: development workers have a certain level, and are older, so they can go to those regions for two, four years. But the volunteers: even in Reo<sup>15</sup> we have problems. When a volunteer is sick... we only have one vehicle...

The International Programmes Director of the same INGO, Joe, explains why one of the projects that placed development workers with six DPOs, including in the three farthest regions<sup>16</sup> of the country, came to an end:

That project was funded [by a donor<sup>17</sup>]... And, basically, during the time,... the [donor's country's] economy collapsed. So [the funding organisation shrunk] to about ten percent of its previous size. So... basically our ability to continue project-funded support with partners really shrunk. So, we are still in the process: we've been able to secure... [a new donor] as a means of support for our partners, but... because of the nature of the programme, there are some geographical limitations about keeping the volunteers close [to the head office because of]... the budgetary restrictions on the transportation, the supervision support over some of the long distances, and the physical communication in those areas. And also, some of those partnerships weren't right for [the new donor]: we couldn't find, necessarily, the skills for [the new donor] volunteers to respond to what those partners<sup>18</sup> needed.

Joe continues to say that the interventions of the INGO are decided upon according to what the new donor can provide, thus demonstrating that it is the donor, rather than the beneficiary, who mostly influences the interventions of the INGO with disabled people. This corroborates observations made by scholars like Ghosh (2009), who argues that INGOs are accountable to donors *rather than* beneficiaries, a factor affecting INGOs' credibility. Furthermore, the fact that INGOs are accountable to both their beneficiaries and donor agencies creates problematic complexities (Lang 2000), putting in question the ultimate aims of INGO interventions and their ability to meet beneficiaries' needs.

The unevenness of INGO geographical intervention also unfolds in the already existing “[u]neven and inequitable geographies of poverty and



opportunity” (Bebbington 2004, 738). Bebbington (ibid.) points out the importance of the role played by the political economy and the fact that:

livelihood and NGO geographies... are structured (if not determined) by the wider politics of aid and political economy of development. Rural livelihood strategies – and the spatial forms they take – reflect the geographies of capitalist expansion and contraction.... Urban migration reflects the overall bias of capital investment.

Bebbington’s observations—made in the context of South America—apply to Burkina Faso and reflect the reality of the urban–rural division discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, the geographies of INGO interventions, the type of beneficiaries they engage with and the types of interventions they implement (as will be discussed in the next chapter), play a role in DPO functioning and, ultimately, in disabled people’s lives.

### *Accountability and Governance*

The factors discussed so far do not exist in a vacuum, but are set in the wider national (and regional) context. Apart from the absence of the *vie associative*, and the correlated concept of establishing—and becoming members of—DPOs as a method of obtaining funds, there exists a third, interrelated challenge: that of funds misappropriation, an occurrence which also reflects what takes place on a national level. In Burkina Faso, corruption is common, especially in the civil service (particularly in such departments relating to customs and infrastructure), where government officers ‘hurry up’ the process (such as signing of papers) or turn a blind eye, if the service user pays him/her. It seems to be accepted by a large number of people. Those worse off are those who cannot pay and those less educated, thus the majority of Burkinabes (LAFB 2007). Beti (1986, 8) harshly criticises this phenomenon on a continental level:

*Corruption* is the major tragedy of our societies... like the slave trade was in a time where... in exchange for a handful of worthless objects, black indigenous chiefs handed over their brothers in their hundreds to the slave hunters. (My translation, italics in original)

Beti (1986) continues to say that corruption obstructs, to the point of blocking, all the paths which could open the way to progress in Africa.

