development to deliberately target persons with disability. For instance, an adult functional literacy programme that takes place in the community needs to have provisions for PWDS as well. This has several advantages. It relieves the overwhelming burden of just a few actors and helps other agencies to see that disabled people are members of the community.

CONCLUSION

For CBR to achieve its goals of equalisation of opportunities for disabled people and their full inclusion in all the development process, it has got to be built into the mainstream socio-cultural and development processes. This will help to address the major CBR challenges of effectiveness, affordability, sustainability and coverage. This is possible if the CBR implementers are committed to this. They must be careful not to hold on to CBR programmes as special territory, for this does not reflect the underlying philosophy.

The original goal of CBR was to provide capacity of community development, to address the rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities within their environment (community.) It is supposed to be an integrated strategy, to address the needs of PWDS within the overall community development process. For this goal to be achieved, CBR has got to be embedded in all aspects of the social development action, interwoven into the culture of people, backed by political action like appropriate legislation and policy making. This goal yet has to be realised in most places where CBR has been implemented in Africa.

REFERENCES

CBR AS PART OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

WHO, UNESCO, ILO, (1994), define CBR as a "strategy within general community development for rehabilitation, equalisation of opportunities and social inclusion of all children and adults with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined effort of persons with disabilities, and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services."

CBR promotes not only the rights of persons with disabilities, but also seeks to create an environment where they can have equal opportunities with their "able-bodied" counterparts, and are allowed to participate fully in all activities of the society. As such, the role of CBR in the empowerment of PWDs is very essential.

DEFINITION OF EMPOWERMENT

Helander (1993), defined empowerment as "an on-going process, which enables an individual to fulfil and be accountable for his or her duties and responsibilities and protect his or her rights in the society. Part of the process is to provide people with the resources, opportunities, knowledge and skill needed to increase their capacity to determine their own future and fully participate in community life."

Empowerment of persons with disabilities therefore, refers to giving them a variety of opportunities to discover themselves, understand their environment, be aware of their rights and take control of their lives and partake in important decisions that lead to their destiny.

WHY THERE IS NEED FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF PWDS

WHO, UNESCO, ILO (2004) observe that, "there is a strong correlation between disability and poverty. Poverty leads to increased disability and disability, in turn leads to increased poverty."

In the year 2000, UN Member States set the Millennium Development Goals, wherein eradication of poverty was top on the list. The effect of poverty on people with disabilities is unbelievably huge and devastating. According to Department for International Development (DFID) (2000), 50% of disabilities are preventable and directly linked to poverty. Narayan and Petesch (2002), observe that "poverty violates the fundamental human rights of PWDs, depriving them of the basic necessities of life including, health, education, safe water, food, shelter and clothing including means of livelihood."

Experience suggests that the majority of persons with disabilities are unemployed, and often denied employment opportunities even when they have met necessary requirements. Consequently, they have no stable income and have to depend on the mercy of family members, well-wishers and charity groups for handouts to sustain their livelihood. International instruments, like the Convention on Human Rights and Rights of the Child; ILO Convention No. 159 on national policy for employment of persons with disabilities, and the UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for persons with disabilities, are practically ignored by most governments in Africa. As such, PWDs continue to suffer increased "discrimination", "marginalisation" and "oppression" (Onota, 2003; Akintaro, 2004) from the so-called able-bodied opportunists. Dazie, (1980) and Omubene, (2002) argue, that such manifestations of negative societal attitudes suffered by PWDs creates "animosity, engenders resentment, and stifles initiative and creativity".

Findings from a recent study on the "Impact of Services for People with Spinal Cord Lesion (SCL) on Economic Participation" reveal that, PWDs suffer various forms of barriers including; access to employment, obtaining appropriate work, retaining work, receiving appropriate wages, discriminating attitude, appropriate skills, lack of educational qualification, inaccessible environment and transport systems etc. (Momin, 2004). These attitudinal and environmental barriers tend to limit their ability to participate effectively in economic activities. PWDs have great potential that could be tapped and harnessed for community development, given appropriate opportunities, attitude, and approach. This challenge lies with
Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes as grassroots service providers and change agents. We agree with Coleridge (1993) and Rifkin and Pridmore (2001), that it is high time that the "powerless" be "liberated" and "given the opportunities to gain experience and confidence needed to influence the decisions that affect their own daily lives "; to discover and choose the path leading to their destinies, take control of their lives and make their contribution towards the development of their communities.

STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF PWDS

There are three main ways to achieve economic empowerment of PWDs through CBR. They are as briefly discussed below.

