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Public Mental Health

Building research capacity as part of the SAFOD Research Programme

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Plan of presentation



- The problem
- Background to the SAFOD Research Programme
- Practical issues and challenges
- Key conceptual questions
- Some suggestions





The problem

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- Historical marginalization of disabled people and disability
- Disabled people as objects of professional scrutiny (including medical scrutiny)
- Voicelessness
- Disability/poverty links
- Overwhelming needs, with disability seen as a minority issue



*Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Fala, bronze sculpture by Neil Estern,
Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial.
Photo by Terry Adams, National Park Service.*



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The SRP



“A Participatory Learning and Action Research (PLAR) approach to build SAFOD institutional capacity which will enable SAFOD to design, drive and deliver their own research programme, focusing on key disability issues, relating to poverty emancipation, social exclusion and human rights. ”

- Twenty trainees from ten countries (gender balanced)
- Widely varying qualifications and experienced
- Range of impairments
- Lusophone countries included





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The training

- Three year training, meeting quarterly with homework in between
- Topics included:
 - Basis data management and analysis skills
 - Interviewing and questionnaires
 - Basic reporting skills
 - Capacity building and workshop skills
- But – “hidden curriculum” possibly as/more important?
 - A snapshot of two trainees (research mindedness)





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Practical issues and challenges



- Trainees with vastly different educational backgrounds and skills
- Literacy and translation/interpretation issues
- Communication and ICTs
- Limited time for contact sessions and difficulty of sustaining training in between
- Impact of impairments on training (especially sensory impairments)
- Relationship with their own DPOs and with SAFOD
- Funding issues for actual research in between sessions



What did people learn?

- Being a researcher is an interesting thing because since the SRP trainings I **do not just make conclusions** about what I see and hear but gather more information about the claims
(Emmie Chiumia, Malawi)
- (Before the training) I was not able to debate or be involved in dialogues with convincing reason but now even in validation workshops I **have ability to point out the gaps** of the report and suggest what can be done to make the report be acceptable.
(Pascalina Letsau, Lesotho)
- The most interesting stage of research, to me is data analysis because it really makes me reason, work out solutions to a prevailing situation and become analytical about any information and even issues I am faced with. It makes me **suspicious and unsatisfied until one works out the true position about a certain issue**. This is the most outstanding skill I have learned since 2009 from the SRP and which I think must be an attribute of every advocate.
(Simate Simate, Zambia)

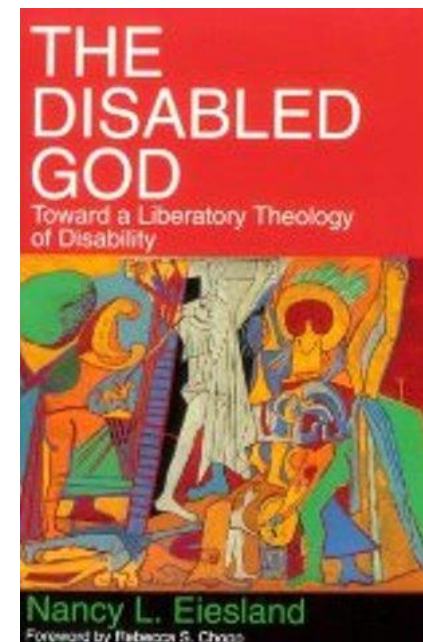


Key questions



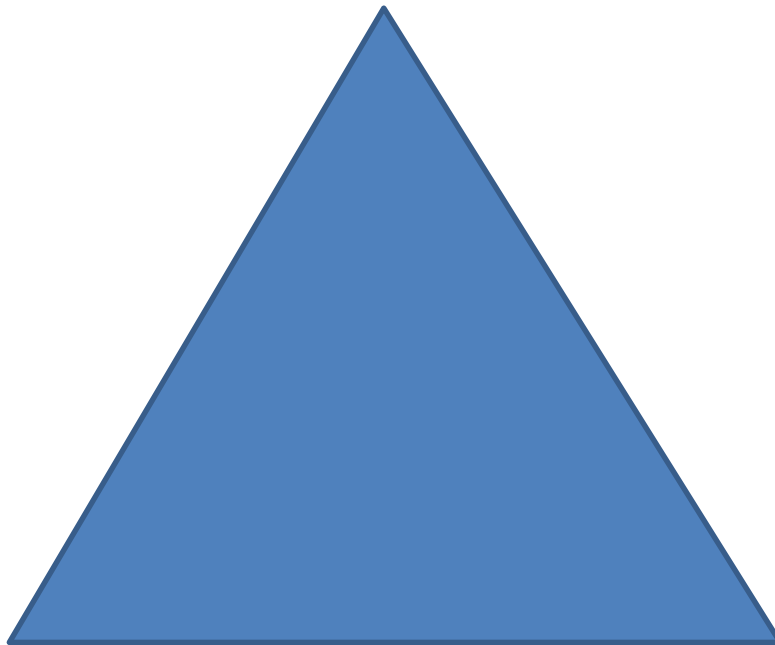
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- Research versus knowledge management
- An example: empiricism versus activism
- Different forms of scepticism
- The politics of solidarity
- Faith and doubt
- Ethical issues
- Authority and authorship



The triangle of engagement

Empirical research (what's going on?)



Activism (how do we change things?)

Faith (What keeps us going?)



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Some questions

- Where to now and how do we go forward?
- Capacitating individuals vs capacitating organizations
- Rhetoric versus reality (whose needs?)
- Building communities of practice versus investing in individuals
- Longer-term issues as SAFOD grows

