

CBR INTERVENTION IN THE WESTERN AREA -Case Study of the Blind and Low vision Persons in the Western Area in Sierra Leone.

Primary Reader: Ministry Of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs

Message: Through the CBR intervention Blind and low vision person are able to access appropriate resources

Summary

The Western Area in Sierra Leone is a densely populated area with over one million inhabitants and its is where the Capital City Freetown is located, The increase in the population in the Area was as a result of the ten years old rebel war.

Introduction

CBR was firstly introduced in Sierra Leone in 2005,through the effective Collaboration of the Sierra Leone Association of the Blind(SLAB),Sight Savers and Comic Relief UK who are the projects implementing partners. The Ministry of Social welfare Gender and Children Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Government forms key stakeholders in the programme. CBR started its operation in four districts in Sierra Leone namely the western Area, the Northern, Eastern and Southern Province, with field staff in four regions to help facilitate work in the programme. Before the introduction of CBR, the perception and beliefs of Community people on Blind and low vision was negative, that is a lot of people think being Blind is because of the wickedness of their parents that is why they got blind and some associate it with Witchcraft forgetting the fact that there are medical conditions which lead to the loss of sight. This brought about the introduction of the Sierra Leone Base Rehabilitation/Empowerment of the Blind project. CBR is a Strategy and since the introduction of CBR work had been carried out in four districts but the Western Area will be the key focus. Various surveys using the PLA/PRA tools to identify the Blind and low vision persons in that Area. UP to date, over forty thousand Blind and low vision persons had being identified and screened by the effective collaboration effort of the Eye Care Department in Sierra Leone on various eye related cases, such as cataract, Glaucoma, eye injuries in Oncho etc. The cases which are treatable are referred for further treatment and these irreversible blind cases are left with CBR programme for further rehabilitation training in Daily Living Skills(DLS), Orientation and Mobility (O'M) and they are used of white cane as a CBR staff working in the area as result affect change. There

are lots of problems working with disabled people, the community and family members. There are lots of horrible and successful stories we counter, to sight a few.

Narrative

During the PLA/ PRA survey in the Central part in the western area of Sierra Leone, a young woman was identified born from a broken home of which the father thought the mother was a witch and as a result of witchcraft the child lost sight. Before the young lady got blind before the war in Freetown in the 90's she was married with a son (age 10) but during the period she had started losing her sight. She was badly treated by the husband and then left abandoned believing she was a burden. The husband left with the child to an unknown location living the young blind woman on her own, she had to be thrown out of the house because of lack of money to pay rent and she was thrown out in the reigns. The Blind lady had to resolve back to her mother in another area. Who was not also capable to take care of her. She was also being discriminated upon even by her own mother until the day she was identified by a CBR staff. After a lot of work through Counseling, training in Daily living Skills, Orientation and Mobility and the used of the White Cane, she then agreed to visit SLAB and now a member.

On the other event during another Survey in the Waterloo Penucilla, A lady, aged 27yrs with three children and single, lived with her parents in the same house in Robin Street in Ebo Town. She was a trader, who sells food items in the market. She said that on a certain day she had a quarrel in the market with another trader and on returning home she could no longer see, according to her she had gone to a lot of witch doctors all around, she was then locked up in a small room and even her children could not associate themselves with her again. She was so depressed and waiting to die, before she was identified by a CBR staff in the area, she is currently under going through rehabilitation training.

In Conclusion

The introduction of the CBR programme has helped to promote the awareness amongst family, Community, the Blind and low vision persons themselves. But still, there is more to be done in providing more facilities, funds and equipment for Blind and low Vision persons. The ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and children Affairs key stake holder need to do more in owning CBR programmes, providing Logistic support and training staff to help Facilitate work in the field.

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