Providing Education Opportunities

Education is a powerful tool for economic empowerment of people with disabilities. Rifkin and Pridmore (2001), support this fact when they state that, "information (education) is power; people who lack information lack power and lack choices about how to improve their lives or control what happens to them... " Through educational programmes (either formal or informal), PWDs can gain knowledge and skills needed to perform functions, tasks or carry out some socio-economic activities for personal and community development.

Education for empowerment should start from pre-school to adulthood. CBR programmes should not underestimate the importance of pre-school skills, like; speech, sign language, sorting/measuring, orientation and mobility, use of tools, daily living skills etc. taught to children at pre-school stage. By teaching such skills, we are already preparing them for future life. Early pre-vocational skills training increases self-confidence, raises self-esteem and perfection, which enhances effective task performance during future working life. In Nigeria, like many African countries, there are a limited number of inclusive schools offering special education and training in vocational skills. The few existing ones do not have appropriate curricula that provide for the special needs of PWDs. Curricula for special and vocational training schools should also take into account activities that would prepare for effective transition of PWDs from school to working life. This view was widely shared by many contributors to an e-discussion on Employment of Disabled Youths, sponsored by the World Bank. CBR programmes and relevant government services need to support PWDs in schools with necessary assistive devices, like hearing aids, talking calculators, mobility aids etc, provide learning materials/equipment, as well as encourage disability-friendly school environments (e.g., accessibility etc.) to facilitate learning.

Empowerment through education cannot be achieved only by training PWDs alone; it is also important to build capacity of the rehabilitation professionals working with them. The Indian Rehabilitation Council in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and Madhya Pradesh Bhoj Open University (MPBOU) has introduced distance education programmes in 25 prominent training institutions and 67 study centres respectively, across the country. Courses offered include; Speech Therapy, Hearing Aid and Ear Mould technology, Special Education, Vocational Counselling etc. This helps in updating and enhancing the knowledge/skills of professional rehabilitation workers, thus increasing the level of empowerment of the PWDs whom are working with (Singh 2004). Long and short term formal training are also going on in countries like Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Nigeria etc.

In Nigeria, Christoffel Blindenmission International (CBMI) runs a National Training Programme for CBR fieldworkers. This is a short-term training initiative where workshops are conducted on various rehabilitation subjects including management of economic integration programmes. An average of 8 workshops is conducted each year. Target trainees include: CBR fieldworkers, special education teachers, parents of PWDs, and government rehabilitation workers etc. This type of short-term training contributes tremendously to the economic empowerment of PWDs. However, to determine the effectiveness of these training...
CBR AS PART OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CBR needs to increase evaluation of impact of services provided by staff who benefit from trainings; especially how the negative attitudes are changed and the economic status of PWDs is improved.

At the community level, CBR can facilitate economic empowerment of PWDs, by arranging for pre-vocational training in various vocations, using relevant services within the local community preferably, under apprenticeship arrangements. An analysis of questionnaires administered in some of the CBMI supported projects engaged in vocational training in Bangalore, India, reveal that, majority of CBR Vocational Training Officers "fitted trainees into preconceived vocational training programmes that are out of date and for which there are no job opportunities " instead of involving them/their families in decision making process (Breisacher 2002). In-service training for PWDs under open employment gives them full qualification for favourable competition with able-bodied persons, and can also help them in retaining their jobs, thereby stabilising their income.

Providing Employment Opportunities

Article 23(1) of Universal Declaration of Rights by UN states that: "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions or work and to protection against unemployment" (UN, 1948). On the contrary, ILO estimates that the "unemployment rate among PWDs in the developing world is an overwhelming problem - up to 80% in some countries" (ILO, 2003). Caswell (2003), observes that: even though "there exists legislation for quota system favouring employment of PWDs, unfortunately, this legislation is either under utilized or not enforced".

Many PWDs are well educated and have brilliant ideas to contribute towards development of their communities and indeed their nation, through public service; but generally they are not allowed the opportunity to do so due to their disability. It is ridiculous for governments in Africa to think they can achieve any meaningful development in all aspects of human endeavour, without involving persons with disabilities in the planning and implementation process. If PWDs have to be involved, then they must be fully represented by way of employment in all government ministries and offices. Most governments and some NGOs in Africa do, to some extent, provide sheltered employment for PWDs. Although this arrangement caters for their special needs, it encourages social exclusion, increases stigma and denies them their right to equal employment opportunities as enjoyed by other able-bodied persons.

The private sector, which is likely to control about 50% of job opportunities in most African countries, is ignorant of capabilities and possibilities of PWDs. During an evaluation of a CBR project's activities in Benue state, Nigeria, a restaurant owner was asked if she would employ a disabled person, and her response was automatic and unmistakable, NO. Asked why, she said; "they can't do anything right; besides, they will bring bad luck to my business". Unfortunately, 80% of private business owners in this district shared her opinion! This negative attitude of the public towards PWDs is one of the biggest challenges for CBR programmes to deal with. On the other hand, PWDs on their part have to work hard to turn this picture around, through hard work and credible performance in any given job opportunity.

