



5th Community-Based Rehabilitation Africa (CAN) Conference

CBR Guidelines: "A Bridge to Inclusive Society beyond the 2015 Development Framework".

Sub-Theme 2: Developmental Framework for Inclusive Society Beyond 2015

Title: Africa's Home Grown Solutions for Disability Inclusion

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June 3, 2015

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Outline of the plenary presentation

1. Overview

2. Three examples of Homegrown Solutions for Disability Inclusion

3. Personal Reflection

4. Concluding Remark

My presentation is based on my 20 years of practice and experience in CBR program work

1. Overview

The CBR strategy developed by WHO that evolved over the years is a general **framework for empowering persons with disability, their families and the community**. However, its **application and extension is determined by every country's historical, sociocultural, economic, and political realities**.

CBR strategy is one of the many community development strategies that its program entry point is **Disability and Poverty**.

Furthermore, CBR concerns itself with the root causes of the prevailing **Activity Limitations** and **Participation Restrictions** and guide the design of the program.

In some East African countries that I know fairly well, their CBR programs primarily focus on empowering children with disability, and the families in general, and **mothers** of children with disability in particular **who suffers most from the consequences of poverty and disability of their children** in their day-to-day lives.

2. Three Homegrown Solutions for Disability Inclusion, the experience of Ethiopia

2.1 MAKING USE OF THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE AND AFFECTION OF MOTHERS TO THEIR CHILDREN FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION:

The love and affection of mothers to their children is innovatively combined with knowledge and skills on disability prevention and rehabilitation of their children with disability by way of appreciating their tradition.

Traditionally, in many of the regions of Ethiopia, most women living in neighborhood come together to make and drink coffee at least once a day. The ceremonial coffee making and drinking process takes 40 – 45 minutes.

This traditional coffee ceremony is a daily arrangement to enjoy togetherness, sharing information, and to strengthen and maintain the neighborhood support group relationship.

The coffee ceremony also serves as a means for dispute resolution. This traditional forum was innovatively transformed by CBR staff into disability awareness forum through group conversation and dialogue.

Through gradual trust relationship development, the CBR Workers were able to educate the mothers regularly on disability and poverty over the coffee ceremony. Meantime, individual and group interest developed to actively engage in the home-based rehabilitation process. The engagement to invest on the empowerment and inclusion process was committed on informed decision not out of pity.

The collaborative empowerment and inclusion process started at household level and broadened to neighborhood and local political administration level (Kebele).

The conscious inclusion processes came about side-by-side with the empowerment process of the children with disability and their parents. Nevertheless, the success did not come that easily!

2.2 MAKING USE OF THE POWER OF PEER POSITIVE INFLUENCE FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION:

Children living in neighborhood play together, go to school together and at times do homework together, as a result, they develop stronger peer relationship.

The CBR staff skillfully organize and sensitize the neighborhood peers on disability and on desirable behaviors and roles of children to play in the well-being of the community.

After the mentoring and coaching by CBR Workers, the peer groups get engaged in drama show, songs and role plays on disability and development to sensitize their age mates in the neighborhood and in their schools.

They include children with disability in their shows and influence their parents and the neighborhood in developing positive perceptions towards persons with disability and thus accept difference.

The persuasive role of the peer groups radiates to reach the community. School clubs mushroomed out of this voluntary initiative

The neighborhood peer groups have been playing significant roles in creating barrier-free environment at neighborhood, playground and school levels

2.3 CBR COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY:

The CBR staff brought together representatives of key stakeholders - organizations of persons with disability (OPD), mothers of children with disability, religious leaders, opinion leaders, teachers, SHGs, sectors ministries (health, education, women, children and youth, industry, construction, municipality, agriculture, labor and social affairs, justice, police, ...), business community, community organizations) and familiarize them with the objectives of Comprehensive CBR with the perspectives of community development.

The Community Assembly is a voluntary committee that bridges a smooth working relationship between community and local government with a responsibility of ensuring the rights of persons with disability and sustainability of the CBR program.

The Community Assembly of some of the CBR programs has influenced regional governments to allocate stipend for children and youth with disability to access education.

One Community Assembly influenced government to allocate **expensive** plot of land for housing construction for poor parents of children with disability and poor adult persons with disability.

Some Community Assemblies facilitate transfer of knowledge to primary school teachers to creating barrier-free environment access to education

And some Community Assemblies facilitate linkage of SHGs with finance institutions and employing firms

The home grown solutions for disability inclusion are few examples mentioned that developed on the

process of implementing Comprehensive CBR program.

3. Personal reflection

Throughout my CBR field practices, years of experience and the impacts I witnessed, it is highly convincing that Comprehensive CBR Strategy implementation is an effective Disability Inclusive Community Development strategy for developing countries like Ethiopia in ensuring persons with disability are able to maximize their physical and mental abilities, access regular services and opportunities, and to become active contributors to their community and society at large.

Secondly, community consciousness building is a basic necessity and an effective component of community development (if applied properly and appropriately) to activate community to promote and protect the human rights of persons with disability and the poor through conscious changes

*within the community by removing barriers to **participation and inclusion**.*

4. Concluding remark:

*Comprehensive CBR strategy implementation primarily depends on the **existing community resources**, but paradoxically, the resources are most of the times invisible unless the CBR staff are curious, mindful and innovative thinkers – who can look for what is very, very **near** to them before they look for the **far** away for community empowerment and full inclusion of persons with disability.*

THANK YOU