

Community Based Vocational Rehabilitation services available to persons with disabilities in Kwara State

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Introduction

The CBVR programme in Kwara State has a pilot scheme which was set off to meet the need of PWDs. Unfortunately, many PWDs of this state are not aware of the services provided by the programme.

Therefore, in this article I will like to draw the attention of PWDs residing in this state to the services provided by this programme and how the PWDs can benefit from it so that they can be less dependant, self reliant and fully integrated to their immediate community and the larger society.

Background

At this point, I wish to inform PWDs on how we came about this concept i.e. Community Based Vocational Rehabilitation (CBVR) and state that it was introduced by ILO/UNDP in 1982 and was embraced by Nigeria and our state in particular.

For clarity purpose, CBVR refers to vocational training of PWDs which involves activities which are essentially aimed at providing simple skills in vocational trades such as tie and dye, clothes weaving etc that PWDs needed to be able to establish their own sheltered workshop so that they can become independent.

The Kwara State Government set up a CBVR committee in the year 2000 in the form of an NGO headed by a community leader with representatives of line Ministries as members of the committee while the secretariat of the programme is located at the Ministry of Social Development and Culture.

The CBVR programme is available for all categories of disabilities such as blind, deaf and dumb, physically disabled, mentally retarded and amputees while vocational training are available in the following areas namely: tie and dye, tailoring, poultry keeping, shoe making and mending, clothes weaving and pottery making.

However, all PWDs in the State who are willing to benefit from this programme are implored to indicate their choice of vocational trade mentioned above so that the CBRV committee can attach them to a trainer within their community or locality to commence a two year training programme.

Benefits

The advantages of the CBVR training programme to PWDs are many. May I inform those PWDs in the States who have not embraced the opportunity offered by the programme that 20 PWDs of all categories of disability who started a pilot scheme in Ilorin Metropolis two years ago have completed their training while a colourful graduation ceremony was done for them.

They were also provided with equipment and materials after the graduation ceremony so that they can establish their own sheltered workshop. All the 20 PWDs mentioned above have also been organised to form a corporative society that is duly registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Cooperatives, with the assistance of the CBVR Committee.

They can easily obtain soft loan from the cooperative society to expand the scope and size of their business while they can also obtain raw materials with which they run their businesses by making a request to the cooperative society. Other PWDs in the State who have not embraced this programme are advised to do so in order to be able to benefit accordingly.

I also wish to use this forum to enjoin those PWDs that are still sitting on the fence to register with the CBVR committee in the State so that they can also make a decent living through the empowerment programme and consequently become self dependent and self reliant.

Another advantage of the programme for PWDs, it has proved that there is ability in disability because all the 20 PWDs that went through the training together with able bodied persons successfully completed the training programme and this has enabled them to overcome the need for a loving and caring environment because some of them are now prominent members of their community development associations. More over, through the CBVR programme PWDs are no longer seen as outcasts and this has removed the

feeling of inferiority complex by PWDs, feeling of shame by their families and community members because PWDs now associate and relate well with all people.

On the other hand, all the 20 PWDs that went through the vocational training and have been empowered are now part and parcel of their community resources as they now contribute to the wellbeing of their families and communities through payment for community development and taxation.

Above all those PWDs that are reluctant to embrace the CBVR programme in the State are not given due recognition like their counterparts who are now empowered by the programme and are well respected to the extent that one of them is now a member of the State House of Assembly and two other PWDs were elected councillors in their local government council.

Finally, other PWDs in the State should know that the presence of their colleagues who are doing well in the society and their individual community has made the act of begging by other PWDs to be unpopular because those PWDs that have been empowered are seen as reference points and role models.

Problem and Challenges

However, I want to state that many PWDs are reluctant and are not ready to take part in the programme by hiding themselves thereby losing the rare opportunity of being empowered.

Also many PWDs in the State are being kept away from benefiting from the programme by their families and relations who wrongly believe that if their PWDs come out it will dent their image.

Although, at the initial stage of the establishment of the programme, there was total dependence on UNDP to fund the project which made the programme to face the problem of inadequate funding. However, the problem of funding is reduced through Government intervention and interest shown by other NGOs such as Sight Savers International, philanthropists and public spirited individuals who have also contributed to the programme in terms of financial donations.

Lastly, PWDs in Kwara State should be aware that at the initial stage of the programme, enough vehicles are not available for the purpose of mobilising PWDs, trainers and trainees for the programme and also for monitoring them from time to time. However the situation has improved tremendously.

Solution

However, all PWDs in Kwara State are informed that a strategy has been mapped out by which most PWDs in the State will be mobilised for the programme and this will involve the use of associations for the various disability groups.

All PWDs in the State who are interested in the programme are required to register with their disability groups who in turn will relate with the CBVR committee for action. The associations are:

- a) Joint National Association for the Disabled (JNADP)
- b) Nigerian Association for the Blind (NAB)
- c) Nigeria National Association for the Deaf and Dumb (NNAD)
- d) Kwara State Association of Amputees

All PWDs in the State should note that all the associations for the various disability groups will be funded by the CBVR committee to mobilise their members for the programme because it is most direct and effective.

Summary

I wish to conclude this article by calling on all PWDs in Kwara State who have not embraced the CBVR programme to make good use of this golden opportunity provided by the training and empowerment programme so that they too can benefit immensely like their colleagues who have been empowered and are now self dependent and self reliant.