

The Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in the City of Baguio

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ABSTRACT

Individuals with disabilities possess fundamental and inherent human rights. However, prevailing cultural perspectives, particularly concerning conducting and learning capacity, have often resulted in persons with disabilities (PWDs) being predominantly confined to their homes. The exact number of PWDs in this situation remains unclear, and many are unaware of their rights and the potential for active participation in the community. In the Philippines, laws such as Republic Act 7277, known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, and Republic Act 10070, which established the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in local government units, now govern disability affairs. This study examined the implementation status of RA 10070 in the City of Baguio. Utilizing a qualitative approach, including key informant interviews and the analysis of carefully selected documents, the study revealed the necessity of establishing a PDAO in every Local Government Unit (LGU) in the country. A PDAO ensures representation of PWDs in local development council meetings and other relevant bodies, facilitates broader dissemination of information on programs and activities for PWDs, and promotes training and employment opportunities. The imperative shift from exclusion to inclusion must be evident across all facets of public administration to guarantee that no one is marginalized in pursuing national development.

Keywords: disability, Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office, Governance, RA 7277, Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

Even before, individuals with disabilities had the lowest and most vulnerable voices. One of society's concerns is persons with disabilities (PWDs), who are disadvantaged by prejudice and social marginalization. Employment, social roles, and access to education have long been issues. These challenges eventually lead to self-doubt and a sense of inferiority, which is credible proof that people with disabilities get unfavorable views from non-PWD people (Dianito et al., 2021). Disability, according to the World Health Organization (2013), is a health condition that is linked to various issues involving human rights and the development of the Person with disabilities. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF) referred to this health condition as "an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions."

Additionally, disability results from external factors (e.g., diseases, accidents, and aging) or is genetically inherited from disabled parents. As of the latest World Health Organization Census, around the world, approximately 15% of the population, or about 1 billion people, suffer some disability. The median share of the adult population across countries is 12.6%, while households with adults stand at 27.8%. The adult was considered working age, 15 years old and above (Mitra & Yap, 2021). Regardless of the type of

disability, PWDs face a variety of difficulties. The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, also known as Republic Act 7277 of the Philippines, listed the seven categories of disabilities: psychosocial, chronic illness-related, learning, mental, visual, orthopedic, and communication impairments. People with the impairments indicated above encountered the same prejudices and exclusion in the community, at work, and in school.

In the Philippines, 1.4 million of the 92.1 million households have a disabled person living there (Narido & Tacadao, 2016). In Baguio City, over 2,000 PWDs were registered by the City Social Welfare and Development Office from 2016 to 2018. According to Aquino, 913 additional PWDs were reported in 2019 after the PDAO was founded and transferred under the City Mayor's Office. (Samidan, 2020). Disability rights activists pushed for the Republic Act 7277 to be passed and urged the government to pay the most excellent attention. Laws have been passed to protect people with disabilities from discrimination, grant them all rights, and make society the safest environment possible for them. Indeed, the range of disabilities is enormous. Often, PWDs are perceived as someone with difficulty or incapability to perform regular living activities. They are the particularly vulnerable populations susceptible to violence, economic inequality, and marginalization. They are declined to the poverty line and are frequently denied employment opportunities and social services, which predominantly suffer in poor and developing countries. Some health issues connected to disabilities lead to ill health and high medical demands, while others do not. Globally, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Social Inclusion (2020) estimated that 80% of the population who live in cities across developing countries of nearly 1 billion persons with disabilities population are poor. Poverty reduces access to health services, rehabilitation services, assistive devices, education, and social security. Access to mainstream healthcare services is necessary since all persons with disabilities have the same general healthcare requirements as everyone else. Article 25 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that individuals with disabilities have the right to the maximum possible quality of health, free of prejudice. Thus, disability is a priority for development because it is more common in low-income countries and contributes to and sustains poverty. The reality, however, is that few countries offer persons with disabilities appropriate, high-quality assistance.

