

PROCEEDINGS

OF

**THE 7th ANNUAL BAMENDA CONFERENCE ON
DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION**

Theme:

'Sharing Our Stories To Create An Inclusive Community'



Cameroon Baptist Convention Conference Hall

6th – 7th December 2012

Introduction to the 2012 Bamenda Conference Proceedings

We are pleased to inform you that the 7th Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation once again took place on December 6 and 7th 2013, This year, it was held at the Main Meeting Hall of the Cameroon Baptist Convention, Nkwen, Bamenda.

The theme this year was “*Sharing Our Stories to Create Inclusive Communities*”– and many important stories were shared. This document is a representation of the stories presented at this 7th Conference. We hope it captures the important points of what happened during these two exciting days of interactive sessions.

We especially extend a big **Thank You** to all of the presenters and participants for your sacrifices, preparations, and many contributions. We hope you learned something during these two days that will enable you to continue to be the candle in the dark where ever you are and to share your light with others. We hope that the stories you heard are still echoing in your lives. For those of you who were not able to attend, this document will give you a taste of how much ground was covered in this time.

This document contains the keynote address, the presentations, information about key activities, a summary of the evaluation by participants and the lessons learned, some great pictures, and ideas about how to move forward.

We look forward to seeing you all at the next editions of the Conference in late 2013.

Sincerely,

The conference planning team

Bamenda Coordinating Centre for Studies in Disability and Rehabilitation

PROGRAM OF CONFERENCE

Thursday December 6th 2012	
8:00 to 9:00	Registration and Breakfast
9 00 to 9:15	Welcome, Prayer –MC Acheinegeh Ruth
9:15 to 9:25	Importance of story; learning from each other. Ngobesing Suh Romanus
9:30 to 10:45	Panel 1: DPOs
10:45 to 11:00	Break – Music
11:00 to 12:00	Panel 2 Rehabilitation Providers Moderator - Mr. Mukong
12:00 to 13:00	Lunch
13:00 to 14:00	Panel 3 Organizations: BCCSDR, SEEPD, SENTTI Moderator – Ngang Emmanuel
14:00 to 15:00	Panel 4 Government Services: Social Affairs, Women’s Empowerment , Sports and Physical Education Moderator – Mr. Mukong
15: 00 to 15:30	Wrap-up and short evaluation Day 1
Friday December 7 2012	
7:30 to 8:30	Registration and Breakfast
8:30 to 8:35	Welcome – MC Ruth
8:35 to 9:00	Welcome Song – DIWEREM Choral Group, Bafut and Festus Wara, Bamenda
9:00 to 9:15	Introduction – Lynn
9:15 to 9:30	Remarks from His Excellency, M. Laramée, Canadian High Commissioner to Cameroon with Response from Nyingcho Samuel
9:45 to 10:00	Songs - DIWEREM Choral Group, Bafut and Festus Wara, Bamenda
10:00 to 10:30	Presentation 1: The Triple Pains – Disability, HIV/AIDS and Poverty: Implications for Food Security Issues and the Attainment of NDGs in Cameroon Ntangsi Max Memfih, Agricultural Economist and Senior Lecturer, University of Buea.
10:30 to 11:00	Presentation 2: Developing Sport for Persons with Disabilities to Create an Inclusive Community, Lukong Evelyn Shulika, (Special Educator) Resource Room for the Visually Impaired, SAJOCAM Mambu Bafut.
11:00 to 11:30	Networking and Refreshment Break
11:30 to 12:00	Presentation 3: What world lies beyond the social: Rethinking disability in the South, Dr. Alfred Ndi, ENS, Bambili University of Bamenda
12:00 to 12:30	Presentation 4: Disability Welfare Rehabilitation Movement –DIWEREM: A New Voice in Bafut. Wanchia John Ngwa and Diodienne Nfobusi
12:30 to 13:00	Presentation 5: a)Knowing the economic value of the Cameroonian child, Tanwie Hanson and b) Microfinance and Persons with visual Impairment, Mbimenang David Ntawen and Tancho Fidel, Hope Social Union Bamenda
13:00 to 13:30	Lunch Break
13: 30 to 13:40	Presentation 6: Disability and press coverage in Cameroon: a personal perspective. Martin Jumbam, Read by Franco Ekeme
13:40 to 14:15	Reflections and the stories from this conference – What have we learned? Small groups
14:15 to 14:30	Large group discussion MC and Anjonga Emmanuel
14:30 to 14:45	Final evaluation, Anjonga Emmanuel
14:45	Closing Remarks and Prayer - Lynn and Julius

