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| Project number | 39907139 |
| Title | FRIDSRO CBR |

Countries

SriLanka

Summary

1. INTRODUCTION

The FRIDSRO CBR Programme began in 1994 as part of FRIDSRO organisation in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

CBR is an approach which rejects the notion of disability as a purely medical condition and something that needs 'curing'; acknowledges that people with disabilities in economically poor communities are the most negatively affected by disability and believes that community members can be trained how to respond appropriately to both physical and self esteem needs for inclusion of people with disability

The programme has been supported by PMU Interlife (PMU) for three cycles.

The aims of the evaluation were to gain a deeper understanding of how and to what extent the project and its administration has influenced and added to the realization of the National CBR. In focusing on FRIDSRO's approach to empowerment through CBR, the evaluation was directed to find out:

The interaction of the *components* of the project and its contribution to the *empowerment* of people with disabilities and their families, and the impact that the projects has had on raising *awareness* and *effectiveness* of officials of the public sector and volunteers of the community: regarding forms, functionality and approach.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

The methodology was participatory and consisted of: a desk review; the circulation of initial reflective questions to the FRIDSRO CBR Team, Edsbyn Church Mission Representative and the PMU Desk Officer as a way of allowing a level of self guided assessment; and a field visit to Sri Lanka where two hundred people made input into the evaluation, either through small group discussions which were then shared at the plenaries of four seminar workshops, as well as conversations during site visits, individual interviews and smaller focus group discussions. An individual interview with a Sri Lankan CBR expert and Convenor of the National CBR Resource Group was also held.

3. THE ELEMENTS OF FRIDSRO'S CBR MODEL

FRIDSRO's CBR Model is premised on the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities through a realization of their rights and an exercise of their responsibilities. At its heart is a belief that it is the quality of relationship between the person with a disability and their surrounding society that determines the extent of the disability. Therefore FRIDSRO's model encompasses intervention at many levels of society in order to make impact on the relationships that make up a 'disability': individual, family, village, school, religious body, state services and governance. While its reach includes all sectors of society, its primary emphasis is on strengthening civil society. Although FRIDSRO's CBR Model forges links with state services and local business through training them in how to serve and work with people with disabilities in a more inclusive and empowering way, it is the strength of the organisation of community volunteers and peer groups and village committees that unlocks the potential for effective service delivery and economic integration to alleviate poverty.

The systemic intervention includes the following elements:

- Formation and training of Community Volunteer groups
- Initial contact with the individual child or adult who has a disability, by the community volunteer
- Home visits to assess what is needed and to spend time counseling the individual and the family through difficulties they may be experiencing and

showing the individual and family positive ways of responding to the physical care and emotional needs that must be met and where they “ *Tend to the person – wash and bathe them and feed them if necessary, if they are found in neglectful conditions and talk to the person and family about how life can be full and positive for a person with disabilities and how they can take responsibility for themselves and are able to change their conditions*”

- Referrals of families to any existing medical, social, or educational and vocational training resources there may be
- Linkage of people with disabilities and their families to others in the community
 - Formation of Parents Groups
 - Formation of Self Help ‘Strength to Strength’ *sameka* Groups
- Establishment of local CBR Resource Groups made up of health, social services, education and NGO’s as well as those with and without disabilities interested in supporting CBR
- Awareness raising and training of health workers, teachers and social service officers at district and provincial level in the policy framework, situation and needs of people with disabilities
- Leadership Development Training with people with disabilities who have formed into Peer Groups
 - Skill Technical Training for people with disabilities
- Leadership Development Training with Village Leadership Committee members
- Advising District and Provincial Office Bearers on the implementation of the National Policy
 - Contributing to National CBR Policy
- Provision of mid –level rehabilitation services (eg. physiotherapy, psychotherapy and speech therapy)
- Lecturing on Disability Studies Programme at Colombo University.

In the above format, the FRIDSRO CBR model has been in operation in all districts in Kandy, for the past five years.

4. THE REACH AND DEPTH OF THE FRIDSRO CBR PROGRAMME

In total, over the past three years, FRIDSRO’s CBR Programme records of all the activities implemented within its model described above show that it has had direct contact with twenty five thousand people mainly in the Kandy district but also with those outside in other Provinces and at national level.

Of those twenty five thousand, a minimum of sixteen thousand are people who have disabilities.

An analysis of the statistics revealed that the training of Community Leaders , the mobilization of Community Volunteers and the formation of Peer Groups of People with Disabilities and Parents of Children with Disabilities were the main activities carried out in the programme.

Therefore, the focus of FRIDSRO’s attention has been civil society, in particular grassroots rural communities.

The data also shows that where FRIDSRO is increasingly intervening in government service delivery, this is mostly at divisional level where the district field officers work most closely with community committees. In other words, it is at the level where government interacts most closely with the people and occurs at the same time as FRIDSRO activities are mobilizing large numbers of civil society members with disability at a grassroots level.