Literature Review

As eloquently stated by Pimentel (2020), The disability agenda only received adequate attention in the public administration discourse after the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was enacted on December 13, 2006, followed by the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which included Goal No. 3 on Good Health and Well-Being and Goal No. 10 on Reduced Inequality.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution promotes the development of social safeguards to address the needs of people with disabilities. Furthermore, Republic Act No. 7277, also known as the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons," offers a comprehensive framework for a policy that promotes "the improvement of the overall well-being of persons with disabilities and their integration into the mainstream of society" (Republic of the Philippines, 1992). The government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and organizations of people with disabilities have worked together to create other policies for people with disabilities that aim to ensure equitable access to social and public services, education, work and employment, and civic participation and governance (OPD). Republic Act 10070, which was approved on April 6, 2010, includes the establishment of Persons with Disability Affairs Offices (PDAO) or the

appointment of a focal person(s) in the case of fourth, fifth, and sixth-class municipalities instead of the creation of PDAO. This ensures that policies, programs, and services for people with disabilities are implemented locally, allowing them to fully participate in building an inclusive society.

The Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office is one of the mandatory offices that our laws need throughout the archipelago. Disability rights must be observed and protected, as evidenced by various rules and guidelines issued by national and local governments. PDAO created and executed employment programs according to national and local regulations and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It also campaigns for equal opportunities and accessibility for people with disabilities in programs such as education, employment, health, access to government and non-government facilities, and socio-cultural and sporting development.

Furthermore, regarding national policies, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) released Memorandum Circular 2017-119 on September 13, 2017, outlining the rules for creating PDAO. The City of Baguio also has rules based on national laws. The City Ordinance Number 40, series of 2015, ordered the construction of the city's PDAO, which would act "as a center for programs, plans, and services for PWDs." The PDAO is designed to create and implement work programs in accordance with national and local regulations, as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It also campaigns for equal opportunities and accessibility for people with disabilities in programs such as education, employment, health, access to government and non-government facilities, and socio-cultural and sporting development. The office also leads community organizing, PWD organizations, and the Federation. One of the primary daily duties of the PDAO is to locate and issue PWD ID Cards to qualifying individuals. PDAO also advocates for disability accessibility. It acts as a consultative and advising body in providing building and occupation permits to properly implement Batas Pambansa 344, generally known as the Accessibility Law. The Persons with Disability Affairs Office is the people's watchdog, checking for RA 7277, BP 344, RA 10070, RA 10754, and other PWD-related legislation violations.

Legal Framework

Legislative and Policy Context

It is specified under the 1987 Philippine Constitution that the state promotes the development of social safeguards to address the needs of people with disabilities (Republic of the Philippines, 1987). Furthermore, Republic Act No. 7277, also known as the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons," offers a comprehensive framework for a policy that promotes "the improvement of the overall well-being of persons with disabilities and their integration into the mainstream of society" (Republic of the Philippines, 1992).

Republic Act 10070. It was signed into law by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on April 6, 2010, to establish institutional mechanisms to implement programs and services for persons with disabilities. Republic Act (RA) No. 10070, the consolidated version of Senate Bill No. 3560 and House Bill No. 1387, amended RA 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. PDAO Law promotes the creation of PWD organizations in their respective territorial jurisdictions. It mandates the creation of the Persons with Disability Affairs Office in every province, city, and municipality. The local chief executive appoints a PWD affairs officer to manage and oversee the office's operations. It also mandates the implementation of Batas Pambansa Bilang 344, or the Accessibility Law, and other relevant laws at the local level. PWDs will be represented in meetings of local development councils and other unique bodies, as well as the

dissemination of information on programs and activities for PWDS, training, and employment opportunities.

IRR of 10070. It is requested that Implementing Rules and Regulations for Republic Act No. 10070 be created to assist provinces, cities, and municipalities in setting up the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office. This comes after talks with government agencies, individuals with disabilities, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, to facilitate compliance and achieve the goals of Republic Act No. 10070, these rules and regulations are established to specify the procedures and guidelines for implementing the law. This will be interpreted and used per Republic Act No. 10070's goals and objectives. When in doubt, the same should be liberally construed to benefit those with disabilities.