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANAC	National Association of the Blind in Cameroon
BCCSDR	Bamenda Coordinating Centre for Studies in Disability and Rehabilitation
CBC	Cameroon Baptist Convention
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CEFED	Centre for Empowerment of Females with Disabilities
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DIWEREM	Disability Welfare Rehabilitation Movement
DPOs	Disabled Person's Organizations
ELECAM	Elections Cameroon
FENASCO	National School Games
FLWDs	Females Living With Disabilities
GESP	Growth and Employment Strategic Paper
HIV and AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus and Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
IGA	Income generation Activities
MBOSCUDA	Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs
MINFOF	Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family
MINSANTE	Ministry of Public Health
MINSPTS	Ministry of Sports and Physical Education
NDC	National Disability Card
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisation
PLWDs	People Living With Disabilities
RTAs	Road Traffic Accidents
SEEPD	Socio Economic Empowerment of People with Disabilities
SENTTI	Special Education Needs Teacher Training Institute
UN	United Nations
VCTs	Voluntary Counseling and Treatment

DAY 1 - 6th December 2012

The conference started by 7:30am with the registration of participants/delegates and breakfast. Activities proper kicked off by 9:15am by the moderator, Mme Ruth Acheinegeh who welcomed all the participants and delegates to the conference and reminded all about the theme: *'Sharing our stories to create an Inclusive Community'*. She thanked all those who have honored the invitation by shelving other activities to attend the conference. The opening prayers were led by Sis Celestine of SAJOCAH.

Highlights of the day included a presentation and 04 panel discussions. The panelists included DPOs – The Coordinating Unit of Associations of Persons with Disabilities, KEAFOH of Kumbo, and Solidarity Disabled Persons of Ndu; Rehabilitation Providers – CEFED of Santa and SAJOCAH of Bafut; Organizations – BCCSDR, SEEPD, SENTI, MBOSCUDA and Family Life of Bishop's House; and Government Services – MINAS, MINSPTS and MINFOF. The discussions centered on their activities, successes and challenges. The panel discussions ended with some remarks, concerns and conclusions.



Presentation 1:

The first presentation was delivered by Dr Ngobesing Suh Romanus. His paper had as theme: 'Importance of storytelling; learning from each other'. He said story telling was as old as the history of man. It is a teaching tool that could be used to teach ethics, norms, and discipline. It was the main teaching tool used by Jesus while on earth. He demonstrated that, It could also be used to socialize, for humour, to breach cultural divide. He went further to let everyone know that everyone has a story as *life itself is a story*. He concluded by saying that, some of our stories could be difficult and harsh but drawing inspiration from Columbus, we should all be strong, have faith, and should not give up.

The table below gives the highlights which emanated from the panel discussions.

Name	Activities, Sources of Income	Successes	Challenges	Concerns, Remarks & Conclusion
DPOs				
CUAPWD Coordinating Unit of Association of Persons with Disabilities	-coordination of activities of the DPOs	-working towards having a National Inclusive platform -Advocate for Cameroon to ratify the UN convention on the alienable Rights of the People Living With Disabilities. -Organization working with disabled person to include them in the design and implementation of projects involving the disabled		CONCERNS -What is being done for the visually impaired to register and vote? ELECAM will provide braille and those who cannot use the braille will vote by proxy. -What steps are being taken to re- instate the field workers? -Inclusion should be fueled and everyone should be given an equal opportunity. -Parents don't take their responsibilities- they abandon their children at the rehabilitation centers
KEAFOH- Association of Persons with Disabilities – Kumbo Central.		-18 children have been enrolled in various secondary schools. - 4 hearing/speech impaired children have been granted scholarship to study at Mbingo by the Kumbo Council. -Received tins of oil worth 435.000frs from the Kumbo Council. -2 members have received tricycles from CBC and MINAS. -15 members have received financial assistance from the Kumbo Council	-Blackmailing, greed, inter- personal conflict. -Late compilation of academic documents for children by parents -Inadequate management skills by members	-There is high level of low self esteem of PLWDs CONCLUDING REMARKS In conclusion, DPOs should make efforts to form satellite coordinating units at the Divisional and Sub divisional levels to better meet the goals of the platform and to be included and participate in the development process in their communities. DPOs such get

Name	Activities, Sources of Income	Successes	Challenges	Concerns, Remarks & Conclusion
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Realization of 42,325frs from a thanksgiving ceremony at Kumbo cathedral. -16 members benefited from a WINEEDCAM loan worth 560,000frs. -Received 30,000frs through appeal letter to the SDO, Bui. -Participated in Arts and Craft exhibition. -The association is represented at ELECAM. -Organization of workshops in collaboration with SEEPD -All members are bona fide members of Mutual health fund. 		<p>more involved in sustainable income generation activities and such activities cannot be operated in isolation. PLWDs are not asking for favour or pity but for Rights and Apathy. Giving is a moral obligation.</p>
Solidarity Disabled Persons in Ndu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sensitization of persons with disabilities on the importance of National Identity and National Disability Cards -Awareness raising on the dangers of HIV and AIDS and importance of education of children with disabilities. -Participation in national and international public celebrations – World Day for the disabled, 20th May, Women’s day etc. -Income generating activities through the retail of salt, soap, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -85% of members own National Identity and National Disability Cards -Members are assertive -Awareness raising on rights -Most members now live independent lives through income generating activities. -Through series of sensitizations, 02 other functional groups have formed in the sub division – Nja-Mo-Ba-Mo group in Wowo and Bongabi group in Ntundip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inadequate net working with other organizations and the absence of a coordination unit in Donga Mantung Division -Insufficient finances to carry out activities -Insufficient presence of CBR field workers -Poor road network hinders field activities -High cost of transport for members to attend workshops/seminars as they pay extra fares for their mobility tools (tricycles) 	

