

Making Community Based Rehabilitation services sustainable

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Message: People with disabilities and their families can take a leading role in initiating, managing and sustaining Community Based Rehabilitation services through locally available resources.

Introduction

The Zanzibar Association of Disabled Persons (UWZ) has been running a Community Based Rehabilitation Programme since 1988 with support from outside (Baseline Survey 1998). To avoid dependence on support from outside, you (disabled people and your families) can take a leading role to educate fellow community members to initiate, manage and sustain CBR services.

To increase community participation in delivering services, the CBR programme in Zanzibar operates with committees for parents of children with disabilities, youth and women with disabilities at the community level (Baseline Survey 1998).

This article will look into the leading role of disabled people and their families in initiating, managing and sustaining a CBR programme locally. It will explain what disabled people can do in:

- Raising awareness on disability;
- Building their own capacity;
- Removing environmental barriers;
- Mobilizing resources;
- Empowering themselves economically; and
- Producing assistive appliances.

Raising awareness

You (disabled persons), in collaboration with community based organizations, can play an important role within the CBR system. You can conduct educative meetings to create awareness on disability and human rights issues. You can also sensitize fellow community members that there are enough resources on their doorsteps that can be used to solve your needs. In this case, you can conduct awareness-raising on:

- Identifying and providing rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities;
- Transferring rehabilitation-related skills to community members;
- Mobilizing available resources and raising funds to carry out the programme;
- Raising the level of community participation to an optimum level; and
- Making the CBR programme sustainable until the needs of disabled persons are adequately met.

Building capacity building

You can recruit your fellow disabled persons to facilitate CBR services and influence other community members who are interested in working with you like supervisors and volunteers. The experience from Zanzibar reveals that the CBR programme has recruited 10 zonal supervisors and 200 volunteers (Baseline Survey 1998).

Removing environmental barriers

You and other community members can remove environmental barriers in order to improve the physical accessibility and inclusion of everybody in the community you live in. You can then easily access services like education and health care if you remove barriers from schools, health centers and places of worship (National Policy on Disability).

To prove this, the CBR programme in Zanzibar has trained over 100 community leaders and school teachers on the techniques of minimizing or removing environmental barriers in schools and homes to enable disabled children to go school (UWZ Annual Report 2003). About 10 schools have already removed some barriers by building ramps leading to classrooms and latrines.

Mobilizing resources

You can actively participate in resource mobilization by encouraging influential community leaders to take part and contribute. The resources can then be used to sustain rehabilitation services as part of community participation and development.

In the case of CBR programme in Zanzibar, well-wishers of disabled children are donating wheelchairs, school books, uniforms and fees to disabled children who go to school. They donate after they observe the improvement made by the disabled children under the CBR programme (UWZ Annual Report 2003). Your parents' group can also fundraise for the services for children.

Economic empowerment

You can empower yourselves economically through various income generating activities. In Zanzibar, for example, 60 poorest families of disabled children got loans to improve their economic condition. The loans are returned in installment (UWZ Annual Report 2003). The families have used the loans to start petty businesses to raise income to meet the needs of their children. The businesses include small shops, poultry keeping and small scale-farming.

Alternatively, your community can assume the role of providing you with resources, opportunities, knowledge and skills.

Producing assistive appliances

In actual fact, the process of empowerment can go hand in hand with provision of assistive appliances to enable you realize your ability to participate in community life. You can, therefore, use locally available materials to produce the appliances you need like crutches, calipers, corner-seats and wheelchairs. In reference to this, the CBR programme in Zanzibar has taught local carpenters how to produce these assistive appliances locally.

Conclusion

A total of 1,500 disabled children are happily integrated in the CBR programme area in Zanzibar. This has been possible because the programme emphasizes on your (parents of disabled children) participation in the

programme service delivery. You are, at the same time, contributing to the services of your children through cost sharing on assistive appliances and medical services.

On the other hand, you can organize play groups for your children and bring parents of non-disabled children to understand and help you in your problems. In this way, you can also contribute not only towards the rehabilitation of your children, but also in awareness raising among fellow community members.

Finally, if you can integrate the social and cultural factors into the CBR programme, you can definitely own and sustain the programme.

Reference:

Annual Report for 2003, Zanzibar Association of the Disabled, 2004

Baseline Survey of Children with Disabilities, Zanzibar Association of the Disabled, 1993, Zanzibar

Working Together with the media, A Practical Guide for People with Disabilities, ILO, 1998

National Policy on Disability, Government of Zanzibar, 2004, Zanzibar

KEY POINTS AND SUBPOINTS

Message: People with disabilities and their families can take a leading role in initiating, managing and sustaining Community Based Rehabilitation services through locally available resources.

1: Disabled people and their families can conduct educative meetings to create awareness on disability and human rights for CBR supervisors and volunteers

1.1: To build the capacity of CBR supervisors and volunteers on rehabilitation services

2: Disabled people and their families can mobilize local human and financial resources through fundraising

2.1: To sustain the rehabilitation services

3: They can alter environmental barriers to improve physical accessibility and inclusion of PwDs in the community

3.1: Structures like schools, health centers, places of worship etc.

3.2: Put in place accessible environment

3.3: Access to education

4: They can empower themselves economically through income generating activities

4.1: Economic empowerment can help them live and independent life

4.2: Earn respect from the community members

4.3: Self-employment

5: They can use locally available materials to produce assistive appliances for people with disabilities in their area

5.1: Assistive appliances such as crutches, calipers, corner seats