The operational definitions for the concepts utilized are as follows:

1. Persons with Disabilities are persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when combined with other impediments, may prevent them from fully and effectively participating in society on an equal footing with others (UNCRPD Article 1)
2. Federation of Persons with Disabilities - a group composed of organizations of and for persons with disabilities from national, regional, provincial, city, and municipal levels;
3. Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office - an office established by Republic Act No. 10070 to oversee the provision of services and programs for individuals with disabilities in each province, city, and municipality;
4. A staff member or official of a fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-class municipality designated or appointed by the mayor of that municipality to carry out PDAO duties is known as a focal person.
5. Permanent Status - refers to the employment status of an employee who meets all the minimum qualification requirements of the position to which he/she is being appointed, including the appropriate eligibility prescribed by the provisions of law, rules, and standards promulgated in pursuance thereof (based on CSC Omnibus Rules on Appointment and Other Personnel Actions).

Significance of the study

This study examines Baguio City's development of the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO), which offers essential educational and livelihood services. It outlines how the office functions as a partner to PWDs, delivering more than simply programs and services, as it empowers the PWD community toward self-sufficiency.

Objectives of the study

This is intended to discuss the established PDAO in the City of Baguio. Specifically, it seeks to provide the following:

1. Give an overview of the PDAO
2. Discuss the functions of PDAO in comparison with partnered agencies.
3. Determine programs and services offered by the office.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a rundown of the entire research process. This section discusses the research design and the study population. This also provides details of the research's data-gathering tools and procedures.

Moreover, ethical considerations are equally discussed as a part of ensuring the safety and well-being of the participants.

Study Design

The study used a qualitative research design through document analysis and key informant interviews. Documentary analysis is a systematic review or evaluation of printed and electronic documents (Bowen, 2009). The lecturer analyzed documents on the purpose of the Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO). Analyzing documents produces empirical knowledge and understanding of the effectiveness of PDAO as a center-based in ensuring the implementation of programs and services for persons with disabilities. Further, the lecturer interviews the Head of the PDAO to verify the authenticity and accuracy of the documents.

Sample/Population of the Study

A thorough search of news outlets and government websites revealed pertinent papers, including Google Scholar, and search engines were utilized. The data sources were peer-reviewed journals and literature, including news bulletins, circulars, and memos from the various levels of the Philippine government and national and local advocacy groups. People with disabilities, the Philippine government, republic acts, policies, programs, PDAO, and Baguio City were among the most popular search phrases. Google.com.ph was used for the searches, and only English and Filipino results were permitted. Further, an interview was conducted to PDAO Head to verify the reliability of the sources gathered through documents and online.

Data Gathering Tools

Content analysis was used as the primary tool. This helps the study identify particular words, themes, or concepts in a qualitative data set. Personal interviews, laws, circulars/memos, and reliable online sources were data collection methods. Based on those, the lecturer developed themes and examined the information on the creation of PDAO.

Data Gathering Procedures

The documents that were collected were chosen for their importance and utility in supplying the study's required data. To retrieve essential information on the establishment of the PDAO, these documents were analyzed using the eight-step process offered by O'Leary (2014): (1) Gather relevant texts; (2) Develop an organization and management scheme; (3) Make copies of the originals; (4) Assess authenticity of documents; (5) Explore documents' agenda; (6) Explore background information; (7) Ask questions about the document through personal interview with the Head of PDAO (8) Explore content through the process of exploring the "witting" evidence, or the actual of the documents by an interview technique. Further, two primary types of documents were analyzed:

- **Public records:** This includes disability laws such as RA 10070, IRR of 10070, RA 7277, ordinances, and
- **Personal documents:** This includes blogs, Facebook posts, newspapers, and personal experiences

Treatment of data

All potentially relevant information was extracted and summarized. Studies were sorted by theme based

on the available data. The data gathered were studied and interpreted through thematic analysis to understand the selected subject in-depth and use it to create empirical knowledge.