Name	Activities, Sources of Income	Successes	Challenges	Concerns, Remarks & Conclusion
	fertilizer, rice etc -Monthly contributions of members Registration of members -Fund raising and appeal letters.	-Created partnership with Community Based Rehabilitation program by CBC in 2009. -Joined the Coordinating Unit of Persons with Disabilities for the North West region -Attended workshops organized by CBC and Coordination unit -Received a grant of 45.000FCFA from Social Affairs delegation of Nkambe -In collaboration with the Ndu Council, 07 children with disabilities and 03 parents with disabilities benefited from Educational assistance -A Sub Divisional Social Affairs center in 2010 was created as a result of our advocacy.		
Rehabilitation Providers				
CEFED, Santa	The inclusive primary school went operational in 2009 taking care of physically disabled and cognitive children.	35 children on roll	Finance to cater for the children and the payment of teachers.	SOME CONCERNS AFTER PANEL DISCUSSIONS: -Why interest rates by SEEPD for PLWDs is higher than that of normal 'njangi' groups?
SAJOCAH, Bafut	-created in 1978 -deals with all forms of	-successfully carried out more than 70 operations	-Parental neglect -Late registration for the	

Name	Activities, Sources of Income	Successes	Challenges	Concerns, Remarks & Conclusion
	<p>disability (cases as a result of RTA, Post Polio attacks, strokes, cerebral malaria, deformed cognival births, knocking and bow legs with ages ranging from 0 – 70 years.</p> <p>-44 staff including 07 physiotherapists and 09 orthopedic technicians</p> <p>-runs an equipped orthopedic workshop for physical and vocational rehabilitation (shoemaking, sewing, hotelier,</p> <p>-runs a resource centre for the blind.</p>	<p>- Existence established self employed past students after rehabilitation program.</p>	<p>rehabilitation program</p> <p>-Inadequate information about activities of the center by the surrounding communities</p> <p>-Financial handicap of parents to send their eligible children for the program</p>	<p>-Why the SEEPD program does not reduce health bills at the Baptist hospitals for PLWDs?</p> <p>-Why the national Disability cards are not recognized especially when some benefits have to be gotten – exemption from school fees for children of PLWDs?</p> <p>-Why the National Disability cards are slow to be issued? No NDC has been issued since January 2012!</p> <p>CONCLUDING REMARKS:</p>
Organizations				
<p>BCCSDR Bamenda Coordinating Centre for Studies in Disability and Rehabilitation</p>		<p>-Organization of conference for the past 7 years</p> <p>-Organization of kids camps</p> <p>-Organization of workshop on market trends</p> <p>-Research studies on prevalence on PLWDs</p> <p>-Organization of the current conference.</p>	<p>-Difficult road network to carry outreach activities.</p> <p>-Inadequate personnel to teach language to prepare children for inclusive studies.</p> <p>-Inadequate use of varied communication medium.</p> <p>-Inadequate access to sanitation and sporting facilities by PLWDs.</p> <p>-Lack of self esteem exhibited by the PLWDs.</p> <p>-Weak DPOs and the absence of coordination unit at the</p>	<p>Organizations and service providers in the North West Region are doing a commendable job to improve the quality of life of PLWDs and the promotion of inclusion. Rehabilitation service providers still have a lot to do to promote inclusion in their rehabilitation program.</p> <p>Irrespective of the situation, they need to support the governmental services –MINSANTE, MINAS, Councils, & MINFOF should work in concerted efforts to harness their activities with</p>
<p>SENTTI Special Education Needs Teacher Training Institute</p>	<p>-Training inclusive teachers to accommodate children with special needs</p>			
<p>SEEPD</p>	<p>-Creation of a socially</p>			

Name	Activities, Sources of Income	Successes	Challenges	Concerns, Remarks & Conclusion
Socio Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities	inclusive society through holistic approach to socio-economic activities -Thrifths and Loans activities -Bring partners in a platform to reduce poverty -Provision of quality health care and Educational services -Carry out research studies		Divisional and sub-Divisional levels. -Lack of collaboration between various stakeholders – ministries, civil societies, DPOs and service providers. -The non existence of the text of application of the laws relating to PLWDs.	respect to the PLWDs. In conclusion, rehabilitation services are responsible to each and everyone. We all have to strive to acquire the communication methods of the deaf and visually impaired. We must adopt positive attitude towards PLWDs and integrating them into decision making structures, promote physical psychosocial accessibilities and participation in the development process in their respective communities.
MBOSCUDA	-Involve people with special needs in their programs -Identification of people with special needs and support			
Family Life – Bishop’s House	-Sensitization of couples on healthy family life style -Educative talks to caretakers of PLWDs -No separate program in place for PLWDs			
Government Services				
MINFOF Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family	-Ensure the promotion of inclusiveness especially with FLWDs -Ensure the promotion of the rights of FLWDs -Advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence against women -Encourage the empowerment of women Socially,			

