

# **THE METAMORPHOSIS OF COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION (ADAPTING TO THE NEW REALITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES)**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

CBR (Community-Based Rehabilitation) was introduced 30 years ago as an innovative program in the disability prevention and rehabilitation of people with disabilities. This program was primarily designed to deal with the situation in developing countries. The strategy of CBR program is to develop the local community through community development strategy so that the community will be able to participate and be involved in the implementation of the program.

The condition of community in developing countries since the last ten years has been experiencing major and essential changes. The changes are due to several factors such as the following:

- a. The advancement and widespread application of communication or information technology.
- b. The increase of people's mobility, which is the direct effect of the improvement of transportation system and the need to look for education and employment opportunity.
- c. The political and economic decentralizations.

In the future it is clear that the intensity of the changes is going to increase. Main changes in community that are related to CBR programs are:

1. The shift from traditional, hierarchical community to information-conscious community.
2. The growth of affinity-based community.
3. The emergence of "new" issues other than the issues of disabilities.

To be able to adapt to the new realities and opportunities in the community, CBR has to experience transformation process in its conceptualization, strategy, and techniques.

This is THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CBR.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **THE CHANGING LOCAL COMMUNITY**

### **A. CBR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND LOCAL COMMUNITY**

CBR and the community are closely related because the basic resources of CBR programs are the community. For the sake of clarity, let us again refresh our memory of the definitions of CBR and community development.

CBR is a strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, and social integration of all people with disabilities (Training Notes in CBR by Maya Thomas and M.J. Thomas, 2001, p.2).

Community Development (CD) is the utilization under one single program of approaches and techniques which rely upon local communities as units of action and which attempt to combine outside assistance with organized local self-determination and effort, and which correspondingly seek to stimulate local initiative and leadership as the primary instrument of change (United Nations Document E/CN 5/291).

So it is clear that through the strategy of community development, local community has become the main pillar for CBR programs and CBR has become part of development strategy of the local community.

### **B. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND NEW REALITIES OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

About three decades ago CBR, with community development strategy, was introduced. During this period, as we can observe, there have been changes in the local community. The changes are mainly caused by the advancement in information and communication technology, transportation system, and the rise of democratic ideals. The result is the shift from the local community with traditional characteristics to the local community with new characteristics. The question is whether or not the community development strategy is still effective when it is applied to the local community with new characteristics.

### **C. CHANGES OF LOCAL COMMUNITY**

In CBR, “community” means a community with geographical boundaries where CBR program is implemented. As mentioned above, that the advancement of technology, especially

the information and communication technology, transportation system, has brought changes in the lives of the people, including the local community.

The local community now can access the information directly through the newspaper, magazine, TV, radio, VCD, etc. Various events happening abroad and at home can directly and instantly be accessed. Many kinds of modern means of communication are now widespread in the local community. For those who do not have access to the regular telephone, telephone kiosks that offer local, national, and overseas calls are very helpful and easily accessible. Mobile or cellular phones are now more widely used.

An interesting story about how information and communication technology has entered the life of the people is what has started in one district in Central Java, Indonesia, namely Kebumen district. An initiative to introduce information and communication technology to that district was suggested by a person who was born in that district. He is now a prominent businessman in advertising and communication industry living in Jakarta. The suggestion got an encouraging respond from the local government especially from the head of the district who is a woman. The information and communication technology was started being introduced several years ago. Among the results, at present the Kebumen district government actively promote their potential resources and provide information to the global public through website namely <http://www.kebumen.go.id/> . VCD on Kebumen district are being produced. This is another way of distributing information. In the near future, there will be a local television broad cast that will serve the need of information for people living in that district.

This is a new reality that was not even imaginable five or ten year ago. Back then the access to information was somewhat difficult. The local community received information mainly from the government or local leaders. Now information cannot be confined to the government or any formal institution only. Almost anybody who knows how to use the computer with the Internet program can access it easily. He/She just needs to go to a cyber café. The mobility of the members of the local community is high as a result of the need to improve their economy and education. Moreover the transportation system is improving. In other words, now we are witnessing the migration of resources, culture, and values that, in the course of time, have resulted in new characteristics of the local community.

In line with the above changes, the rise of democratic ideals is also prevalent. Decentralization of political and economic power is reflected in the development of government system with strong local authority.

The two dominant factors (the advancement of technology and the rise of democracy) brought major and essential changes. A new situation and characteristics are prevailing in the local community. The following diagram explains the changes of the local community.