Ethical considerations

There were no ethical violations because the study was based on published interviews and reports. However, the study includes public sectors and officials; hence, names were identified. Data in the form of soft copies should be kept as encrypted files on computers. Results of the study were available to the university for dissemination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section oversees the results and discussion of data gathered by the lecturer. This section presents the overview of the Persons with Disability Affairs Office, its functions, and programs offered in the locale chosen.

Establishment of PDAO and Appointment of PDAO Focal Person

The absence of a specific mandate for the creation of the Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) in the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 underscores the evolving nature of inclusivity and recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in local governance. It was with the passage of RA 10070 in 2010 that establishing the PDAO became a compulsory requirement for local government units (LGUs). Enacted during President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's term, this legislation played a pivotal role in institutionalizing the commitment to promote the welfare of PWDs at the local level. Section 1 (b) (1) of RA 10070 specifically assigns the PDAO responsible for formulating and implementing policies, plans, and programs in collaboration with relevant national and local government agencies. Despite these legal provisions, the enforcement and compliance with the establishment of PDAOs remained a challenge, as some LGUs continued to prioritize the creation of offices like the Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office (DRRMO) that fell outside the LGC's original mandate. The introduction of RA 10070 marked a significant step forward in recognizing the needs and rights of PWDs within the local governance framework. However, the challenge lies in ensuring widespread adherence to the mandate as LGUs grapple with competing priorities. The law's emphasis on coordination with various government agencies reflects the interconnected nature of policies affecting PWDs, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach. As LGUs navigate their responsibilities under RA 10070, the broader context of inclusive governance requires a shift in mindset and resource allocation to prioritize the establishment and effective functioning of PDAOs. This shift becomes crucial in fostering a more inclusive and accessible environment for PWDs, addressing the gaps that persisted despite the initial legislative intervention in 2010.

In 2017, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, specifically through the Bureau of Local Government Supervision (BLGS), released data on the compliance of Local Government Units (LGUs) with the People with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) establishment requirement, as mandated by the LGU Local Governance Performance Management System (LGPMS). The assessment highlighted a concerning trend, indicating that a decade after the implementation of the PDAO law, only 60% of LGUs had successfully established PDAOs. Many provinces (58%) and wealthier municipalities (63%) failed to comply with Republic Act 10070. The nature of non-compliance varied, such as appointing PWD focal

persons to simultaneous roles or integrating the PWD unit within the social welfare office. This data underscores the need for increased efforts to ensure the proper implementation of PDAOs and highlights the existing challenges in achieving comprehensive compliance across diverse localities.

The prevailing situation in the Philippines reveals a concerning lack of support for people with disabilities (PWDs), as more than half of the country's 1,700 Local Government Units (LGUs) currently operate without a designated office or focal Person explicitly addressing the unique needs of PWDs. This information, sourced from the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), underscores a systemic gap in ensuring inclusivity and accessibility at the grassroots level. The absence of dedicated resources and personnel in a significant portion of LGUs implies a failure to adequately address and cater to the diverse requirements of PWDs, potentially hindering their participation and integration into various aspects of community life. Urgent attention and strategic interventions are imperative to rectify this issue and promote a more inclusive society where the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities are prioritized and safeguarded.

The establishment of the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in the City of Baguio, as mandated by City Ordinance Number 40, series of 2015, marked a significant milestone in the city's commitment to the welfare of its disabled population. This move culminated in a nine-year effort driven by the advocacy of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and their supporters, who had long sought to create a dedicated office to address their unique needs and challenges. The PDAO serves as a centralized hub for coordinating and implementing programs, plans, and services to enhance the quality of life for PWDs within the highly urbanized environment of Baguio.