Corruption also destroys the meagre heritage left by the coloniser before “devouring the entrails of the reduced black continent” (ibid., 9). While it is beyond the scope of this book to go into corruption and bribery—or into cultural approaches to, and understandings of, these occurrences—it is useful to note that both these terms and what they represent are complex and problematic (Rothstein and Torsello 2014). Corruption, while being universal, is understood according to the value put on public and private goods (ibid.)—which is dependent on context (Torsello 2014)—and the expectation of other people’s action(s) when they come across prospects of bribery (Rothstein and Torsello 2014). According to the social exchange theory, petty corruption is considered as a social exchange or a

reciprocal interaction between people and the organisations they represent particularly under conditions of scarcity of determinate goods, as well as of inefficient rules of access to these goods. (Torsello 2014, 3)

In this context, petty corruption “can be tolerated or even desirable in particular cultural contexts” (ibid.).<sup>19</sup> In Sahelian countries, the giving of the ‘kola’ (little gifts) is a normal occurrence in everyday life:

This ‘kola nut’ is not a fixed or negotiated price of remuneration... it is above all a moral duty. The beneficiary of whatever kind of aid has the duty to make some gesture of thanks. (De Sardan 1999, 38)

Furthermore, foreign aid and development projects themselves may foster corruption (Torsello 2014). De Sardan (1999, 30) takes the example of community funds at a village level, which would have been:

[g]enerally instituted under direct or indirect pressure from development institutions, or in the hope of obtaining help from them.... [T]hese community funds give rise at one moment or another to accusations of misappropriation: for example, such and such... treasurer or president has ‘gobbled up’ the money from the cashbox.

The term ‘gobbled up’ is a direct translation of the French term—widely used in Burkina Faso—‘*bouffer*’, which, as De Sardan (1999, 27–28) explains, is “of current use in French-speaking Africa in reference to all illegal modes of enrichment through positions of authority”. Similarly, regarding the DPO milieu in Burkina Faso, Moussa, an INGO national director, notes that:

[DPOs]... come to see an INGO, saying ‘this is our plan of action, we want to do this’. But when they are financed... the problem of governance proves to be a problem: often, we don’t know how the funds were spent.

The high commissioner of a province in the Cascades region concurs, stating that once a grassroots association accesses funds, they are immediately spent or else they “disappear”. Likening this occurrence to tree cutting, she remarks:

If you have a tree and keep cutting its branches... you will end up with nothing. Even the roots will die.

Since no complaint to the police is ever placed—it is inconceivable to report a relative, neighbour or someone with (even a remote) personal connection, and such action would result in strong disapproval by society—there is also no proof that these allegations have actually occurred. However, while these practices might be hidden from foreigners—even more so if they are the funders—they generate anger and resentment among the community (De Sardan 1999). Such feelings have driven many DPO members in Burkina Faso—particularly in urban areas—to lose faith in the potential of collective organisation through DPOs. Christian, a physically disabled man from Ouagadougou, cites this as the reason for which he does not belong to any DPO:

I was, before. But I left.... Things weren’t going well, [and] I resigned. Things weren’t transparent... there.... I prefer staying in my workshop.

The matter of transparency mentioned by Christian, together with DPO leadership, are two other elements which are linked to misappropriation of funds, organisation (non-)functioning and the reasons for DPO creation. Before going into these two issues, however, it is significant to note that underlying these structural shortcomings are the general obstacles experienced by disabled people in Burkina Faso.

One of the major obstacles is the lack of education, which—as explored in Chapter 2—resulted in many adult disabled people today lacking the writing and reading skills which are often required in an organisation leader, skills whose absence is felt more intensely when the DPO is in partnership with INGOs. As Kapoor (2004) notes, the implementation of development programmes is subject to various demands, be they technical, bud-