N O	CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL LOCAL COMMUNITY	INTERVENTION OR INPUT	CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY LOCAL COMMUNITY
1	Highly value the traditions and social hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced technology (especially information and communication) and transportation system.</li> <li>• Conflict or synergy among different interest or values.</li> <li>• The rise of democracy, political and economic decentralizations, local autonomy</li> </ul>	Highly value information and the egalitarian spirit
2	Information was not widely circulated		Information is widely circulated
3	Inter-regional communication could not be done easily.		Inter-regional communication can be done easily
4	The mobility was low		The mobility is high
5	The number of needs was small and problems were not complex		The number of needs is ever increasing and problems are complex
6	Passive or stagnant participation		Active and dynamic participation
7	Suitable for top-down policy		Suitable for participatory policy

In the future the trend of change will hold on and even intensify. The question is whether or not the definition of “local community” as it is written and implied in the definition of community development is still relevant to the new reality. Can community development still be the appropriate strategy for CBR in their reaching its vision and mission in the future?

#### **D. SOME ANALYSIS**

To answer the above questions we will try to analyze some essential problems in community development that is related to the new realities of the local community in the context of CBR. The problems are, among others:

### *1. One single program*

As the intensity of communication, information, people's mobility and diversity of interest are increasing, since the last ten years; universal social issues have been arising. Those issues turn out to be influential to exclusive CBR issues. For instance, inclusive to the human rights issue is the rights for people with disabilities; inclusive to the issue of gender inequality is discrimination towards women with disabilities; the environment issue includes the accessible environment for people with disabilities.

CBR programs in the future must be informed about and sensitive to universal issues, especially those with disability related content.

### *2. Local Community*

As discussed previously, there are major and essential changes of local community. It has impact to the implementation of CBR programs.

Efforts of rehabilitation, equalization of rights and opportunities, social integration done for the people with disabilities usually focus on the area of work in the local community level. However, this approach cannot solve the problem holistically, yet. The following case study will clarify the situation. Although, the local community have given equal rights and opportunities to the people with disabilities, have also accepted them in social interactions, have supported them to improve their quality of life, but when they go to other places to study, for instance, they find a different reality. They find a great deal of obstacles. Even, some are rejected because the schools they want to go to do not know how to serve the people with disabilities.

So, the usefulness and the effectiveness of the local solution in the local community are not comprehensive enough.

### *3. Outside Assistance*

The term "outside assistance" implies that there are two parties in a program, namely the outsiders and the insiders (in this case: the local community). The outsiders are in a "higher" position because they give the assistance. The insiders have to choose their position: either as a subject or an object, or both. But one thing is clear: the outside assistance is a decisive factor.

When local autonomy has been implemented and therefore, the local community has various kinds of opportunities to manage their own problems and resources with more autonomy; the local community have their own network system, get easy access to information, has more confidence, have more critical and active minds; the concept of outsider-insider is not appropriate any more.

In the future, CBR still need partners, both insider and outsider, but the relation among partners and community members is based on the more appropriate principle that adapt to the new characteristics of the contemporary local community.

#### **E. CBR STRATEGY IN THE FUTURE**

Based on these new realities in the local community, the basic strategy that is suitable is the “partnership relation” which has the following characteristics:

1. Equality

It is emphasized that there is no “higher” or “lower” position in this relation. Each party has its own roles and works according to its potency to reach the same vision that has been decided before. No party should ever feel superior because it gives the assistance. Nor should a party feel inferior because it receives the assistance. It must be kept in mind that upon the completion of the program both parties must feel satisfied.

2. Mutuality

The program must benefit both parties. The implementation of the program must not cause one party to suffer, while the other party reaps the benefits.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **POTENTIAL RESOURCES**

#### **WITHIN THE AFFINITY-BASED COMMUNITY**

One of the characteristics of modern society is the existence of diversity of affinity for a certain interest, hobby, profession, etc. People who share the same affinity usually form a group. These people have a common interest and are therefore united although they are not living within

common geographical boundaries. If the number of the people in the affinity group is big, the group can become an affinity-based community.

One example of such communities is tourism community. During the organizing of **The First Asia – Pacific Conference of Tourism for People with Disabilities**, the tourism community works together with rehabilitation professional. From the interaction it was realize that the tourism community has potential to support efforts to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities.

Ways that can help improve the quality of life of the people with disabilities by the tourism community are, among others:

1. Hotels, restaurants, transportation facilities, places of interest, and public buildings that will be visited by people with disabilities tourists, must be accessible.
2. Art shops can help sell handicrafts made by the people with disabilities.
3. Theatres, hotels, restaurants that usually present live shows can invite musical band of the blinds or dancers who have impaired hearing.
4. Travels agencies can design a special tour program for the people with disabilities.
5. Tourism industries can also provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities, e.g. as tourist guide, office staff, etc.

There are many other affinity-based communities such as community of artist, business executive, etc. In each of those communities there are always potential that will be able to support CBR to achieve its goals.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE RISE OF NEW ISSUES**

#### **OTHER THAN THE ONES ABOUT DISABILITY**

As it has been discussed in Chapter One, the more developed society is the more various the needs and the more complex the problems will be. Nowadays there are new issues that were not present three decades ago when CBR was first introduced. The issues are, among others: drug abuse, AIDS, violation of human rights, and gender inequality.