The decision to establish a separate PDAO, distinct from the Office of the City Social Welfare and Development (OCSWD), reflects a strategic response to the specific requirements of the PWD sector. This deliberate move demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that the concerns and rights of PWDs receive focused attention and are not subsumed within broader social welfare initiatives. The PDAO's integration into the City Mayor's executive branch further underscores the city's dedication to elevating the Status and inclusivity of PWDs by placing their affairs at the forefront of municipal governance. Before the PDAO's inception, various committees and offices handled PWD-related programs. Still, establishing this dedicated office signifies a more comprehensive and targeted approach to addressing the needs of the disabled community in the City of Baguio.

The emergence of organizations such as the Federation of Persons with Disabilities underscores a growing recognition of the unique challenges faced by people with disabilities (PWDs) in society. Despite existing agencies providing some level of assistance, there has been a collective push towards establishing a more specialized and comprehensive support system. Creating the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in the City of Baguio is a significant step forward. By focusing specifically on the needs and concerns of PWDs, the PDAO aims to bridge existing gaps in services and ensure a more inclusive and accessible environment. This initiative reflects a commitment to actively address the multifaceted challenges faced by PWDs, promoting their rights and fostering a community that embraces diversity and equal opportunities for all.

The City of Baguio's decision to establish the PDAO is a response to the immediate needs of PWDs and a strategic move towards building a more inclusive and compassionate society. The active involvement of groups advocating for the rights of PWDs demonstrates a collaborative effort to shape policies and initiatives that cater to the unique requirements of this community. The PDAO is a vital link and a centralized hub for information, assistance, and advocacy. Through its establishment, the city positions itself at the forefront of a movement to create an environment where PWDs can thrive, participate fully in community life, and enjoy the same opportunities as their able-bodied counterparts. In essence, creating the PDAO in the City of Baguio is a proactive step towards fostering a society that values diversity, equity, and the inherent dignity of all its citizens.

Functions of the PDAO

The Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) is crucial in promoting the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities as outlined in RA 10070 Section 1 (1). According to the Head of Baguio City's PDAO, the office primarily focuses on formulating policies and providing programs, projects, and activities to foster the development of persons with disabilities (PWDs). This includes coordinating the implementation of the Accessibility Law, representing PWDs in development meetings, and disseminating information on training and employment opportunities for them. The PDAO is also instrumental in the issuance of PWD IDs. Despite being a relatively new office, it collaborates with various local agencies to fulfill its mandate. As Miriam Acosta-Llanos, the national president of the League of PWD Affairs Officers of the Philippines (LPDAOP), emphasizes, PDAOs serve as a crucial link, bringing the government closer to PWDs by representing them in meetings and finding ways to ensure their access to government programs and services. She further highlights the pivotal role of PDAOs in bridging the gap between the government and PWDs, underscoring their representation in crucial meetings (Rocamora, 2021). This representation is particularly significant as it ensures that the unique perspectives and needs of PWDs are considered in the development processes. The PDAO advocates for PWDs, striving to make government programs and services accessible to them.

While the PDAO is a dedicated entity, its operational framework extends beyond independent functioning, relying on collaborative efforts with various agencies to deliver comprehensive services to disabled individuals. The City Social Welfare Development Office (CSWD) retains a crucial role, overseeing programs related to social services, including early intervention, livelihood support, and educational assistance. PDAO collaborates with the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) in Baguio City to address employment concerns. Notably, the office does not directly dispense medicine, deferring this responsibility to the City Health Center. In essence, PDAOs primarily act as facilitators, organizing seminars and orientations to enhance awareness and accessibility, fostering an environment where individuals with disabilities can better avail themselves of the services provided by relevant agencies.

In a statement from the PDAO Head of Baguio City (Personal Communication, 2022), emphasis is placed on the organization's commitment to addressing issues in the medical sector. The Head discusses the need to develop programs specifically tailored to the healthcare needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly pregnant women with disabilities. While acknowledging that initial check-ups are not within their mandate, the PDAO aims to play a role by conducting seminars and collecting relevant data. The statement highlights a shift towards collaboration with local and national agencies, emphasizing a new era

of check-and-balance with the presence of an overseeing office, contrasting with the previous lack of such oversight. The PDAO's focus on partnerships and data establishment underscores its evolving role in addressing the unique healthcare challenges faced by people with disabilities, showcasing a proactive approach to enhancing their overall well-being.