CBR should facilitate employment of persons with disabilities in leadership positions to enable them to advantage of such opportunities to develop themselves and use their initiatives in handling their responsibilities. Employers should also allow PWDs under employment, to join in labour unions to enable them express their views and feelings concerning general problems and issues affecting their lives. CBR programmes can encourage open employment of PWDs through creating awareness on the need for equal opportunities for PWDs, educating the public on their capabilities and encouraging DPOs to get involved in the political process, by forming pressure groups capable of influencing government policies.
Self-Directed Employment

Albright, (1993), observes that, "self directed employment is an option that is of increasing interest to people with disabilities both in economically developed and developing countries. " This could be a strong tool for economic empowerment of persons with disabilities; not only because they take the initiative, but also because they play a leading role in their structural set up and day-to-day decision making and management process. Self-directed employment includes running small business enterprises, and working in cooperatives controlled by disabled persons. Nyerere, J., the president of Tanzania, supports self-directed effort as effective tool, for empowerment and development, when he said:

"Man can only liberate himself or develop himself. He cannot be liberated or developed by another. For man makes himself. It is his ability to act deliberately, for self determined purpose, which distinguishes him from animals. The expansion of his own consciousness, and therefore of his power over himself, his environment, and his society, must therefore ultimately be what we mean by development".

Toit (1991), cites the Self-Help Association of Paraplegics, (SHAP) in Soweto, Republic of South Africa, as one of the good examples of self-directed efforts to empower, develop, and create employment opportunities for young persons with physical disabilities. SHAP operates a factory, which employs 130 disabled people working on a sub-contract basis, doing packaging and assembly work, repairing sophisticated mechanical and electronic devices, such as cameras and calculators etc. This association wins the admiration and support of government and indigenous companies in their fundraising efforts for self-support.

Another good example of self-directed effort worthy of mention is the that made by the Social Assistance and Rehabilitation for the Physically Vulnerable (SARPV) initiative in Chakoria, Bangladesh. Founded in 1989, by Mr. Shahidul, who is physically disabled, SARPV runs a Skill Development and Credit programme called, BUILD OWN SMALL ENTREPRISE PROJECT (BOSEP), to empower and support poor disabled persons in the district, who want to be successful entrepreneurs but are lacking relevant skills and funds to realise their dreams. Although Caritas-Netherlands and UN ESCAP largely fund SAPRV, its ability to integrate its activities to suit the culture and needs of the people in this area makes it original. Business skills are taught to members and loans provided to groups of disabled members after successful graduation. Members of the association are encouraged to work together with family members and other able-bodied persons in the community in carrying out respective economic activities (Alan, 1997). In Mombasa, Kenya, the APDK (Association for the Physically Disabled, Kenya) project runs a community based employment creation programme where 360 micro-enterprises have been established, of which 80% are running successfully. CBR programmes should encourage similar initiatives in other African countries, to enhance economic empowerment of PWDs.

Providing Opportunities for Financial Resources

In an attempt to empower people with disabilities economically, it is not adequate for CBR programmes to stop at "teaching them how to fish" without arming them with the necessary equipment that they need to use in "catching the fish". PWDs who have successfully graduated from vocational training and have not been able to secure wage-earning jobs need to be supported to set up workshops or suitable income generation activities (IGAs), in order to earn a living.

In Nigeria, Services for People with Disabilities gave loans to 40 persons in 2003, under its Revolving Loan Fund. Loans ranged from 1000N (7 USD) to 50,000N (370 USD). Loans are determined by the client's disability condition, nature of the business and economic situation of the PWD/family, among other requirements. PWDs whose IGAs require substantial capital are given part grant and part loan. Findings from a world survey conducted by CBMI to determine the success and failure of vocational training and livelihood programmes confirm that, PWDs supported with both grant and loans, are likely to succeed better than
those who only have access to loans (Caswell, 2003). Experience with supervising the economic integration scheme in Nigeria shows, that it does not necessarily take large sums of money to make a difference in the lives of majority of PWDs living in the rural areas. Sources of funds for support of PWDs willing to start IGAs could come from the government's Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAPs), community banks, philanthropists, local non-governmental organisations (LNGOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), members of the community, disabled peoples families etc.

Case studies of various of various economic integration projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America show, that it may be an illusion to conclude that they are successful based on records of high loan recovery rates. This is because majority of PWDs go hungry for a long time in order to meet loan repayment deadlines. Some have to literally borrow from neighbours to pay back loans! Therefore, the goal of CBR programmes in creating opportunities for PWDs to access funds for business purposes should not only be to recover loans given, but also to answer the question: what difference has credit made, on the lives of PWDs who receive them? As much as PWDs have to fulfil their loan contract agreements, they also have a right to live.

