

IMPLEMENTING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BASED REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

A case study of the CBR programme in Paki Masabong chiefdom, northern Sierra Leone

This piece of writing intends to encourage persons working with the CBR programme that they can implement a sustainable programme and in the process empower persons with disabilities. More so, it is intended to;

1. Share experiences on the steps taken to ensure the implementation of sustainable CBR programme.
2. Understand how the CBR operates and to support the programme.
3. Inform donors and other organisations about the achievement of the CBR in the Bombali District and encourage them to give more support to the programme.
4. Inform ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) working with PWDs about the achievement of the Sightsavers supported CBR programme in the Bombali district and to encourage them to provide more financial, material and human resource for the expansion of the CBR programme to other district

INTENDED READERS

CBR Workers: it will help to create awareness and stimulate CBR workers to use similar steps in achieving their intended goals.

NGOs: it will help to through light on the value for money (to evaluate the impact of the Project in the targeted community) attract funding from these organisations.

Government: draw the attention of the government to support the implementation of the CBR programme in Sierra Leone by seeing the project as a strategy for the equalisation of opportunities and the reduction of poverty among persons with disability.

Researchers: will use the work as reference point for future research or academic work.

Community members: raise awareness on the role of the CBR project in their communities and their roles as community members in the implementation of the project.

It is often difficult to determine the successes of any project without being biased; especially bearing in mind that the writer is a worker of the project. However, this piece of writing aims at bringing out the work of the of the Sierra Leone community Based Rehabilitation of the Blind in Bombali district, northern Sierra Leone. It also looks at how the project was able to ensure a sustainable project in one of the thirteen chiefdoms in the district, thereby presenting the need for expansion of the programme and the need for more financial support.

INTRODUCTION

An overview of the CBR programme

In 2005, the Sierra Leone Community Based Rehabilitation and Empowerment of the Blind in partnership with agencies like the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, Local Council, Inter-religious Council and the disabled persons themselves, started its operations in four regions of the country (Bo, Bombali, Kenema and the Western Area). It is important to note that the idea of using a CBR strategy was new although some organisations had been implementing some form of CBR unknowingly. CBR is a strategy for the rehabilitation, equalisation of opportunities, poverty reduction and social inclusion of people with disabilities (Joint Position Paper, International Labour organisation, UNESCO and World Health Organisation, 2004).

Using participatory rural appraisal tools like focus group discussion, community sensitisation, formation of chiefdom executive committee and surveys, the CBR workers in 2008 introduced the CBR project in Paki Masabong chiefdom. The CBR project in this chiefdom became a success story which attracted the attention of the Global Director of Sightsavers International.

Paki Masabong chiefdom is found in the North-Eastern part of Sierra Leone with a total population of 18,757(2004, population census). It is a small chiefdom with six sections and has only one junior secondary school, three clinics and no market place. The main livelihood activity of the people is farming, with the cultivation of rice as the main crop cultivated.



Left to Right: Nancy Smart –Sightsavers country Director, PC Massa –Paki Kabonboh II and Adelaide – Sightsavers Director of Programmes

The key elements that helped in making the project a success story included traditional authorities who were very receptive to the programme seeing it as a means of helping their vulnerable brothers and sisters in the community. They helped in the organisation of community meetings and provided lodging and feeding for the CBR workers. They even attend meetings organised by the Blind.

A chiefdom executive committee was also formed with some technical advice from the CBR staff has also been able to provide effective leadership. The CBR programme also provided training for those members in the chiefdom executive committee. These were able to organise themselves and schedule days for their meetings. Regular meetings helped them to plan and implement their programmes.

Their ability to meet regularly helped them to plan programmes for the development of the association they had formed. It was in one such meeting that they agreed on undertaking fund raising activities.

Their first attempt was in agriculture. They were able to secure about fifty cups of groundnut which they cultivated with support from their family members. However, the groundnut they planted did not do well. This did not dampen their desire to undertake developmental self-help projects.

In their monthly meetings, they have agreed that every member should contribute the sum of two hundred Leones as monthly. They therefore agreed to start a small scale micro credit loan scheme with the sum of twenty thousand Leones which they had collected. They gave out the loan to two members, each receiving ten thousand Leones. They were expected to pay back the loan with an interest of twenty percent. They have been able to manage this money with the help of the community animators who served as secretaries to the group.

To date, the group in Mapaki has not only increased the amount the given to them as members from five thousand Leones to twenty thousand Leones, but have also increased the number of beneficiaries from two to eighteen. They were also able to open a bank account with strength of over three hundred thousand Leones with the help of the chief.

CONCLUSION

As seen from the above, several factors helped to bring about a successful implementation of the CBR. The resilience of the blind people themselves, the corporation of the family members, the understanding of the traditional rulers, the corporation of the community members, the patience of the community animators, the role of the CBR workers, and the donors who provided the funds for the implementation of the programme.

The blind people in Paki Masabong chiefdom through sensitisation have the idea that they own the project and have worked very hard to sustain it. Another factor is the collaboration between the various partners. This demonstrates that if there is effective collaboration in the implementation of CBR programmes they will achieve their intended goal.

The situation in Paki Masabong shows that with little support and the right message people in some communities can also work on their own to make a change that will improve their lives.

There are many more communities that could be reached with the CBR programme so that they too can benefit from such a wonderful programme. This requires funds to support the implementation of such programmes. So far government support to the CBR project in Sierra Leone has been very insignificant. Support for the project was from external donor and there seems to be donor fatigue.

The government through the ministry of social welfare can allocate funds for the implementation of the project.

Written by:
Paul Moses