

International Consultation on Reviewing Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)

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DAR TEAM - WHO

Good Morning, Madam Chairperson and all participants

- About 600 million people in the world experience disabilities of various types and degrees.
- 80% of the world's people with disabilities live in low-income countries and the majority of them are poor.
- Basic survival is one of the greatest challenges of many people with disabilities, particularly those with severe and multiple disabilities living in low-income countries

- Despite the incremental progress made in the past 20 years, even today, the vast majority of people with disabilities cannot access even basic services.
- The majority also cannot exercise their Human Rights.

- As an aftermath of the declaration of Alma-Ata in 1978, there was a realisation about the need for, and benefit of a shift in emphasis from city-based institutions/hospitals to the community.
- Community based rehabilitation (CBR) developed as a natural consequence of this initiative. It was seen as an alternative or complimentary approach for reaching members of the community who would otherwise have no access to even basic services.

- It was also to build on existing resources of local communities to assist people with disabilities to become equal members of their communities.
- Rehabilitation does not mean only “cure or treatment” – it has a much deeper meaning “**dignity, equal opportunities and equal rights**”.
- Naturally it is difficult for one UN organization or one department of the Government to meet the need.

Madam chairperson

- Time to review past experiences and evaluate the impact of the CBR approach in order to provide direction for the development of CBR in this new millennium.
- This event will provide a valuable opportunity to engage the active participation of all stakeholders and people working in the field in frank and open discussions with one goal in mind - how to ensure a **better quality of life** for people with disabilities for the future.

- Many positive changes have taken place since the CBR approach was first introduced in the early eighties. Now CBR has been adopted as national strategy for reaching persons with disabilities in many countries.
- Along with the quantitative growth in CBR, there have been major changes in the way CBR has been conceptualised.

The influencing factors include:

- Different national/international declarations
Mainly,
- The ILO Convention No. 159 which promotes national policies for employment of people with disabilities.
- UNESCO [Salamanca Conference](#) document which advocates for inclusive education.
- The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with disabilities
- The growing commitment of the ministries of social welfare as coordinator in the majority of the countries

- All communities are different because of socio-economic conditions, terrain, cultures and political systems. Therefore, there cannot be one model of CBR for the whole world. It may not be the same even within the same country.
- The focus of CBR has expanded from medical rehabilitation towards more comprehensive multi-sector approaches such as access to total health care, access to education, vocational training, income generation programmes and participation/inclusion in the society.
- CBR is being viewed as an essential part of community development with the goal of empowerment of the whole community.

- We have a shift in focus from service delivery to management issues that influence the effectiveness and the quality of services.
- CBR provides the means to realize the human rights and equal opportunities of people with disabilities as defined in the international legal instruments and particularly in the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities.
- The International Classification of Functioning disability and Health (ICF), has refocused attention on the abilities and has recognised the social component of disability.

- Government is responsible for addressing the needs of all citizens of its country, including people with disabilities.
- There is evidence that people with disabilities are among the most marginalised groups in most societies, especially women and girls.
- To overcome this situation, all the stakeholders need to collaborate, discuss strategies and assume responsibility for priority strategic actions which would have a significant impact on improving the citizenship of people with disabilities in the coming years.

Dear friends,

- To have a consultation on all the issues related to CBR in a short span of time, is not possible.
- So, we initiated a process for identifying key issues which can make a significant impact in existing CBR programmes while, at the same time, assisting in scaling up CBR for nationwide coverage.

- WHO organised Inter-country meetings with its member states with representatives from ministries of health, ministries of social welfare and disabled peoples organisations (DPOs)
- A meeting in Geneva with other key stakeholders including UN organisations, international NGOs and international DPOs

4 Main issues have been identified

- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/
OWNERSHIP**
- **MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATION**
- **ROLE OF DPOs IN CBR**
- **SCALING UP CBR**

The Government of Finland kindly agreed to host this consultation

First issue - Community involvement and ownership

- The term community may have many meanings. For this Consultation, however, 'community' refers to the smallest administrative area where people live.
- This implies that there is a formal structure or administrative body and there is an elected or appointed administrative chief/mayor/leader responsible for the wellbeing of all citizens of the community, including people with disabilities.
- Besides that, we also expect Local interest groups to have an active role in CBR, which would eventually lead to community participation and ownership.

- Community involvement is a necessary condition for the success of CBR
- It would be ideal if communities own the CBR Programme.
- This may not always be possible, especially when CBR ownership is perceived as outside the community and belonging to one particular ministry or NGO.
- It is important to devise strategies that creates bridges and partnerships among people with disabilities, communities and government.

Points to be considered in the discussion of the first issue:

- Raising awareness of the community about the need for, and benefit of CBR and ensuring that resources will be committed for the benefit of people with disabilities.
- Empowering communities to take responsibility for planning, implementation and to be involved in monitoring and evaluation of CBR programmes.

