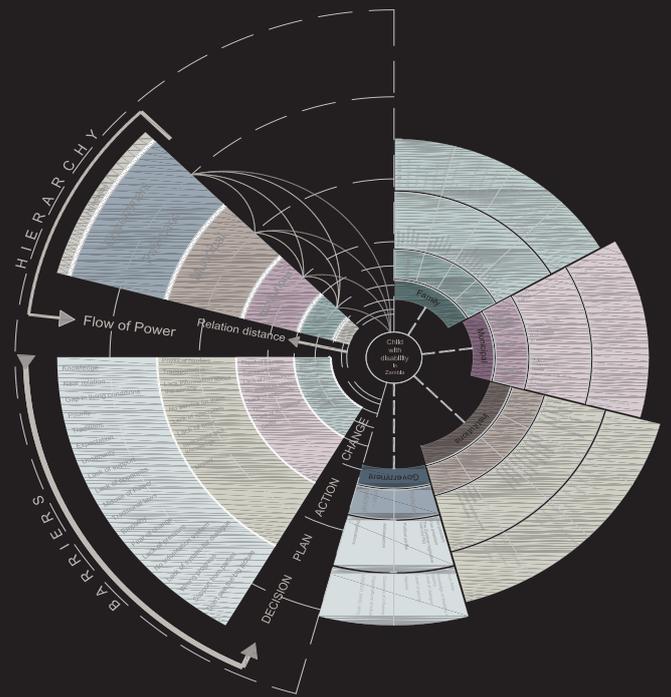


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Customized Aid for Disabled Children



Terese Charlotte
Aarland

Disability and Poverty

In 2001 the 192 the United Nation members together with several international organizations recognized the need to act more efficiently to fight poverty in development countries. They agreed to achieve The Development Millennium Goals. The goals derived from the Millennium declaration from 2000 at the Millennium Summit meeting (United Nations, 2008). The MDG's got criticized from various organizations around the world. The criticism was directed to the lack of inclusion of the people with disabilities. They argued that it will be impossible to achieve the millenium goals by 2015 without including the most vulnerable group among the poor. The former world bank president stated, "Unless disabled people are brought into the development mainstream, it will be impossible to cut poverty in half by 2015 or to give every girl and boy the chance to achieve a primary education...." (World Bank, 2009)

There is a strong link between poverty and disability. Are you disabled you are likely to be living in poverty, are you poor you are likely to develop an impairment. Disabled people are among the poorest people in the world. In comparison to the non disabled people they have less chance to escape poverty. Due to social -, economic -and political factors they are being isolated and stigmatized. Usually they are being perceived as a burden – useless and incapable. Without access to health services and education their situation is a one way struggle to survive, both for them and their family. They are being excluded from mainstream development whereas they fall out of information flow and decision making. Usually they have no authority, not even over their own life - decisions are made for them. They are likely to lack educational and vocational training and have no chance and resources to obtain their basic needs. The lack of health care and therapy leads to aggravation of their conditions. The poorest people probably have low or none educational background. They are therefore in risk of developing impairments as a cause of malnutrition, bad working conditions and the lack of medical care. Accordingly, disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty.

Disabled persons are estimated to comprise one of every sixth in the developing countries.

- 98% of the children with disabilities are not attending school.
 - 98% of the disabled does not have access to rehabilitation and basic services.
 - 80% of the people with disabilities are unemployed.
- (Disability world, 2003)

Disabled people are frequently attributed lower status and value compared to non – disabled people. Seen as a burden and useless, they get isolated. There are several barriers in a society that cause the problematic situation for disabled people. Children not able to eat or drink at school because of the accessibility to the lavatory, this is an example of the difficulties the children are facing.

Main barriers causing isolation can be:

- Environmental and accessbarriers
 - Legal and Institutional barriers
 - Attitudinal barriers
- (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, 2002)



Image: 1

Innocent was isolated in a hut for 11 years before Sakauntan Association eventually made his family understand that he had the same rights as everybody else. (www.add.org.uk)

Children and Disability

An especially vulnerable group is children with disabilities. Lack of health care, injuries and illnesses can lead to lasting disabilities. While existing disabilities deteriorate, or develop into other disabilities. Studies indicate that there are approximately 50% of the 120 million children not attending school have a disability. Children with disabilities are very often seen as a burden to the family and it is very common that they end up as street children. This group of disabled children, is unfortunately overrepresented among children exposed to violence and sexual abuse (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, 2002)

The Family members

It is crucial to investigate the living condition in the household in order to optimize the living conditions for disabled children. Both as a act to prevent the children to be institutionalized by giving the household and its members the necessary support to live overcome barriers. This crucial point was stressed by SINTEF's scientist staff through the example of a mother with a child with mobility impairment. She had herself developed a back – and hip impairment as a result of carrying her disabled child around, while performing her daily activities. Now her child had grown and become too heavy for her and she was now forced to leave her child at home in isolation.