5. Key Findings

5.1 Impact

FRIDSRO's initiative has transformed a previously disabled relationship that existed. It has facilitated this transformation primarily at community level, between the poorest of the poor with the result that society as a whole is benefiting

The FRIDSRO CBR model has built the 'ability' of individuals, families, schools and state departments to 'respond' (response + ability = responsibility!) to the need to transform the disabled relationship that existed between those with a functional limitation and those whose attitudes disable society from developing to its full potential (this is attested to by the fact that in the Kandy area the village leadership committees have both disabled and non-disabled members, in the absence of official quota's and that there are a number of the village committees headed by a person with disabilities. Similarly, a number of the self help groups have mixed membership and their focus is on income generation and not only on meeting the challenges of disability).

With all the results identified in the body of this evaluation report (viz the changes in people's lives as a result of the programme, of which many accounts were heard and evidence was seen during the course of the field trip), it is clear that the FRIDSRO CBR Programme has significantly influenced and added to the realization of the National CBR in the following key respects: the development of a tried and tested multi-sectoral, grassroots oriented CBR model; the establishment of enabling community conditions for the roll out of national CBR; and finally, a considerable cadre of trained and experienced people with disabilities and without to undertake holistic capacity building of district field officers for CBR.

The FRIDSRO CBR Programme is clearly a highly valued partner to the state in its efforts to meet the needs of people with disabilities in poor communities. It was reported during the evaluation that that its firmness about its purpose and the confidence about its experience, coupled with a flexibility to collaborate makes it a valuable, distinctive partner. To be able to build this quality of engagement with the State in a politically contested society such as Sri Lanka, is no mean feat and should be celebrated.

The pilot phase of FRIDSRO's CBR intervention is over. The intervention has become a model of interest to others, particularly the Sri Lankan State where this model is on its way to becoming institutionalised into standard government fieldwork practice when working with PWD - both adults and children.

The project has therefore indeed raised awareness and the effectiveness of public officials and community volunteers.

5.2 Upscaling

Today FRIDSRO is a member of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and sits on the Community Based Rehabilitation National Resource Group (NRG) convened by Dr Padmani Mendes, where FRIDSRO's unique role is to advise the government about how to effectively undertake CBR at a grassroots level, based on its intensive experience of implementation in Kandy. The task of the NRG is to advise government on how to roll CBR out across the nation and in this regard the FRIDSRO CBR Programme has now been asked by the government to be the leading capacity building provider and technical support in the roll out of CBR through each District Office to every rural community in the nation.

Through its planned involvement in the forthcoming roll out of a National CBR Programme, crafted in no small measure by its own input, FRIDSRO CBR now has the opportunity to participate in realizing its broader vision – that of making a difference in the lives of each grassroots person with disabilities in Sri Lanka. It is only the State that has the resources to meaningfully scale up social improvement interventions – and the authority to improve its own service delivery. By participating in the CBR training of all

district officers across Sri Lanka, the FRIDSRO approach to CBR has a strong possibility of being institutionalized in Sri Lankan society. After all, mainstreaming of social change is every civil society activist's dream!

It will be challenging for the FRIDSRO CBR Programme to hold on to the community based nature of its approach. It is the qualities within the FRIDSRO approach that have made CBR's roots so strong amongst people with disabilities and their communities. To date, within the FRIDSRO CBR much of the work is undertaken by community volunteers. The work has a 'vocational' element. The word 'vocation' is defined as "the work...for which one has a special fitness...a calling'. State employees may regard their work as 'a job' with defined parameters. If the FRIDSRO involvement can awaken that capacity, the roll out will have a chance of a deeper impact. It is recognized at a National Resource Groups level that 'the state has the quantities and FRIDSRO CBR has the qualities'.

Furthermore, if FRIDSRO CBR Programme could keep its eye and main involvement in the roll out on strengthening the ability of people with disabilities to organize themselves then the pivot around which the current CBR moves, ie. people's power, will be maintained and the roll out of CBR will be prevented from becoming a pre-ordained package that is delivered and imposed on local communities.

5.3 Disabled People's Organisations

It is clear in practice that people's organisation lies at the heart of the FRIDSRO model and that to a large extent the implementation of FRIDSRO's CBR programme activities are highly represented by people with disabilities, as evidenced by the presence of people with disabilities on the local and national CBR resource groups. It is clear that FRIDSRO is not providing leadership to the communities – the Village Leadership Committees and Peer Group Leaders are doing this.

However, what is not as evident is the leadership of people with disabilities in determining the direction of the programme now that it is in its fifteenth year of operation and the programme has built an extensive layer of leaders with disabilities.

Similarly, the opportunity to strengthen grassroots leadership in CBR through the national roll out is not all that visible in the current design of how FRIDSRO CBR will relate to the national rollout.

5.4 Replicability

CBR is not FRIDSRO's model. FRIDSRO's model is its approach to CBR. FRIDSRO's CBR programme is being used as a teaching model in a number of tertiary institutions internationally which suggests that social development practitioners in other countries find the approach has something to offer in their context. Over the past three years ninety students from other countries in the Asia-Pacific region have come to FRIDSRO's Development Centre as part of their professional studies.