Name	Activities, Sources of Income	Successes	Challenges	Concerns, Remarks & Conclusion
	Politically, Economically.			
MINAS Ministry of Social Affairs	-Protect and promote the rights of PLWDs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issuance of national Disability Cards 2. Ensure the exemption of school fees of PLWDs in public schools 3. Ensure the exoneration of taxes for PLWDs -Ensure the Socio-economic integration of PLWDs into the society			
MINSEP Ministry of Sports and Physical Education	-Improve the access of sporting facilities/playgrounds to accommodate PLWDs -Organization of Divisional, Regional and National competitions for PLWDs			

DAY 2 – Friday 7th December 2012

The day started with registration and breakfast. The opening prayers gave way for discussions on issues of the previous day. Highlights of the day included the visit by the Canadian High Commissioner and 05 presentations.

Entry of the Canadian High Commissioner:

The Canadian High Commissioner and his wife were the august guests of the conference. His arrival was acclaimed by a welcome song by the DIWEREM choral group. The song¹ was composed by DIWEREM.

HE M. Laramée was welcomed by Mr. Wango Julius, Executive Director of BSSSDR, who thanked him for taking time off his busy schedule to be part of the conference.

The High Commissioner, who has been to Cameroon just for a year, was introduced to the participants by Dr. Lynn.

The High Commissioner said he was delighted to be part of the conference. He said the 50 years of bilateral corporation between Cameroon and Canada has been that of learning and sharing of experiences. A win-win partnership, they stand to promote universally accepted values – Human Rights, Good governance and Democracy. As citizens, he said PLWDs should be treated equally. He praised the efforts of BSSCD in changing people’s attitudes towards PLWDs and the foundation of inclusion acknowledging that it is needs courage and commitment to succeed. He thanked Dr Lynn and the 04 students presently working with BSSCD in meeting their goals.

In response, and on behalf of DPOs, the head of the coordination unit, Mr. Samuel Nyincho, thanked the High Commissioner for taking time off to meet the PLWDs. He commended the South-South cooperation in their commitments to improving the quality of life. He acknowledged the fact that the resources are limited thus, the ‘battle is far from over’. He regretted the fact that Cameroon has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of PLWDs back in 2008 but has not signed the text of application. He then urged the High Commissioner to use his high office to make this a reality.

Concluding, the High Commissioner promised to use his office to lobby for the text of application to be signed. He also encouraged everyone to do his/her small effort to build a society without barriers.

To crown his short stay, BCCSDR and the planning committee appreciated him with North West traditional attire that was put on him and a statue of a woman with a baby to his wife.



Mr. Mukong, Chair of BCCSDR Board, Madame Laramée, HE M. Laramée addressing the audience, Dr. Lynn Cockburn; Sign Language Interpreter

¹ Lyrics of the song are in the appendix.

PRESENTATION 1: *The Triple Pains – Disability, HIV/AIDS and Poverty: Implication for Food Security Issues and the Attainment of MDGs in Cameroon*². By Mr. Ntangsi Max Memfih, Senior Lecturer, University of Buea. Mail: ntangsi2005@yahoo.com

The paper shows how Disability, HIV/AIDS and Poverty inter relate and reinforce each other to perpetuate the vicious cycle. The paper shows how national food security cannot be attained if PLWDs are not mainstreamed in the poverty alleviation process as a group with special needs. The paper which is based on review of contemporary studies by individuals and organization recommends various ways through which a participatory inclusive development process can be achieved.

PRESENTATION 2: *Developing Sports for Persons with Disabilities To create an Inclusive Community.* By Lukong Evelyn Shulika, Special Educator, Resource room for the visually impaired, SAJOCAH Mambu, Bafut. mail: lukong2004@yahoo.com.

The paper brings out the importance of developing sports for PLWDs and sports as a corner stone when planning a curriculum of inclusive education. The paper also discusses the concept of disability and basic requirements for sporting activities for persons with special needs. It further discusses some consideration and guidelines in coaching a person with a disability. It went further to discuss issues like lack of policies/legislation, inadequate financial & human resources, attitude by public towards PLWDs and low self esteem as some of the factors that hinder the development of sports for PLWDs towards creating an inclusive community. The paper concludes with some proposals for a successful development of sports for persons with disabilities in the region and Cameroon as a whole.

