

established, in Finland, FINNIDA and the Alliance in Norway. This has had some real benefit for disability organizations and particularly grassroots where disability rights organizations to play a more active role internationally. While the disability rights movement and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities has had a major impact in developing a worldwide disability rights movement and has provided leadership within that organization for over twenty years there is still no financial support that is available for them to play an active role internationally. In fact their funding for international projects has been very limited and virtually is non-existent at this time. This could have significant impact for a future role for Canada in international disability issues.

Another area of limitations is that Canada has not yet identified any significant resource base for Canadian disability organizations to bid on international contracts. Several countries like Britain and Australia have set aside a specific pot of money in which the voluntary sector and private sector organizations can bid on contracts within international bodies and other governmental RFP's utilizing some of the resources within their international aid body. This has led to them being able to play a very active role in many countries that have been much more difficult for the Canadian voluntary sector and specifically the disability organizations.

## **Future Opportunities**

Based on the trends identified a number of future directions could be considered. The partnership model characterizing past initiatives seems to provide an effective model for pursuing future directions. Who the partners are, though, is an important issue. They can't be arbitrarily chosen or unduly influenced by particular governments or funders. The partnerships as described above were based on a common mission, a joint decision-making process and open communication between all partners. The integrity of the partners to be accountable to their own constituencies was extremely important. *Given that such conditions are in place, the support for a partnership approach to pursuit of international disability issues is an important principle to be promoted in the future.*

Another important issue is the financial and political support needed by disability organizations in Canada to pursue a role internationally. Canadian disability organizations, while interested in issues of colleagues in other countries, rarely are funded at a level where international work is feasible. Further, there always are domestic pressures, which raise the question whether international work should be a priority. There also is the legitimate question whether the best approach is for Canadian disability organizations should themselves work abroad, or whether the best approach would be to seek to influence those organizations with extensive international development experience to include disability within their mandates. Both approaches have merit, and there is an argument to be made that both need to be pursued. Whichever approach is adopted, the absence of financial and political support places severe constraints on all. In the mid-1980s a study of future options for Canadians was