Community involvement & ownership – points for discussion

- Identifying mechanisms for decentralising government CBR programmes and for transferring decision making power from central level to communities and people with disabilities.
- Promoting inclusion of CBR in the community development agenda when there are a number of competing urgent needs.

Second issue - Multi-sector collaboration

- The basic needs of people with disabilities are the same as those of other citizens.
- The majority of people with disabilities do not require life-long medical rehabilitation.
- It is not disabilities but society's attitude towards people with disabilities and an unfriendly environment and barriers, which prevents people with disabilities from equal opportunities and participation.

- It is difficult for one ministry or one NGO to solve the needs of people with disabilities, especially those who are poor.
- Multi-sector collaboration needs the support of an established national policy that provides a framework for all stakeholders.

Points to be considered in the discussion of the second issue

- Ensuring participation of all ministries especially of health, education, social welfare, labour, development and finance in responding to the needs of the people with disabilities.
- Ensuring that International NGOs, local NGOs and private service providers respond to the needs of people with disabilities in an integrated manner.

- Identifying a strategy for the coordination among all the stakeholders mainly government, international and local NGOs, DPOs and communities
- Ensuring that government will **implement** the UN Standard Rules through appropriate country legislation/acts.

Third issue - the role of DPOs

- People with disabilities know their own needs better than others. "Nothing about us without us" is a legitimate claim.
- Historically, people with disabilities have been seen as only "passive receivers".
- Many CBR programmes do not involve people with disabilities or DPOs in planning, implementing and monitoring the work of CBR which threatens its relevance and impact.
- In many places, CBR implementers and DPOs do not work together.

- One of the outcomes of CBR is to develop strong partnerships with DPOs.
- Where DPOs do not exist CBR should encourage the formation of DPOs.
- DPOs should participate in the formulation and implementation of national policies to ensure equal rights.
- DPOs also need to take an active part in service provision and to be role models.

Points to be considered in the discussion of the third issue

- Facilitating the participation of people with disabilities especially when people have restricted mobility and access.
- Promoting representation of all types of disabilities among DPOs participating in CBR, which could help to ensure that CBR programmes are accessible to all disabled persons.
- Enabling people with disabilities to form their own community level organizations which also should include parents or care-givers of people with disabilities.

- Ensuring that CBR programmes have good representation of people with disabilities among the CBR workers, especially women with disabilities.
- Promoting people with disabilities to be represented in decision making and political systems at different levels.

Fourth issue - Scaling up CBR

- In many countries, CBR has been initiated by external assistance as a pilot project covering a limited geographical area and often to address the need of one group of people with disabilities. Many CBR projects have been restricted to the same geographical area for the last 10-15 years.

- The expectation might be that enough experts will be available one day to meet the needs of communities, which is impossible.
- Most of the countries do not have enough resources to produce so many specialised professionals or to employ them.
- Specialised professionals prefer to live in cities and few want to work in rural areas.

- Specialised professionals need to guarantee an effective referral system and to enlarge their roles from “service provider also to trainer and counsellor”.
- Some ministries have the interest and resources but do not have either the expertise or the network to link with the community.
- So, there is a need to mainstream specialised services into regular programmes, such as rehabilitation in health care, inclusive education in schools.

- Governments do not view the needs of people with disabilities as a priority issue and often consider interventions in favour of person with disabilities as very expensive and with a low cost-effectiveness benefit.
- Governments sometime do not have enough funds to meet all the need of people with disabilities especially in low income countries.
- Even international and national NGOs experience similar problems.
- Alternatives have to be explored – such as using local resources as much as possible and ensuring that people with disabilities are included in various government development programmes that are not specifically focussed on people with disabilities.

Points to be considered in the discussion of the fourth issue

- Ensuring that Governments provide services to all citizens with particular attention to people more in need and among them people with disabilities.
- Mobilising Community resources to scale up pilot projects.
- Identifying specialised services that can be mainstreamed into services available in the community.

- Strengthening the referral system in every sector and among sectors in order to support CBR.
- Giving CBR an important role in nation-wide poverty alleviation programmes.
- Providing evidence of the cost-effectiveness of CBR.

Madam Chairperson

- This Consultation is an opportunity for policy makers, NGOs, DPOs and CBR implementers to learn from each other.
- The optimal result will be achieved when all the stakeholders focus on how their individual constituencies can best improve their own performance in this joint effort to promote CBR.
- Thus the basic question to each participant is “what shall I and my organization do in the near future to advance CBR, especially to reach more people with disabilities with an aim of an inclusive society”?

Dear Friends

- The task is huge, so there is a great need for collaboration among the stakeholders”.
- We hope that this Consultation will be a first major step in the right direction.
- **Thanks for your attention**