PRESENTATION 3: *What World Lies Beyond The Social: Rethinking Disability In The South.* By Dr Alfred Ndi, ENS Bambili, University of Bamenda

This paper argues that the social movement for the emancipation of disabled persons is a post-Enlightenment strategy that has certainly achieved a great deal of liberties for disabled people all over the world, at least, as far as overcoming of social barriers and awareness raising are concerned. However, when its objectives are benchmarked against the context of the South and particularly, the North West Region of Cameroon, they are found to be open to certain limitations which restrict their global efficiency and constraint their impact. From this light, the paper addresses itself to issues about the 'body' (as opposed to the claim that only society disables impaired persons) such as 'pain', family inheritance factors; questions of rural poverty and witchcraft, identity politics, power politics and social investment. It suggests and concludes that if the social movement is to optimize its noble goals and maximize its Southern reach, it has to take into account these interdisciplinary actions into its policy options.

PRESENTATION 4: *Disability Welfare Rehabilitation Movement- DIWEREM: A New Voice in Bafut.* by Wanchia John Ngwa and Diodienne Nforbusi

The presentation was based on the route, the successes, challenges and the way forward of the group. It's a CBO (community based organization) created in 2010 and based in Bafut. It is group made up of disabled persons, by disabled persons and for disabled persons. The group's philosophy is 'Nothing about us without us'. Its vision is 'A society of completely rehabilitated, integrated, independent, socio-economically empowered disabled persons'.

The objectives of the group are:-

- To promote the rights of persons with disabilities;
- To foster the welfare of disabled persons;
- To engage persons with disabilities in self-enhancing training and activities for self- sustainability;
- To involve persons in active participation in global issues and challenges;
- To fight poverty by engaging in modern agricultural and livestock methods of farming.

² Entire presentation at the appendix

Some of the highlights of achievements include:-

- Organised a sensitisation seminar on rights of disabled persons in Bafut in August, 2011
- Organised a training session on Omo production and Cane works from September, 2011 to March, 2012;
- Took part in the Bafut Municipal craft Exhibitions in August, 2011 and emerged 1st Position despite competing with groups of able persons;
- Competed at the Divisional Craft Exhibitions on the *14th October, 2011* and emerged *20th Position out of more than 100 competitors, despite short notification;*
- Attended the Regional Craft Exhibitions on the *17th October, 2011* and emerged *29th Position;*
- Attended the 3rd Edition of Cameroon International Arts Exhibitions (SIARC 2012) in Yaoundé from the 23rd January-3rd February, 2012 organised by the Ministry of Small and Medium Size Enterprises
- Hosted Association AVANCE from Vienne-Austria on the 26th of June, 2012
- Hosted the President of National Association for Blinds in Cameroon (ANAC) on the 26th of August, 2012
- Attended ELECAM Regional conclave on Disability Voting Rights on the 8th of October, 2012 and have since been sensitizing members on the need to register, vote and be voted in up-coming elections;
- Cane furniture supplier for PRESCRAFT Bamenda since 6th August, 2012
- Local crafts producer for CBC SEEPD (Vision Shop) Program since August 2012

Amidst the enumerated successes, there have been some challenges that include:-

- Absence of a conducive site for office work, workshop and inadequate marketing strategy
- Absence of specific technical expertise in Special Needs domain
- insufficient resources to cater for the needs of members such as production materials
- Continuous marginalisation and persecution from others including mainstream organisations purportedly for the disabled, but with hidden exploitative agendas
- Absence of a major long term partner organisation especially for technical assistance;
- Absence of a full time employed skilled personnel;
- Inability of funds to create a website to sell our talents, products and activities for fund raising;
- Difficult access to potential members in peripheries and hence difficulty in completely setting up data base for the disabled in Bafut

Despite these setbacks, they have embarked on a strategic plan to forge ahead. Some of these plans include:-

- Scaling-up of partnership ventures with other organisations and partners
- The construction of a website, but still need an expert for technical aspects
- Continue with advocacy and human rights struggle in order to avert persecution from others
- Canvass local support for the fight against persecutors and dubious fellows who pose for organisations interested in disabled persons, but who are out for laundering and exploitation
- Stick to their vision with commitment and devotion



Group of Students (who have hearing impairments) performing a dance to liven up the conference

PRESENTATION 5: *Microfinance and Persons With Visual Impairment.* By Mbimenang David Ntawen and Tancho Fidel, Hope Social Union, Bamenda.

Using a presentation which was prepared in Braille, the presenters discussed the path through which the group has followed, its objectives, successes, challenges, and recommendations.

The group was founded in 2003 and registered with MINAS and 30 active members that started like a 'njangi' group .

Objectives:

- To improve on the living standards of people with visual impairment
- Enable visually impaired persons create income generation activities (IGA) for a positive impact on their lives.
- Create awareness among members on the impacts of HIV/AIDS.

Successes/Impacts:

- Received training on project management
- Some members have become economically independent through loan contracted
- Increase in membership.

Challenges:

- Difficulties in creating partnerships because of skeptical attitude as to their abilities
- Access to appreciable/tangible loans
- Loans are mostly for agricultural activities but non existence of grace periods on the loans
- Financial indiscipline behavior of some members
- Ability to come up with tangible projects.
- Financial constraints to reach out to others out of Bamenda.