PWDs also need technical support from CBR programmes in order to succeed with their IGAs. Areas of support include; elaborate business plan, teach basic bookkeeping, monitor progress, evaluate execution process and advise on areas that need to be improved upon. PWDs should also be encouraged to cultivate the habit of saving, either with the programmes or with local community banks. This provides relief in time of any hiccup, helps in case of expansion and raises the status of PWDs (Malcolm, 1996).

In realisation of the importance of economic integration programmes for the empowerment of PWDs, and the challenges that exist in running them, CBMI recommends the training of specialist supervisors for all CBMI-supported CBR programmes. The invaluable support of such supervisors can enhance the effective management of the programmes.

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF IGAS TOWARDS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF PWDS

The ability of PWDs to earn a living for themselves, rather than depending on others for a living, is a cornerstone for their economic empowerment. It is important that PWDs have a sustained economic power, in order to meet their essential needs and contribute towards community development.

HOW TO MAKE IGAS SUSTAINABLE

- Integrate CBR economic integration activities into government poverty reduction and other related programmes
- Encourage establishment of cooperative societies through DPOs
- Increase financial support for economic integration activities through CBR
- Increase public awareness on capabilities and possibilities of PWDs
- Encourage capacity building of PWDs involved in IGAs and CBR workers in this area
- Encourage utilisation of locally existing related services e.g. community banks, vocational training centres, etc
- Encourage innovations. New ideas about IGAs can motivate local support and patronage
- Encourage monitoring, evaluation and research
- Encourage participation of the civil society organisations (CSO) in planning and implementation of government economic policies. This can be achieved through holding consultative forums, exchange of ideas at seminars etc. It is rather unfortunate that, unlike in the UK where the government holds wider consultation with CSOs on a broad range of issues, most governments in Africa look at CSOs as rivals rather than partners in development.
Sensitisation of Community and Labour Market as a Vital Tool to Achieve Economic Empowerment of PWDS

As a change agent and a key partner in community development, CBR plays a crucial role in sensitising all stakeholders concerning disability issues, the capabilities and rights of PWDS.

PWDS need to understand the nature of their disability, their limitations, potentials and possibilities. They also need to know about their rights, government policies and programmes that concern them. CBR programmes need to make it clearly known to PWDS what services are available in the community that would help improve and raise their status and existing opportunities. CBR programmes should also facilitate their accessibility and participation in available services and programmes. They should also be mobilised to form associations or groups, to enable them to advocate for their rights.

On the other hand, CBR programmes should sensitise members of the community on issues of disability, i.e., causes, nature, implications and services available, to help improve the various conditions. Members of the community should also be made to understand about the potential capabilities of PWDS by allowing them equal opportunities to participate in community activities or through apprenticeship training among other things. This helps the community to understand the nature of PWDS, accept them and allow them equal opportunities to participate in the socio-economic activities of the community.

The labour market needs to be sensitised about the potential, capabilities and possibilities of PWDS in order to reduce doubts about their performance. This can be achieved through presenting personal profiles of intelligent and hardworking PWDS, as well as challenging employers to give qualified PWDS a trial on certain tasks available. The Government's legislation concerning employment, accessibility, rights etc of PWDS need to be discussed with employers for their awareness and appropriate action.

Methods of Sensitisation

There are several ways through which CBR programmes can sensitise PWDS. Some of these ways include:

- Campaigns Workshops or meetings
- Role plays
- Stories and songs
- Role models
- Drama
- Puppets
- Radio/TV
- Group Discussions
- Printed leaflets/handbills etc.

How to Organise for Sensitisation

Effective sensitisation requires thorough planning, adequate preparation and good implementation. Involvement of PWDS, DPOs and labour unions, for example, is very strategic and important. Organisers should be mindful of the culture, education etc of the people they are about to sensitise during the planning stage; this helps in selection of method(s), language etc to be used in implementation. Steps towards organising sensitisation include:

- Choosing an appropriate topic
- Developing an appropriate strategy
- Making adequate preparations
- Implementing a strategy
- Evaluating the effect of sensitisation
CONCLUSION

Economic empowerment of PWDs is very crucial in raising their status. However, this cannot be achieved without the involvement and participation of all stakeholders: the government, members of the community, the labour market and PWDs themselves. CBR programmes need to increase sensitisation of the public on disability issues and rights of PWDs. Also, innovation and increased support for economic integration activities is necessary; as well as implementation of realistic and results-oriented plans in order to achieve successful empowerment of PWDs through CBR.

REFERENCES