Sustainability – aid and development

Norwegian aid was in 2007 about 20 billion Norwegian NOK. This is a lot of money but if we distribute them on the people that are in the greatest need, the Norwegian aid budget gives each of them only 5øre a day. The aid is helping but as concluded in norad's evaluation report it is functioning but not good enough (Norad, 2009) This statement indicate that the aid given needs to be strategically planned with a sustainable in order to achieve permanente change and development for the poorest nations. Very often donation is given, but they are done for the people and not with them. The giver nations should focus on aid which encourages the nation to carry out the projects themselves, which result in independent development in its own nature.

The people that fully know and understand the situation is the people of the nation themselves, and they should be the leading source, while the contributing countries should only assist the implementation.

Today the focus on long term aims for aid and development is being strived for. There are several exaples of aid and donation that have been done in vain or only provided an effect for a short periode of time. An example is the tendency to donate equipment. Most likely it is a product made in the industrial country, not fully adapted to the need of the person to using it. This is as a result of the lack of medical examination in order to evaluate individual needs. As a result the assistive devices are not adapted to the specific needs of the person using it. The disabled are often being devided into groups according to their diagnoses and imapirment. This is often the root to the wrong equipment donated, potentially resulting in more harm than help. The equipment donated will require maintnance. The receiver country often lack the knowledge of the product and impairant, and they do not have available technical equipment to maintain it.

Werner (1998) point out this fact in a story about four different women in Bangladesh, Mexico, Egypt and the Philippines, all four was diagnosed with spinal cord injury.

It was donated wheelchairs to the four women, wheelchair made in - and for developed countries. The result was that all four women stopped using the wheelchairs for different reasons. The wheelchair prevented the Bangladeshi women in participating in the cooking and eating situation with her family, the Mexican women could not use it in the rough trials where she lived, the Egyptian women could not use it in the sandy condition in the desert, for the Philippine women it was a barrier when entering doorways of shacks in squatter towns (Werner, 1998). This story demonstrates the need for mapping of the diagnoses and the environment of the receiver. People have different needs, despite their common label on the impairment. Several people with the same diagnose and living in the same environment might have very different needs of therapy and equipment. The combination of their impairment and the environment they live in must be analysed specific for each individual to achieve maximal effect.

United Nations and National authorities emphasize the lack of quality data as one of the main barrieres towards the developpe of policies and improve the living conditions among the disabled (SINTEF, 2009)

A challange for smaller specific projects is to coordinate the range of activities with other efforts and plans for the same target group in order to prevent them to become isolated episodes.

These projects must be anchored into local struc tures and into governmental responsibility. (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, 2002).

One project concept that demonstrates the benefit of a more sustainable method is the concept is structured by training people with disabilities to assist other people with disabilities. The project is designed to provide for services for maintnance, repair and adaptation of assistive devices for people with mobility difficulties (LOREWO, 2005). This project provide for local driving forces in the whole process, from mapping of local resources to needs of the individuals. It provide for employment and training for people with disabilities.

Lesson learned; from a Cultural and historical aspects of the donor country

Being the donor country our way of thinking and solve proplems are anchored in a culture and history which differ from the developing country receiving the aid. This is a strong argument for the crucial aspect of assisting the project through teamwork and not for them. Our history can be valuable as cues of which "buttons to press" to achieve change. Norway share the positive development with several other nations. They have gone from institutionalization of disabled towards a focus that all disabled should have equal rights. Throughout this transformation the disabled have had the chance to be educated, social active and a driving force for their own matter. The forming of organisations, which advocates for their rights, has been crucial for the change in their living conditions. After the Second World War the concepts of integration and normalization was being strived for. During the 60's a new notion appeared, which pointed out the relation of the perceived experience for the individual and the limitations built around them in the society, both on a physically and a mental level. In 1982 the term handicap was defined. It was then understood as the relationship between a person's disability and his/her environment. Unfortunately there has not been the same change in the development countries (United Nations, Enable, 2006)

We may say that we have an ideal structure in comparison to others when it comes to disabled peoples living conditions and rights. It is important to measure the sucessfullness according to history. Till this point there have been made a lot of mistakes on the way of acheiving maximal equity among handicapped and non – handicapped and still it is a lot of effort left to get there. An exaple is from the periode when mental disabled people where isolated and institutionalized as a result of lack of knowledge and policies in the Norwegian system. From this period we find stories of children being isolated and neglected as a result of none existing policies and knowldge.

Today the Norwegian system has both strengths and weaknesses, and still issues to address to achieve equality among disabled people. What is seen to be one of the major mistakes through history is the tendency to see beyond each individual and instead categorize people into groups when trying to adapt a support system.

In our attempt to "save" the developing countries from poverty and fight for for equity for the disabled people it is important to look at our own mistake and learn. On the other hand we must be careful to not try to copy our own system and procedures and paste them into the developing countries.