getary or time-related. INGOs generally expect the beneficiary to produce written reports and other documents (Mawdsley et al. 2002, 2005) often demanded by donors (Ghosh 2009). All of these have an effect on the implementation of the development programme, which, ultimately, has “little to do with on-the-ground needs” (Kapoor 2004, 634). For example, a study of NGOs in Mexico found that they are moving away from political education and organisation of the poor and the oppressed and are instead adopting an approach of technical assessment of the capacities and needs of the community and the provision of social and economic inputs. This shift to a more professionally oriented approach has led to a large inflow of money and pressure to implement effective and efficient social and economic projects (Kamat 2004). And, while not all scholars are critical of the professionalisation of INGOs—for example, Tandon (2003) maintains that professionalisation has enabled INGOs to be more effective and lobby the state and global institutions to change—grassroots organisations are critical of the way in which effectiveness and accountability are being enforced. These criticisms centre around the amount of time spent on reporting; the fact that smaller grassroots organisations might not possess the required technical or language capacities to be able to produce written requirements such as reports, log frames or applications; and the distortion of the original aims brought about by these forms of accountability (Mawdsley et al. 2002). As Mawdsley et al. (2005, 80) argue:

The current insistence on quantifiable targets and outputs is of limited value, and in some cases even harmful to more effective change.... First, they can distort NGO efforts towards what can be counted.... Second, less tangible indicators may be equally important, but neglected. Sometimes the most meaningful changes – self-respect, the exercise of greater choice, and so on – are the most difficult to massage into figures.

In other words, “procedures may dislodge the substance” (Ghosh 2009). However, these reports have become increasingly common as INGOs shift from direct intervention to a role of financial and technical support with grassroots organisations (Mawdsley et al. 2005).

In the case of DPOs in Burkina Faso, such obligations tend to facilitate the rise to the top of those disabled people with a higher level of education but who are not necessarily keen to further the well-being of the organisation and its members, and who might join simply to garner what benefits are to be had from the INGO. Regrettably, such DPO members—who

usually form the executive committee of a DPO—tend to form an elite group whose constituents are repeatedly elected (albeit in different roles) in successive elections. Fatou, a physically disabled woman, talks about this leadership monopoly and other complications which form part of the organisational life of DPOs in the Cascades region (see Textbox 3.1).

### **Textbox 3.1 Fatou and the two DPOs**

Fatou came this evening to the Centre [of Disabled People] to talk to me.... She was telling me how Carole, the president of the disabled women's organisation, has the key to the office where the material for making soap and soubbala is. Carole doesn't come to the Centre anymore, and so the women cannot work. Fatou says that the women used to come to work but when they sell the soap they do not see the profits, they do not know where the money has gone! So they gave up and don't come here to work anymore.

Fatou also says that she was not informed of the physically disabled people's DPO meeting that was to be held a couple of weeks ago, nor that it has been postponed to this Friday. Last time, the meeting was cancelled because the president, Hamidou, didn't show up. I asked Fatou why they keep electing Hamidou and she replies 'Who is there to elect apart from him? Inoussa is busy with the workshop....' I ask why not her. She says that Hamidou would make trouble for her if she proposes herself.

Fatou's story underlines the mismanagement of the disabled women's organisation—of which she is a member—and the mishandling of its funds. Meanwhile, the organisation's president holds complete power over what happens. Fatou's observations also elucidate the reasons which lead DPO members—like Christian, quoted earlier—to stop taking an active part in their respective organisations when they feel there is a lack of transparency, particularly if it relates to an income-generating activity which should be yielding profit for the members. Fatou likewise talks of the DPO of physically disabled people, which is also riven by leadership difficulties. Its current president, Hamidou—who was also the president during the term preceding the last one—evades the executive committee elections in order to prolong his term in office as much as possible. Meaningfully, Fatou points

out that—in the unlikely event that she attempts to contest the elections for the role of president—this would induce problems with Hamidou. The situation is rendered more complex by the absence of other eligible contenders with the requisite educational levels. One such eligible contender, Inoussa, prefers to work in his welding workshop and avoid DPO politics. This elite capture of DPOs' executive committees, combined with the irregularity of elections, is also commented on by INGOs:

There are always the same people at the head: there are no general assemblies.  
(Moussa, INGO national director)

Another noteworthy factor in Fatou's reflections is her lack of awareness of the occurrence of DPO meetings. Miscommunication and deficiencies in the transmission of information are problems which plague many a DPO. Roland, a physically disabled man from Piela, relates how he was unaware that the man who had accompanied me to his (Roland's) house was, in reality, the incumbent DPO president:

[We] haven't made any renewals. To [my] knowledge, there haven't been any renewals of the Executive Committee in which [I] participated... [I] was the president and [my] deputy was a visually disabled person.... Neither [I] nor [my] deputy... know that there is a [new] president, because [for this to happen] people must be present to say "we are going to elect a new committee, so that one became president, that one became..."