The newly established PDAO demonstrates adaptability in its coordination with other agencies, particularly in preventing duplication of efforts, such as with the scholarships provided by the CSWD and the PDAO. To mitigate redundancy, the office efficiently processes information through databases. Its core functions involve monitoring, evaluating, and coordinating various programs and services aimed at enhancing the well-being of PWDs. The PDAO actively engages with local agencies, encouraging their inclusion in budgetary considerations while possessing the flexibility to independently appropriate or prepare budgets, ensuring alignment with the overarching goal of avoiding overlaps with other agencies.

Organizational Structure of PDAO

Implementing rules and regulations entails nominating the Head of PDAO and Focal Persons to carry out the responsibilities of the office alongside establishing the office itself. Rule V, Section 7 of the same set of regulations emphasizes the prioritization of qualified persons with disabilities in appointing the Head of PDAO for provinces, cities, and 1st to 3rd-class municipalities. However, due to budgetary constraints, local chief executives in fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-class municipalities can designate a focal person instead of establishing a PDAO. It is important to note that the appointment to these positions is contingent upon the approval of the qualifying standards by the Civil Service Commission (NCDA, 2016). In compliance with Rule VI of the IRR of RA 10070, the PDAO has at least four (4) personnel on permanent Status. The Head is designated as a key figure responsible for overseeing the management and operations of the PDAO. Rule IV of the IRR specifies the crucial role of the PDAO head, emphasizing their responsibilities, which include representing persons with disabilities in local government council meetings and other relevant bodies. The PDAO head of Baguio City is appointed under the Mayor's Office by RA 10070. The Head has an orthopedic disability, highlighting the significance of the PDAO head being a person with a disability, aligning with the prioritization of qualified Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) for this role. The Head's personal experience as a polio survivor since age two adds a unique perspective to his leadership, as de Guia (2022) reported in the Baguio Midland Courier. Beyond managing the office and implementing programs, the Head of PDAO actively engages with PWD applicants, offering orientation and assistance at his desk in the mayor's office, including coordination efforts with local agencies, attends council meetings, and provides briefings on the proper recording of PWD numbers in barangays. The proactive approach of the PDAO's Head is evident in various activities, such as certifying PWD registrations at the barangay level. The leadership style reflects a commitment to the principles outlined in the IRR of RA 10070, ensuring the effective promotion of the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities within the local community. PDAO Head's leadership exemplifies a hands-on and dedicated approach to advancing the cause of persons with disabilities in line with the legal framework provided by Republic Act 10070. At present, four personnel are employed in Baguio City – PDAO.

Programs, Projects, and services provided by the office

The Baguio City Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) plays a pivotal role in ensuring the well-being and integration of persons with disabilities (PWDs) into mainstream society. Through its

multifaceted approach, the office addresses critical aspects such as employment, education, political participation, and awareness programs, which catalyze change and inclusivity.

1. Employment Opportunities

The PDAO-Baguio City recognizes the importance of equal employment opportunities for PWDs. Coordination with the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) facilitates job opportunities for disabled individuals. The office monitors and advocates for the fair treatment of PWD employees, ensuring they receive the same terms, conditions, and benefits as their non-disabled counterparts. Furthermore, the PDAO actively engages with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to propose livelihood projects that enhance skill acquisition for PWDs.

2. Inclusive Education

In line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the PDAO emphasizes the significance of inclusive education. A representative from the office highlights the legal basis for inclusive education and the coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd). The PDAO monitors, suggests, and promotes tools that enhance accessibility to education for PWDs, emphasizing collaboration with DepEd for scholarships and addressing the needs of out-of-school youth with disabilities.

