

DISABLED PEOPLES INTERNATIONAL (DPI)

Position Paper on

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)

Perspective

Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) is a sectoral strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of community stakeholders with the active participation of disabled people themselves, their families and communities, to facilitate their access to appropriate health, education, social, vocational and other services. (Agreed to in 1994 by ILO, UNESCO and WHO)

DPI Position

DPI recognizes that *CBR* has resulted in positive change in the lives of disabled people in many countries. It is difficult to generalize our evaluation of CBR without a detailed review region by region. Our position therefore will be limited to the improvements DPI would like to see in the goals and strategies of CBR.

1. DPI asserts that *CBR* must change to reflect a human rights approach and be modeled on the independent living concept. By its very nature of being a community based decision making model – people with disabilities do not have a voice of their own in matter that affect their lives.
2. The community-based approach is particularly appropriate for the prevention of disability, early identification and intervention of children with disabilities. Community based approach usually means that many sectors of the community –one of which is disabled people - will identify programming to meet the need.
3. If our goal is full participation then disabled persons must be in control of decision making in all aspects that effect their lives. CBR, in most instances, does not ensure that disabled persons are the decision makers in their own lives, rather community based decisions result in housing, transportation, education and employment that take away the ability of disabled person to make their own decisions and choices.
4. Poor families' priorities may be at the level of survival needs, rather than solving the problems of a disabled family member. In other cases families may have hidden away their disabled family member. In either situation the person with the disability may go unnoticed or unheard, unless specific actions are taken to ensure that the voice of disabled people are heard.

5. Some of our regions report that CBR is still medically oriented, not considering the human rights, social and economic needs of individual disabled persons. In other instances, regions report that even when their input is requested, their opinions are not equally weighted to that of professionals. Worst, there were instances when disabled peoples' ideas were totally disregarded. Their input therefore is meaningless.

In summary, DPI believes that CBR, if it is to continue in its present form must be revitalized and disabled persons must direct this revitalization.