The important role that presidents play in DPOs—whether it is towards the success or demise of the organisation—is interlinked with another aspect: gender. Gendered DPO leadership has given rise to the growing number of DPOs created by disabled women who, over time, have become discontented with male-led organisations. Abigael, the president of a women's DPO in Ouagadougou, explains that its members made the decision to leave the DPO they were formerly part of and create their own, the reason being that in the previous DPO, "women come second to men". Abigael's experience is comparable to that of Binta, the president of another organisation of disabled women in Ouagadougou, who relates:

At first, we had a mixed organisation... [and] we thought... why don't we, the women, separately... create our own organisation? Because, often... in the organisations, women don't have decision-making roles. Moreover, in the [executive] committees, [women] hold posts... which do not have priority:

often they are posts relating to women's issues and such.... So, in decision-making... men are in the forefront every time. Thus, together we reflected: why not create our own organisation? Because... it's true, disabled people have problems; but... women have more problems than men... We have problems in our own right, so why not... see how we can overcome them?

Elaborating on the difficulties faced by disabled women and the way these differ from those faced by men, Binta explains:

In our families, there are barriers... because, firstly, you have to sensitise the family.... If you are accepted, it's already something. If you are not accepted, this is... a problem. So, together, we have to reflect on all this. And then, we have children. And children are problems: a child always has a father, but... everything falls on the mother. So she has to seek work to... meet her child's needs.

Women's DPOs, however, are not solely created due to leadership issues and male domination. They are also created—much like the INGO-related phenomenon illustrated earlier—in response to the surge in prominence that women's issues hold with the government. Whether this prominence is mere tokenism or otherwise, Samira, the ex-president of a women's DPO in Banfora, explains that since disability issues are granted less attention than women's ones in Burkina Faso, disabled women have felt the need to branch out on their own (sometimes while still remaining members of other disability-specific DPOs) in order to enhance their visibility:

[We] noticed that now, here in Burkina... the associations of women are more listened to. The authorities have put an emphasis on... associations of women. So that's why [we] decided to... create [our] organisation.

The motivating factors pushing disabled people into branching out into new DPOs is not solely a gender-specific issue but seems to pervade the urban DPO milieu, with many disabled people preferring to pursue their own course rather than uniting into a single front:

[I] was the president of the coordination of disabled people... (the president... is the one who is in charge of all the organisations... of the district...)... [and] since... for the moment... the coordination has stopped [functioning]... [I created my own DPO]... (Adama, DPO President, Ouagadougou)

For these reasons—and in spite of the stumbling blocks they face—the number of DPOs burgeons. Meaningfully, the DPOs led by Adama, Binta and Abigaël are all based in the capital, suggesting that the proliferation of DPOs corresponds to greater access to the resources needed to sustain an organisation, higher levels of education among disabled people and a greater number of opportunities to branch out from bigger, already existing organisations which are found in larger urban areas like Ouagadougou. In contrast, in rural areas, the disability scene is beginning to take its tottering steps towards collective organisation. This nascent state of affairs also denotes the marginalisation of DPOs—and disabled people in general—in rural areas in relation to accessing support and assistance and making their voices heard. These form part of both the causes and consequences of the fact that much of the self-organisation in the less urbanised areas is in its preliminary stages, as exemplified by the situation in Loumana, a rural municipality in the Léraba province (see Textbox 3.2), and Mangodara, a rural municipality in the Comoé province (see Textbox 3.3).

