

Editorial

Experiences of CBR programmes from 2 of the largest countries in the Asian region reveal useful insights into key factors that can make a difference for successful implementation and sustainability of CBR.

Need based planning, and ensuring quick access to schemes and benefits from government helps to mobilise and motivate persons with disabilities and families. Simultaneous mobilisation and sensitisation of other key stakeholders like local government and community leaders also helps to make a difference.

Government leadership and support for the programmes is probably one of the most important key factors for sustainability. Advocacy for inclusion of CBR into local government plans and budgets; supplementing/strengthening the work of government; and utilising existing structures and systems instead of setting up parallel systems, for example in the area of education or skills training, are all important strategies for implementers to consider.

Capacity building of key stakeholders like government and persons with disabilities is increasingly understood as a key to sustainable programmes. This needs to be an on-going activity, and programme planners need to ensure 'localisation' of international concepts and terminology, for example, 'empowerment' or 'rights based approaches' for better acceptance by the local population.

Establishment and building capacity of a structure like a 'disability working committee' that has representation from government and civil society, including local self-help groups or 'disabled persons' organisations has been found to be of help. Such a structure can be of value in acting as the bridge between government and persons with disabilities; and over time it can grow into a coordinating and capacity building resource agency.

Another factor is addressing inclusive development: going beyond disability issues to address other issues of concern (health, water and sanitation, child rights for example) to the general community. Including disability issues into development agenda, and including other marginalised groups in the project activities are issues that CBR planners need to consider.

Experience from many countries has shown that capacity building of government and of persons with disabilities is the most important strategy for long term

impact and for sustainability. However, there are disadvantages of working with any governmental system, such as the varying levels of interest, commitment, knowledge and attitudes; and changes in trained personnel at different levels of government. This means additional resources need to be earmarked and allocated for an on-going, needs-based capacity building effort for effective transfer of knowledge and skills at all levels of government sectors. Such capacity building needs to be made relevant for local needs, and internalised within the government structure, if possible.

Over the last few years, the evidence base for CBR practice has been growing, with development and use of evaluation frameworks and tools, along with documentation of 'good practice' from different regions across the world. This should be encouraged, as it will help to increase the body of knowledge on CBR and enable people to learn from each other. It is also necessary to ensure that such documentation of 'good practice' is not mere description of activities; instead, it should be based on evidence to make it more valuable for other to learn from.

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