

## **Ways by which community leaders in Benue State in Nigeria can embrace Community Based Rehabilitation by Terna Uor**

Community leaders are the immediate administrative structure we have in every community in Benue State. Their voices are highly respected when it comes to taking decisions. They are responsible for maintenance of law and order in case of communal disputes. It is also their duty to nurture the programmes which are meant for community development as supported by members of the community e.g. CBR programme.

It is the nature of an African to assist those in need. It was the case in pre-colonial African society up to date. PWDs were given priority in the area of building houses for shelter, farming, cooking and protection against external domination.

Until recently the 'we concept' that had existed in the mind of an African is replaced with self centeredness for example in 1992 when CBR Mkar was introduced community leaders and members of the community used to donate clothes and food items for PWDs but the reverse is the case today. Members of the community are no longer willing to do something that will showcase his or her love for PWDs even if it is done by donors or NGOs community members will never allow it stand. For instance CBR programmes in Benue State are poorly supported by community members. We recollect a situation whereby CBR project office at Mkar was burgled by community members and materials worth millions of Naira were stolen. It is generally true that when a group of people come together for a common purpose and with a common voice it is rather easier for them to

accept the change than necessarily imposing onto them what they don't have a meaning to and doesn't have an idea of where its coming from and what advantage that is likely to be obtained. In this article I will enumerate problems militating against community leaders embracing CBR programmes.

Some CBR programmes were introduced without due consultation with the communities it hopes to cover.

CBR programmes are rarely a priority for most communities in Benue State because of diverse perceptions. Some community leaders did not welcome CBR programmes simply because the head office was not sited in their areas. To others its because the children are not employed as field workers for instance in September 2006 Ipav Community in Benue State Nigeria mobilised and attacked the CBR office demanding employment for 11 of their children.

Some refuse CBR because the gain expected from the establishment of such programmes had gone past their selfish desires. To some leaders it is total ignorance, they hardly know what the concept is all about and what benefit could be fetched from it.

### **Remedies**

In view of the above a conscious mind might want to ask, "how can our leaders learn to embrace CBR programmes?" Remedies are as paragraphed below:

CBR and other developmental programmes such like Community Based Vocational Rehabilitation (CBVR), Sight Savers International have to come from people's initiatives. How? Let them be part of any CBR programme at the formation of it. Make them understand it is their own programme. During this period, you will have to convince the people to really see the need to have such a programme in the community. When this kind of arrangement is put in place at the very beginning the need for a felt programme will be realised. Many CBR programmes survived because this point was given attention.

Another important point is programme implementation. This is a stage where most CBR programmes have received a kick back because tasks were not allocated to the immediate beneficiaries. Under this period duty can be shared among community members. Let them have this spirit that they work and suffer for it.

CBR programmes have received relatively low patronage and support from community leaders because their concerns were not sorted before establishment. For instance CBR programme Mkar in Benue State still suffers this consequence today.

Monitoring of CBR programme and other developmental programmes is important at any point in time. Under this point emphasis is placed on progress of the initiated CBR programme. Here community leaders may be allowed to constitute a monitoring committee that will be responsible for checking files. Community leaders themselves could form part of the community together with other prominent sons who are influential, whose voices are respected and held on to.

In CBR project Oju, Benue State the Chairman Board of Governors is a community leader with some prominent sons who are strong in Government.

Another point is evaluation. Evaluation is a good point that can never be discarded. Evaluation in CBR is usually measured in terms of smooth progress in the programmes activities when intensive input of resources is stopped. In CBR programmes evaluation is necessary for it ensures sustainability. Many CBR programmes failed because this aspect is neglected. Leaders of the people and their members are sole beneficiaries of this programme and as such should not fold their arms and see it collapse. They are responsible for daily running of CBR programme activities.

### **Conclusion**

By conclusion, community leaders should always be ready to initiate programmes they thought their people mostly needed. After a felt programme is sought and acceptance acknowledged, community members can involve in implementation of such programmes. Monitoring and evaluation are necessary to ensure the running and continuity of an ideal CBR. Any CBR programme that is meant for changing lives of PWDs must begin with the people and end with them. This is the only success key for any established CBR programme.

### **Recommendations**

- Christoffel Blinden Mission International (CBMI) should include community leaders on their training calendar.

- Individual CBR programmes should always organise training exercises for community leaders and their members on yearly basis.
- Members of the public should be given awareness on how to be contributing for sources of services for PWDs.
- Government policies should include PWDs in reality so as to cut the magnitude of PWDs in Benue State and Nigeria at large.