#### **Textbox 3.2 Loumana: Creation of a rural DPO**

Upon arrival in Loumana, a guy who... is the brother of a disabled person came to meet us and brought us<sup>20</sup> to a place under the mango trees where about 13 people are gathered.... Apparently they don't really have a DPO... but... they have been trying to put one in place.

#### **Textbox 3.3 Mangodara: Creation of a rural DPO**

Just arrived in Mangodara, 105 km away from Banfora.... [S]o today there was supposed to be the GA [General Assembly] which puts the DPO in place in Mangodara, but since the guy in charge had been in Côte d'Ivoire and the informer... failed to inform people, the GA has been postponed.



### *Umbrella DPOs and the National Federations*

Now that we have looked at grassroots DPOs, we turn to umbrella organisations, whose role—as Lamine, the president of an umbrella DPO, indicates—is to strengthen DPOs and provide support to enable their mobilisation:

The union [umbrella DPO] ... was created because, well... as there are ... several associations, [disabled people] have deemed it necessary to come together in a union. Well, because we say that union is strength... and together you can really get what you are looking for... It is with this idea that the union... was created...: when [we]... get together... [to] fight [for our rights], it really makes it easier.

This argument, however, seems to lose consistency when Lamine continues to specify that their union—which groups together DPOs of people with a particular impairment—does not accept *all* relevant DPOs as members of the union, but only two such DPOs from each region who then report back to the other DPOs in their respective regions. This evokes the pyramid model of DPOs discussed previously, but also suggests that the union was put together as a form of tokenism, rather than to actually unify DPOs. This is reinforced by Lamine’s answer to the question of whose idea was behind the creation of the union:

Well... people with disabilities got together, but the idea came from other people... saying: ‘If people with disabilities get together ... it’s going to give... them visibility....’ Instead of people being scattered, if there is a union of people with disabilities, at least the backers – whether they are NGOs, partners – ... know now who to go and speak to, to know... the issues of people with disabilities.

Lamine’s remarks expose the predicament in which umbrella DPOs find themselves. Similar to the smaller grassroots DPOs, they face dependency, functioning and leadership problems. While umbrella DPOs generally have access to more resources and support—meant to eventually reach grassroots DPOs—they are also haunted by other setbacks. One such setback is that of multiple leadership posts, where presidents are allowed to hold this post in multiple umbrella DPOs. At the time of research, for instance, the same person was leading three different umbrella DPOs.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, at

national federation level, politics are tearing apart the unity such federation is intended to bring:

[The disabled people's movement in Burkina Faso] exists, but it functions very weakly... It's the two structures: ReNOH and FEBAH... their actions are not translated on the ground.... The difficulty is the weak engagement of DPOs: they have a very weak engagement concerning the implementation of their rights... not to speak of the synergy... between the two organisations... having two federations... does this help us? I don't think so. (Joseph, physically disabled man, Ouagadougou)

Joseph, a disability activist, is referring to the internal discord and ensuing split of the original national federation of DPOs into two separate ones (the FEBAH and the ReNOH). Joseph now advocates for the establishment of a confederation which would join these two organisations, with the aim of bringing some cohesion to the disability movement. Yet, the problem of leadership raises its head here once again, as both Joseph and Denis (the national director of an INGO) testify:

It's a problem of leadership: with white people, things are clear: you have done your mandate, you leave your place... [to someone else. But] some people have finished [their term] and don't want to let go! They modify the statute; they create an Executive Secretariat which has even more power than the president! (Joseph)

I cannot say that the DPOs work well.... You know that usually DPOs have a problem of leadership.... Besides the leadership problem, there is also... the notion of organisation per se: it's not yet well perceived, because they always put forth the problem of means, of lack of means.... Even when you look at DPOs which are well structured, there are always difficulties.... When you take the case of FEBAH, you see how it went: [then] there is ReNOH, you have two federations.... They themselves don't foster... cohesion..., because it's always problems of leadership, internal power struggles, low blows. (Denis)

This lack of unity amid DPOs mirrors a parallel context on a national level. One of the INGO national directors identifies the resemblances between DPO governance and that of political parties in Burkina Faso:

I think the first thing that disabled people and their organisations should deal with, is the issue of organisation: the DPOs in Burkina are not organised....

