Principles of Independent Living

While persons with disabilities use the term Independent Living, our goal is to participate equally in our communities – exercising our self-determination.

These principals are to guide the work of ENIL:

1. Independent living is a process of consciousness raising, empowerment and emancipation. This process enables all disabled persons to achieve equal opportunities, rights and full participation in all aspects of society.

2. Disabled people must be able to control this process individually and collectively. To achieve this goal we provide peer support and use democratic principles in our work.

3. As equal citizens we must have the same access to the basics of life including: food, clothing, shelter, health care, assistive devices, personal support services, education, employment, information, communication, transportation and access to the physical and cultural environment, the right to sexuality and the right to marry and have children, and peace.

4. The Independent Living Movement must be a cross disability movement addressing the needs of all disabled persons. In order for this to occur we must rid ourselves of any prejudice we have towards persons with disabilities other than our own and encourage the involvement of disabled women and other underrepresented groups. Disabled children should be enabled by their families and society in general to become independent adults.

5. Disabled people must obtain all the requirements for equalisation of opportunities and full participation by defining their own needs, choices and degree of user control.

6. The Independent Living Movement is opposed to the development and maintenance of systems which promote dependency through institutional responses.

7. Disabled people must involve themselves in research and development, planning and decision making, at all levels, in matters concerning their lives.

These above principles were adopted at the ENIL meeting, "Het Timmerholt", Netherlands August 31 – September 3, 1990