3. Political Participation

Recognizing the importance of political representation, the PDAO actively promotes the political participation of registered PWDs. The Accessible Polling Precinct (APP) ensures that vulnerable groups, including PWDs, seniors, and pregnant individuals, can exercise their right to suffrage without hindrance. By encouraging PWDs to participate in policymaking, the PDAO ensures their voices are heard, creating a more inclusive political landscape.

4. Orientations/Seminars/Training

As a center-based services provider, the PDAO conducts orientations for PWDs and barangay officials. PDAO's efforts to orient barangay officials on laws and programs related to PWDs underscore the commitment to implementing City Ordinance No. 47 series of 2017. The PDAO also actively participates in and promotes awareness programs, collaborating with government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to broaden its impact. Head of PDAO (2022) emphasizes the consultative role of the PDAO in infrastructure projects, acting as a facilitator and monitor-evaluator. The office oversees implementing agencies, ensuring they adhere to the Institutional Arrangements of Rule IX in the IRR of 10070. The establishment of PWD desks in every barangay, funded through local budgets, further exemplifies the commitment to addressing the unique needs of PWDs at the community level.

Thus, the Baguio City Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office is a proactive force in championing the rights and well-being of PWDs. Through its diverse programs, projects, and services, the PDAO ensures that policies are not just words on paper but tangible, transformative initiatives that empower PWDs to lead fulfilling lives as active and integrated members of society.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in Baguio City represents a

commendable effort towards creating an inclusive society that recognizes and addresses the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. Despite the evolving nature of inclusivity within local governance, the passage of Republic Act 10070 in 2010 mandated the creation of PDAOs in local government units, marking a significant step towards prioritizing the welfare of persons with disabilities. However, the challenges lie in ensuring widespread compliance and effective implementation of these offices across diverse localities. The assessment of compliance with PDAO establishment requirements reveals a concerning trend, with only 60% of Local Government Units having successfully established PDAOs a decade after the enactment of RA 10070. This data underscores the need for increased efforts to ensure comprehensive compliance and highlights the existing challenges LGUs face in prioritizing the establishment of PDAOs amidst competing priorities. The establishment of the PDAO in Baguio City serves as a model for other localities, showcasing a strategic response to the specific requirements of the PWD sector. The deliberate move to create a separate office dedicated to addressing the needs of PWDs reflects a commitment to ensuring that their concerns receive focused attention and are not overshadowed within broader social welfare initiatives. The organizational structure, headed by a person with a disability, emphasizes inclusivity and representation at the leadership level. The proactive approach of the PDAO, as seen in its collaboration with various agencies and its emphasis on inclusive education, employment opportunities, and political participation, demonstrates a holistic and targeted strategy in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by persons with disabilities. The office's facilitator, collaborator, and advocate role exemplify its commitment to creating an environment where PWDs can thrive, participate fully in community life, and enjoy equal opportunities.

Recommendations

In light of the extensive documentation on Persons with Disabilities Affairs Offices (PDAOs), the researcher proposes several targeted recommendations. Firstly, directed towards the government, a strategic initiative is needed to encourage Local Government Units (LGUs) to expedite the establishment of PDAOs, especially given that nearly half of the country's LGUs still lack a dedicated PDAO or Focal Person 12 years after the law's approval. Additionally, the national government should conduct a thorough assessment to identify and address the root causes contributing to the delayed or sluggish creation of PDAOs. Secondly, the researcher advocates for empowering local officials, particularly at the barangay level, by ensuring they possess comprehensive knowledge of laws about Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). As frontliners in delivering essential services and addressing the needs of PWDs, well-informed barangay officials play a crucial role. Lastly, for future researchers exploring this topic, a recommended avenue of investigation is to delve into the efficiency of PDAOs and assess the limitations of RA 10070 in specific locales. Conducting policy analyses becomes imperative to scrutinize whether institutions comply with national legislation and oversight organizations, providing valuable insights for ongoing improvements in disability affairs.

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