

# NOTE FOR THE PRESS



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## WE WANT TO BE HEARD AND INFLUENCE OUR OWN LIVES, DISABLED PEOPLE SAY

Community-based rehabilitation programmes assessed by users in  
three countries

*"Actually my needs are no different from those in the community," said one participant.  
"The only difference is that I am blind."*

Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) has a profoundly positive impact on self-esteem, self-reliance and social inclusion. The programmes, however, are too small and under-resourced to make a qualitative difference in the lives of more than a fraction of the disabled people in developing countries.

These are some of the conclusions of the first ever assessment of CBR programmes from the perspective of persons with disabilities. *Community-Based Rehabilitation as we have experienced it...voices of persons with disabilities* is launched today by the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Swedish Organizations of Disabled Persons International Aid Association (SHIA).

CBR seeks to achieve rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of children and adults with physical, sensorial, psychological and mental disabilities. It also aims to eliminate stigma and increase the recognition of disabled persons as resourceful members of societies. It is implemented through the combined efforts of disabled people, their families and communities and the appropriate health, education, vocational and social services.

The CBR assessment calls for increased participation of disabled persons as role models, self-advocates and employed experts in CBR programmes. According to the assessment, "...CBR programmes largely continue to regard persons with disabilities as beneficiaries and not as participants with a voice and a choice."

"We hope that this report will be used as a source of inspiration and support. It is through the participation and involvement of disabled persons in CBR programmes that their quality of life can be improved," said Dr Enrico Pupulin, Co-ordinator, Disability and Rehabilitation Team, WHO.

The limited participation in school, work and social activities experienced by disabled people is largely a result of societal barriers. The report stresses that the combined efforts of community members, policy makers and legislators are needed to improve conditions for persons with disabilities.

WHO estimates that between 7% and 10% of the world's population - almost 500 million people - experience disabilities. Approximately 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries, only 1% to 5% of whom have access to the necessary rehabilitation service.

The researchers interviewed people with disabilities in three developing countries - Ghana, Guyana and Nepal, each of which represents different approaches to CBR and organizational models.

To access the report : <http://www.who.int/ncd/disability>

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All WHO Press Releases, Fact Sheets and Features as well as other information on this subject can be obtained on Internet on the WHO home page: <http://www.who.int>