Recommendations /Conclusions:

- Visually impaired persons should be seen as potential entrepreneurs
- Agricultural loans should be accompanied by a period of grace
- Visually impaired persons need more capacity building trainings on project proposal and management
- Satellite associations should be formed with an umbrella association so as to benefit from loans and empowerment activities.
- Visually impaired persons have unexploited talents and skills that could be harnessed to fit into an inclusive society.

PRESENTATION 6: *Disability and Press Coverage in Cameroon: A Personal Perspective*³. By Martin Jumban, read by Franco Ekeme.

Though from a personal point of view, the paper shows how the media (written, spoken or audio visual) portray persons living with disability of one sort or another. The press gives a negative view of PLWDs.

³ Complete paper is at the appendix

They are most at times given the picture of people who are evil, violent, objects of poverty, pity, ridicule or sexual pleasure.

It argues that, people living with various forms of disability, need love like any other person, for their situation is largely not of their making. It also portrays the steps the Diocese of Kumbo has gone in creating an inclusive society. This led to the creation of 'The Apostolate of Mentally Disabled Persons' in 1990 spearheaded by Rev.Fr Roland Bernegh. The challenges presented are abound. However the most recurrent is that of limited financial resources, specialists (psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors) and negative attitudes towards PLWDs especially from family members and friends and the public in general.

Concluding, the paper believes that, this negative prevalent view of PLWDs by the press could be reversed. This could be achieved if the press re-focuses the public's attention to the positive aspects of PLWDs as people who also need love, caring and understanding just like any other 'able' human being.

SOME CONCERNS, QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION FROM THE PRESENTATIONS

- ✚ What specific actions for food security in the area of disability? Food Security is all about Availability- function of production; Access – how to get it; Utilization – the use of what we have. In terms of availability, the PLWDs will have to maximize their potentials at community level. Certain activities get in function of production. With financial means, they can access through purchase so, a data base is required. And in terms of utilization, the quality of food intake is the base.
- ✚ Sports for PLWDs are for all. Sports teachers need to come together in order to create an inclusive community. PLWDs should always use their crutches and shoes as it is believed that refusal or resistance has a negative health effect.
- ✚ Media practitioners should always consult specialists before writing their stories
- ✚ Appropriate words should be used in describing disabled persons – difference between mental illness and cognitive disabilities
- ✚ How could the visually impaired read newspapers and the hearing impaired listen to news?
- ✚ Can it be possible to create an inclusive society with people with mental challenges? Ans: it's a whole process that concerns the Council and Ministry of Public Health. Unfortunately, there is no clear text for the rehabilitation of mentally ill persons. So its difficult to know where responsibilities lie. More clarification is needed from MINSANTE on how to address issues of mentally ill persons.
- ✚ To create an inclusive society through sports, there is need for the organization of sporting activities like the FENASCO games to include PLWDs
- ✚ PLWDs need family support and each person has to take responsibility within the family
- ✚ There is need for self esteem from PLWDs. They have to believe in themselves first and put up positive attitudes in public with a lot of dignity.
- ✚ At global level, strengthening partnerships and facilitating coordination between various UN institutions – setting up of a Global fund to combat disability,
- ✚ The full implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities,
- ✚ Support policy advocacy on CRPD and legal reforms to create an enabling framework - A HRBA to development be adopted in various development programs in Cameroon i.e. including disability in national poverty reduction programs like the GESP, triennial programs,
- ✚ Improving on existing infrastructure and ensuring that new ones take care of people with disabilities,
- ✚ Intensify the education of people with disabilities on their rights and various opportunities - access to information and communication technologies
- ✚ Mainstream disability at various levels as has been done with gender in order to provide possibilities for people with disabilities becoming decision makers at various levels,

- ✦ Collect reliable statistics relating to poverty among people with disabilities disaggregated according to gender, types of disabilities and geographical locations as well as causes of the disabilities
- ✦ Improving on existing infrastructure and ensuring that new ones take care of people with disabilities,
- ✦ Intensify the education of people with disabilities on their rights and various opportunities - access to information and communication technologies
- ✦ Mainstream disability at various levels as has been done with gender in order to provide possibilities for people with disabilities becoming decision makers at various levels,
- ✦ Collect reliable statistics relating to poverty among people with disabilities disaggregated according to gender, types of disabilities and geographical locations as well as causes of the disabilities
- ✦ Including a Disability component in all development projects as a mandatory requirement for approval just as it has been for gender.
- ✦ Identifying various partner organizations that are involved in disability issues outside UN system and partnering with them,
- ✦ Avoid using destructive and humiliating words (e.g. handicap people, deaf, blind, etc),
- ✦ Provide livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities through empowering them,
- ✦ Promote community-based support services that address the needs of households with members with disabilities,
- ✦ Incorporating social security for people with disabilities in Corporate Social Responsibility of various firms and development programs,
- ✦ Making the national social security system of the country functional in an efficient and effective manner,
- ✦ Creating more NGOs on disability issues and more DPOs and extending activities to rural areas,
- ✦ Knowing your HIV status and attending VCTs,
- ✦ Self esteem which increases hope,
- ✦ Knowing and putting your potentials into use, etc.