They do not manage to get on with each other.... They do not really have an interest in uniting and... working in the same direction... It's a question of organisation and also of governance... in the sense that it's always the same disabled people who are at the head of the same DPOs. If I'm not happy here, I go to the other side. For me, this is the image of our politics: see how we do politics... I am in a political party today, if I am not in the head, I leave and create my own party. So we have a lot of organisations which exist. But what do they do? Nothing! (Moussa, INGO national director)

On a national level, since the ousting of then-president Blaise Compaoré in 2014, the number of political parties in Burkina Faso has been constantly increasing, so much so that it has been noted as “worrying” (Mone 2018, n.p., my translation). With a total of 148 political parties in 2017, they seem to be sprouting “like mushrooms” (*ibid.*, my translation). Confirming Moussa’s observations, Mone (2018, n.p.) notes that these parties are created “either to express personal dissatisfaction with the president of a party or to support the majority party” (my translation).

Having said all this, and as we come to the end of the discussion on the reasons for which DPOs in Burkina Faso fail to fulfil their roles, it is important to note that, as briefly alluded to in the earlier discussion about corruption and bribery, DPO functioning and governance cannot be estimated or judged from a western perspective. As Connell (2011, 1378–1379) observes, politics among disabled people in the Global South are liable to differ from those in western contexts:

This is not only a matter of different cultures... the history of social embodiment in the colonised world is different. Contemporary economic structures and resource levels are different, and political opportunities and needs are different.

Furthermore, as noted above, DPO politics are set in a national and regional context. Blunt and Jones (1997) contend that in sub-Saharan Africa,<sup>22</sup> styles of leadership which put emphasis on kindness, consideration and understanding are preferred to those which prioritise vision and transformation. Honouring colleagues from the same ethnic group and paternal and supportive management are leadership qualities which are given importance over long-term strategy. While this might be an over-simplistic and generalised observation, it serves to make the point that western styles of leadership do not necessarily sit well in other contexts like sub-Saharan Africa and as such cannot be used as templates or measuring tapes for man-

agement and leadership styles. Thus, the reiterated need to engage with the experiences and lives of those targeted by international organisations in the name of development, and to open up paths to rethink these practices, is evident.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the currents that underlie and influence DPOs in Burkina Faso, discussing DPO life from different aspects, including the factors motivating their creation, the *vie associative* of DPOs at different levels and the interactions between DPOs and INGOs. The predicament in which DPOs find themselves is influenced by INGO intervention, which tends to not only keep DPOs dependent but also influence DPO creation and renders them more or less dysfunctional once the INGO withdraws funding. Intertwined with this precarious context is the unstable political scene that not only pervades Burkina Faso at national level, but also at the scale of grassroots and umbrella DPOs and national federations. Nevertheless, the case that is being made here is not that DPOs are useless. On the contrary—as evidenced by disabled people in Burkina Faso themselves—DPOs enable spaces where disabled people meet, find comfort and solidarity and exchange ideas. DPO members likewise attest to the case of strength in numbers, an aspect of added significance with regard to those who are often marginalised and rendered invisible. While financial, political and social circumstances in Burkina Faso lead many Burkinabes to struggle in obtaining a good quality of life, it is essential that—while recognising that they are also in the same situation as other fellow citizens—disabled people are recognised in their own right and as a ‘group’ which encounters particular obstacles which are not always present for those who identify themselves as non-disabled. In this context, DPOs provide a potential medium which can be used by disabled people in standing up and speaking out for what is their due. The test for Burkinabe DPOs is in finding the balance between being independent and having the right amount of support from INGOs and the state, without that support dictating what a DPO should be and do and without actually debilitating those same DPOs. On the part of INGOs, for example, Mawdsley et al. (2005, 79) argue that a substantial part of the reports they require from their beneficiaries could be substituted with “being there”, through visits, observation and interaction. These visits would not only reduce the time burden that reporting produces, but would also increase job satisfaction and motivation, and provide the opportunity