Responding to the new issues that are prevalent, there are two things we have to consider:

1. Resources demand for social actions will be in accordance with the number of the issues that arise. There will be competitions between social groups to obtain the resources. In line with this CBR programs must widen their base for resources, for instance by working out resources within the affinity-based communities.
2. In order that CBR can merge into a synergy with other issues, especially the ones that include disabilities, such as human right issue, gender issue, etc. CBR has to adapt its strategy by actively develop networking with the other issues.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE DEFINITION OF CBR**

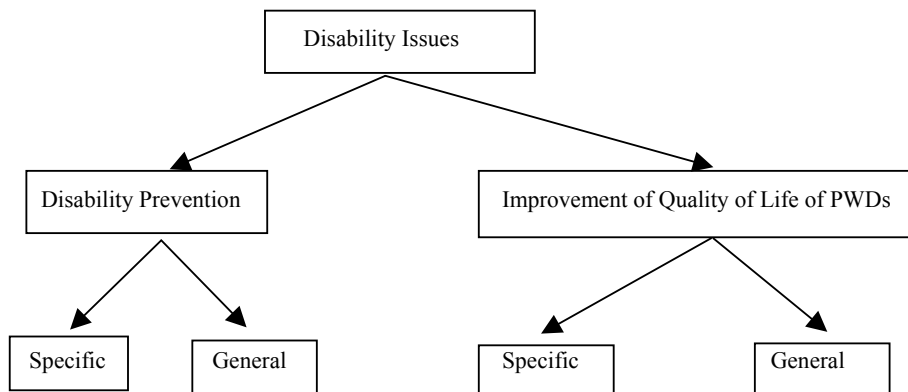
In addition to a scientific definition, a simple and practical definition of the concept of a program is needed to make it more operational. It is called a “working definition.” This working definition is useful when stakeholders or people who are not familiar with a certain issue or who still have different perceptions can now understand the issue clearly.

The main stakeholder of a CBR program is community. In the previous chapters changes in community have been discussed. It can be concluded that the meaning of “community” in its relation to CBR is wider and more varied in regard to the levels of education or socio-cultural backgrounds and its personal interest.

The key words in CBR are “disability prevention” and “improvement of the quality of life.” It is only normal that everyone will try hard to avoid disabilities. It is also normal that everyone will try their best to improve their quality of life. What needs to be socialized is the fact that the people with disabilities have the same ideals or expectations. What they need to improve their quality of life are the same as those needed by people in general: proper respect for their rights, sufficient education, accessible means of transportation, and a supportive community that welcomes them as its members.

So, people in general will have no difficulties in understanding the two CBR issues, i.e. prevention of disability and the improvement of quality of life of people with disabilities.

The following diagram will be useful for our discussion.



Specific disability prevention relates to specific preventive measure, such as polio immunization etc. in which the professional will play a major role. However organizing a successful polio immunization campaign will need participation of the community. The family and community will be able to have a major role in prevention of household industrial and traffic accident. Those are part of the general preventive measures in disability. In this case, the professional as co-stakeholder of CBR could play a role by providing information, technical advice and training to the community when the community needs it.

Scientifically, the definition of rehabilitation includes the improvement of quality of life of PWDs. However when we communicate with the community, the term rehabilitation is understood as a specific professional skill that they will not able to do.

In the case improvement in quality of live of PWDs in general, it is clear that community member including families of PWDs can play a major role. Community acceptance to people with disability, positive community attitudes towards PWDs in day-to-day life increase their quality of life. There are many ways that community could help to improve Q of L of PWDs such as providing job opportunities, inviting the PWDs to sport and social events, etc.

Using community friendly definition of CBR as explained above, the community would understand what is CBR easily, and therefore, the community will be able to involved them-selves more widely and intensively.

## CONCLUSION

1. Due to the advancement in technology and the rise of democracy, the traditional local community has been changing into the local community with new characteristics. Community development strategy is not appropriate anymore with the situation of the changing local community.

2. In the future affinity-based community could be a new resource for CBR. Although its vision and mission are not directly related to the issues of disabilities, in practice the affinity-based community can participate in promoting the quality of life of people with disabilities.
3. New issues that are not directly related to the issues of disabilities, such as violation of human rights, gender inequality, environment issue, are prevalent now all over the world. In order that CBR can merge into a synergy with other issues, especially the ones that include disabilities, such as human right issue, gender issue, etc. CBR has to adapt its strategy by actively develop networking with the other issues.
4. Responding to the various changes in heterogeneous community, besides a scientific definition CBR needs to formulate a simple, practical definition (working definition) so that it will be easy for people in general to understand it. In this way people in general will be able to get involved in CBR programs more easily.
5. Adapting to the new realities and opportunities, CBR has to transform itself. The meaning of transformation here is: the vision and mission of CBR are still the same but the concept, strategy, and techniques are different, thus it is more dynamic and inclusive. This is “THE METAMORPHOSIS OF CBR.”

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