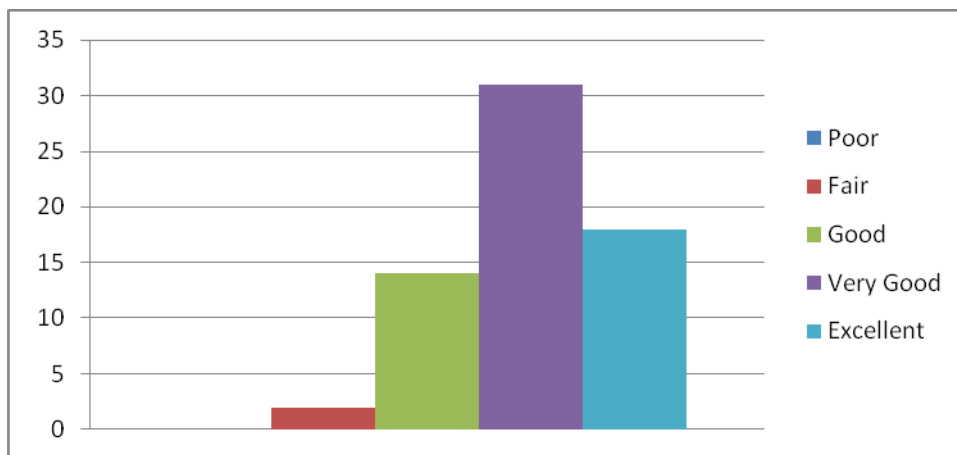
The conference was covered by several local media – radio, television, newspapers



The 7th Annual Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation

EVALUATION OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference was rated by the participants. Below is the summary of the rating.



Likes :

- Educative presentations
- Attendance was from varied strata of the society (physically challenged and 'able' persons)
- Sharing of experiences
- The presence of the Canadian High Commissioner
- PLWDs as presenters

Dislikes:

- Time management was poor
- Toilet far from conference room and not easily accessible
- Not much time given for questions
- Absence of documents in Braille
- Absence of spiritual teachings
- Lodging was not provided for participants
- No interpreters
- Discussions in English while most PLWDs understanding pidgin
- No writing facilities – tables
- Lack of clarity regarding roles of those helping

Proposals:

- Continue with the conference next year
- More assistance to be given to visually impaired during recess
- Provision of conference materials for visually impaired
- Transport arrangements should be modified to suit field realities
- More convenient conference environment
- Logistics to be improved
- Participants should include PLWDs from other regions
- Every DPO should present their activities

The 7th Annual Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation

- Provision for translators/interpreters
- Spouses / caretakers of PLWDs should be invited for subsequent conferences
- 'Able' people should also be invited for such conferences
- All DPOs should be invited
- Invite more physically challenged persons who have succeeded in life
- Minutes of each conference should be sent to all DPOs
- Resource persons should come from other government services dealing directly with PLWDs – MINSANTE, Council etc
- The use of current ICT systems –powerpoint and other captivating tools
- Divisional conferences should be organized
- Practical ways of networking should be set up
- HIV/AIDS should be included in the interventions
- Increase number of days

APPENDIX

A. PRESENTATIONS

1. Importance of Story- Learning from each other.

A TALK BY Dr. Ngobesing Suh Romanus.

Do you like telling stories? Many people do. Some like telling stories and some like listening to them. Stories are important. It is not today that the culture of story-telling has been developed. Stories are as old as the history of man. Stories are universal. In the time of Jesus Christ, telling stories was common. That is why Jesus told many stories; and through them he was better able to drive home his message. His stories were called parables. If Jesus Christ is known as the greatest leader that the world has ever known, it is because he used stories to teach the people. Stories can be called a teaching tool. They are an instrument for teaching. They enable a lesson or message to be better driven home. This is not all. Stories are told for entertainment. There are many humorous stories that make people laugh; and when they laugh, they are happy. Many humorous stories are told on radio; and make those who listen happy. Another reason stories are important is they are used to socialize. When people meet, they may tell stories to pass time or to have a good time with one another. Indeed, stories are very important.

They are universal

They can bridge cultural, linguistic and age-related divides.

Stories can be used as a method to teach ethics, values, cultural norms and differences.

Stories provide a tool to transfer knowledge in a social context.

Humans are story-telling organisms.

We use stories to teach children respect through listening, discipline

Through stories, we learn to live through adversity.

We also learn respect for life.

Stories help in building skills in creativity and narration in both the listener and the teller.

In services, people use stories to manage conflicts.

Stories can be used to interpret the past and shape the future.

