

Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Program

Integrating: Disabled and Marginalized People in Afghanistan

What is CDAP?

The Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Program (CDAP) was established in 1995 as a UNDP/UNOPS interagency initiative in Afghanistan.

- Target beneficiaries including primarily disabled persons, but also vulnerable women and children
- CDAP utilizes NGOs to implement a common Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) project model for disabled and other vulnerable people in both rural and urban areas of Afghanistan
- CDAP takes a lead role in formulating disability policy and strategy in Afghanistan through National Disability Workshops, which bring together all international and national agencies working in this field

Is Disability a Development Issue?

Yes it is. Although no national survey has been done, local surveys indicate that about 3 percent of the population of Afghanistan is disabled. In a population of 20 million this means about 700, 000 children, women and men.

War has disabled thousands, creating amputees, blindness and paralysis.

While people disabled by the war form a highly visible proportion of the disabled population, an equally significant but much less visible group are those with sensory and multiple impairments.

Many disabled people are hidden from view, especially disabled women and children, trapped by their culture and lack of services within very narrow confines at home.

While 3 percent are directly disabled, if the disabled person was the main breadwinner in the family, the whole family is adversely affected. Thus the actual proportion of the population affected by the disabled is probably higher than 10 percent.

What is CBR?

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is a strategy within community development which aims to ensure that disabled people can:

- Maximize their physical and mental abilities
- Have access to regular services and opportunities
- Achieve full integration within their communities

The strategy is jointly promoted by UNDP, WHO, ILO, and UNESCO.

CBR sees disability as a rights issue, not an individual medical problem. It is a comprehensive, practical approach to achieving the rights of disabled people through, for example, prevention and rehabilitation in primary health care activities, mainstreaming of disabled children in ordinary schools, and provision of economic activities for disabled adults.

CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of:

- Disabled people themselves
- Their families and communities
- The appropriate health, education, vocational and social services

What does ‘community based’ mean in CDAP’s program?

- CDAP encourages the formation of local committees who take responsibility for disability and related issues in their own area
- These committees are typically composed of health workers, school teachers, parents of disabled children, disabled people themselves, as well as local shura members
- Both field workers and local committees recruit volunteers at the village level who raise local consciousness, provide one-to-one skill training and home-based training
- In addition, disabled people’s organizations (DPOs) are encouraged and supported at the national, regional and district level
- There are currently more than 800 volunteers in the program, 270 local committees and 100 disabled people’s organizations at the local level

Disability committees and DPOs at the local level provide an opportunity for people with social concerns to find a voice and make significant contribution to community affairs. These committees discuss a range of social problems affecting people in the village, and do not confine themselves to disability issues.

CDAP and women’s participation

- CDAP is committed to ensuring the full participation of women in the program, as beneficiaries, as workers and as decision makers
- In 1998 approximately one third of the beneficiaries were women, and one quarter of the field workers were also women
- Female CBR committees exist in all geographical regions of the program
- Home-based training by both male and female field workers and volunteers provides an ideal opportunity to reach women who are confined to the home by culture and by disability
- Being trained as a field worker or physiotherapist provides women with valuable opportunities for adult education, which are rare in rural areas

Within the framework of the UNDP P.E.A.C.E. Initiative, CDAP has responsibility for vulnerable groups other than disabled people, especially women and children.

Its main objective is the fuller integration in community life for marginalized women and children, through advocacy of their needs and rights.

Local communities set up to focus on disabled people seek a wider role in addressing the needs of all vulnerable people in their communities. Disability is therefore used as an entry point for concerned discussion and action around marginalized people at the village level within the context of a community development approach.

Typical activities include:

- Training women in productive enterprises
- Establishing women's for a for collective action
- Stimulating the formulation of women's committees at village level to take responsibility for disabled and other marginalized people

Coordination and Common Programming

As a U.N. program, CDAP has an important role in coordinating action and policy on disability at a national level in Afghanistan. It organizes regular National Workshops on Disability which focus on achieving consensus among all the agencies involved on:

- Building a common vision on disability in Afghanistan
- Standardizing orthopedic technology and training
- Developing a common curriculum for physiotherapists
- Agreeing policy and strategy on employment, education and advocacy

Through these workshops it has utilized 30 agencies which have either a specialized interest in disability or a general desire to include disabled people in their programs. A particularly significant achievement is the agreement to standardize orthopedic technology throughout the 13 orthopedic workshops that are run by different agencies in Afghanistan.

Who does CDAP work with?

CDAP in an interagency program combining efforts of a number of NGOs and U.N. agencies. It has at present three implementing-partner NGOs operating in six regions of the country:

- The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA)
- Coordination for Humanitarian Assistance (CHA)
- Guardians

Other Collaborating NGOs:

- Radda Barnen supplies training and advice for CDAP staff in CBR and the needs and rights of disabled children
- Sandy Gall's Association for Afghanistan (SGAA) and International Assistance Mission (IAM) provide training for physiotherapists
- SERVE provides resources and training for work with deaf and blind people

Other U.N. agencies provide training and expert advice as required in:

- Inclusive Education (UNESCO)
- Employment Support, vulnerable women and children (ILO)
- CBR, Physiotherapy and Orthopedics (WHO)

CDAP's current program is funded by UNDP, the donor governments, including Sweden, Norway and Canada.

What are CDAP's objectives?

1. Training local field workers and communities in basic rehabilitation skills
2. Providing specialized rehabilitation services
3. Promoting local community involvement and management
4. Advocating for disabled persons' rights
5. Building national capacity and strategy in rehabilitation
6. Addressing the socioeconomic integration of vulnerable groups

Its activities include:

- Employment support through training and micro-credit
- Integration in schools
- Training in communication skills for deaf and blind people
- Home-based training in daily living skills
- Physiotherapy
- Orthopedic workshops
- Leading the formulation of a national strategy on disability

Contact information

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