for both INGOs and grassroots organisations to learn more about each other, enabling a deeper and more respectful partnership. Furthermore, these interactions not only enable “downward accountability” (ibid.) but also provide a more rigorous system for ‘upward accountability’, since this system, apart from helping to immediately rule out the corrupt grassroots organisations, would help monitor “*what counts*” with the genuine ones (ibid., 80, italics in original). Needless to say, this approach is not without its limitations: visits involve time and money, are not a fool-proof way of evaluating progress and impact, can be intrusive to grassroots organisations and might showcase only the best aspects, hiding the less good ones (Mawdsley et al. 2005). Above all, Kajimbwa (2006, 61) suggests that INGOs should support the communities in which they work to realise “their own sustainable programs” in “economic, political and social areas”, rather than implement the INGO’s own programmes. He contends that INGOs need to create “space for people to act” (ibid.), a perspective which is at the core of postcolonial critiques of development and participatory development and an aspect we turn to in the coming chapter (Fig. 3.1).

## NOTES

1. Humanity & Inclusion was previously known as Handicap International.
2. ADD has now stopped intervening in Burkina Faso.
3. UNICEF stands for United Nations Children’s Fund.
4. However, the general term for DPOs in French (including in Burkina Faso) is *Organisations des Personnes Handicapées (OPHs)*.
5. *Fédération Burkinabè des Associations pour la Promotion des Personnes Handicapées*: Burkinabe Federation of Organisations for the Promotion of Disabled People.
6. *Réseau Nationale des Organisations des Personnes Handicapées*: National Network of Disabled People’s Organisations.
7. As explained in Chapter 1, the French term ‘*handicap*’ is the term most used in Burkina Faso to refer to disability and impairment.
8. Whether this is paid employment in the formal sector or an income-generating activity in the informal sector.
9. The term ‘*vie associative*’ is often translated as ‘community life’ in English. However, in this context it is deemed more relevant to define it as ‘organisational spirit’, according to its common definition on the ground among DPOs in Burkina Faso.
10. Some of the people talked to hold multiple roles; hence, the occasionally different role titles attached to the same name.
11. See Fig. 2.3 in Chapter 2.

12. OCADES Caritas Burkina (*Organisation Catholique pour le Développement et la Solidarité*: Catholic Organisation for Development and Solidarity).
13. The Plateau-Central and Centre-Ouest regions.
14. Olivia uses the words ‘*assistance technique*’, which, she says, is different than ‘voluntary work’. ‘*Assistance technique*’ would translate into ‘technical assistance’, but here, I am using the term ‘development worker’, rather than ‘technical assistant’, for the purpose of clarity.
15. A town in the Centre-Ouest region.
16. Hauts-Bassins, Cascades and Sud-Ouest regions.
17. The name of the donor has been omitted in order to preserve the INGO’s anonymity.
18. Grassroots organisations including DPOs.
19. However, Torsello (2014) warns against the tendency of social exchange theory to emphasise petty corruption at the cost of not explaining the larger picture, while Pardo (2016) cautions against the stigmatising sociocultural practices and the “tendency towards simplification, a wish to root the problems in African institutions and ‘culture’” (ibid., 136).
20. The interpreter and me.
21. These three umbrella DPOs are the *Union Nationale des Associations Burkinabé pour la Promotion des Aveugles et Malvoyants* (UN-ABPAM): National Union of Burkinabe Organisations for the Promotion of the Blind and Visually Impaired People; the *Fédération Burkinabé de Sport pour les Personnes Handicapées* (FBSPH): Burkinabe Federation of Sport for Disabled People; and the national federation, the ReNOH.
22. While it is acknowledged that it is very difficult to generalise across a whole—vast and heterogeneous—continent, the point made here is that western models of leadership are not necessarily applicable worldwide.

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