There is little doubt that Sri Lanka's strong spirit of volunteerism encouraged by the State has been an enabling factor in the significant reach of this programme, but it is not the only influential factor. In fact, although volunteerism is a common value in Sri Lanka, the programme has had to work within the complexities of a number of diverse religious leadership in each community.

The diverse components of the model, particularly the mobilization of people with disabilities, the integrated capacity enhancement model and the systemic relationships which FRIDSRO's approach to CBR has grown are strong contributing factors to the success of the model. Those features could be replicated in other contexts, although of

course adapted.

5.6 The Management and Administration of the FRIDSRO CBR Programme
The staff of the FRIDSRO team is relatively small for the huge reach that the programme has.

It appears that strategic leadership is shared between the Country Director and the Director. At this level, leadership is democratic and consultative which marks a significant transition from the understandable history of family involvement in the leadership of FRIDSRO since it was founded by a family and there was a high degree of trust accorded to the leader on that basis. The past three years have seen a movement towards a more formally defined leadership away from the informality and personalized decisionmaking that characterizes family led enterprises.

It is also clear that project staff and the members of the resource group are able to use their creativity in responding to the work of the programme in the field with the many stakeholders of CBR. In its fieldwork practice therefore, FRIDSRO appears to spread ownership and leadership of the implementation of the programme. However, the same degree of democratic decision making was not that evident at the level of staff and management.

Recommendations *In order to ensure a strengthening of people with disabilities and community focus within the national roll out, the FRIDSRO CBR Programme could consider the following:*

- Conducting community mobilization and leadership training for people with disabilities and establish local CBR resource groups prior to training district officers, or at least simultaneously
- For the first two stages of rollout to train together with already trained community volunteers and disabled peoples' leaders, and to progressively withdraw thereafter
- To establish a disabled people's reference group (of elected representatives, preferably) to guide FRIDSRO's CBR programme involvement in the roll out
- To include community exchange visits as part of the national roll out

To ensure the strengthening of horizontal civil society relationships that can enhance the sustainability of FRIDSRO's CBR approach

- FRIDSRO should invite increased participation of other NGO's and churches in Sri Lanka in the island-wide roll out of CBR
- FRIDSRO should monitor the extent to which its relationship with the State is either enabling or inhibiting its practice as a primarily civil society organisation.

To strengthen the enabling conditions worldwide for holistic CBR

FRIDSRO should continue growing its relationship with the international CBR movement and could explore ways in which it could connect the CBR work in other countries with its own work.

To ensure continued innovation and relevance of the FRIDSRO CBR Team and practice, the team should consider the following:

If the next phase of the Programme is to primarily upscale for the mainstreaming CBR – a logical choice given the successful reach and depth of the model as we have seen, then what of FRIDSRO's CBR focus in Kandy? Here, the CBR Programme could go about doing things as it has always done, or begin to withdraw from some activities in order to allow local DPO leadership to come up to sustain the CBR successes in Kandy, and could use that opportunity to focus on empowering a particular group. Here, the team could consider formulating some questions as to what it wants to learn about in this next phase – could the team develop a 'common line of inquiry' beyond just implementing the quantities called for by the government - perhaps formulating a project around

understanding the particular needs and strengths of women with disabilities, those without and fostering connection between these two groups of women? FRIDSRO in Kandy could continue to see itself as a learning centre and continue to test such new innovations in the field of CBR.

If it wishes to strengthen its own learning ability and therefore its monitoring and evaluating and innovation capacity, the FRIDSRO CBR team could think about how to more meaningfully analyse all its diligently captured data.

To continue to provide conscious change management leadership that can build in the roots of organizational sustainability beyond its present members, the Board and Directors should consider ways of slowly opening up decision making processes to the rest of the staff.

To further enable the development of democratic leadership at FRIDSRO the composition of FRIDSRO's board should be explored with a view to strengthening the presence of Sri Lankans.

FRIDSRO should consider opening the position of fieldworker specifically to someone with a disability

To celebrate its Work and as a reflection exercise, FRIDSRO CBR should write a little book about how the model developed, what it is all about now and the success that has been achieved. This could be a creative exercise for the FRIDSRO CBR Team and people with disabilities who have been touched by and who have shaped CBR in Kandy to author their experiences and share them for the inspiration of others.

FRIDSRO should continue its close relationship with the mission unit of Edsbyn Church. This is clearly a practical and resourceful help to FRIDSRO as a whole, particularly in the form of the high quality media produced by Edsbyn that communicates the work and message of FRIDSRO. To add more value, Edsbyn church governance perhaps could support FRIDSRO with thinking through how to manage its leadership transition in a sustainable way, and to strengthen responsible democratic leadership within the programme and the organisation.

Edsbyn should consider the resource implications for the nature of its future support to FRIDSRO in light of the prospective island-wide roll out of CBR.