Stories can be used to influence others.

Stories can be used to train in reasoning.

Stories are used for marketing. For example: adverts.

People enjoy stories. Stories are our most powerful tools for effective communication.

Our stories thrill others. Others like to listen to our stories.

Through stories we entertain, share our history, and culture, spread knowledge, persuade, advance a cause, teach and dream a vision for the future.

I tell many stories in my radio programs. Many people like to listen to them. When they do, they learn.

Sometimes they make them laugh and release some of the tension in them.

2. The Triple Pains-Disability, HIV/AIDS and Poverty: Implications for Food Security Issues and the Attainment of MDGs in Cameroon.

By Ntangsi Max Memfih (ntangsi2005@yahoo.com)

OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Disability and Poverty
- Poverty and HIV/AIDS
- HIV/AIDS and Disability
- The Triple Pains
- The Need for and Inclusive Development Agenda
- Implications for Food Security and the MDGs in Cameroon
- Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006. WHO and the World Bank have demonstrated the need to include people with disabilities in development.

A major feature is that they are not a homogeneous group of people but the following are particularly vulnerable;

- Children with disabilities
- Girls with Disabilities
- Women with Disabilities
- People with Multiple Disabilities
- People with Disabilities who are HIV Positive.
- People with disabilities living in remote and rural areas

This paper tries to demonstrate the interactions existing between disability, poverty and HIV/AIDS and how these create a vicious cycle of suffering of humankind. It attempts in providing major policy guidelines that could help reduce the gravity of the situation. It is based on secondary data.

DISABILITY AND POVERTY

Poverty is about vulnerability – being powerless particularly economically and politically.

Disability contributes to poverty by;

- Leading to lack of access to services.
- With few services often underfunded and poorly managed.
- The likelihood that a person with a disability will not be working,
- The likelihood that a family member will be taken out of work (or school) to provide care
- In households with a family member who has a disability, the costs of health care and other interventions are higher. This is what Amartya Sen calls the “hidden costs of disability.

Poverty contributes to disability through

- Lack of education,
- Malnutrition,
- Poor health care,
- Dirty and polluted environments,
- Occupational and road accidents,
- Lack of ambition and lost of hope,
- Exclusion from societal activities, etc.

The relationship between poverty and disability is complex and multidimensional, creating a vicious cycle running in both directions.

POVERTY AND HIV/AIDS

- Poverty has been an important facilitating factor in the spread of the pandemic,
- Poverty impact on people's behaviours underlying the incidence of HIV/AIDS,
- Establishment of beliefs or pattern of thought,
- Behaviours and beliefs mediating the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS,

On the other hand; HIV/AIDS has led to

- disability which increases poverty,
- care and medical expenses increasing cost of living,
- mortality resulting from HIV/AIDS push households into poverty,
- Loss of productive resources (time, finances, etc),

The causal linkages between poverty and HIV/AIDS are complex and multidimensional, creating a vicious cycle also running both directions.

HIV/AIDS AND DISABILITY

- Major interventions around HIV/AIDS prevention, care, support and mitigation have been done, but little or none has targeted people with disabilities as a special category,
- Aids Service Organizations do not consider Disability as their main development focus,
- The Organizations also believe that people with disabilities do not have normal social lives,

In addition, people with disabilities are unable to access these services because of their nature,

- Inaccessibility of buildings and structures used by most service providers particularly for the physically impaired,
- Inaccessibility of the information; example awareness based interventions that have a strong component of information; education and communication have not looked at the needs of the blind, the deaf and the mute.
- Disabled girls and women are at an increased risk of HIV infection.
- Lack of finances further exacerbates the problem when transportation costs cannot be afforded to go to townships where services are usually available.

THE TRIPLE PAINS: THE NEED FOR THE INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

- They constitute a significant population; about a billion of world population and more than a million in Cameroon,
- They have the potentials needing enhancement,
- They are a vulnerable group,
- They are among the poorest of the poor,
- They need special packages, etc.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY ISSUES AND THE MDGs IN CAMEROON

- Enough food must be available to meet people's basic food needs.
- People must have access to the food that is available under normal circumstances.
- Volatility in production or prices must not threaten this availability, and
- The quality of food that people consume must be adequate for their needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- At global level, strengthening partnerships and facilitating coordination between various UN institutions – setting up of a Global fund to combat disability,
- The full implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities,

- Support policy advocacy on CRPD and legal reforms to create an enabling framework - A HRBA to development be adopted in various development programs in Cameroon i.e. including disability in national poverty reduction programs like the GESP, triennial programs,
- Improving on existing infrastructure and ensuring that new ones take care of people with disabilities,
- Intensify the education of people with disabilities on their rights and various opportunities - access to information and communication technologies
- Mainstream disability at various levels as has been done with gender in order to provide possibilities for people with disabilities becoming decision makers at various levels,
- Collect reliable statistics relating to poverty among people with disabilities disaggregated according to gender, types of disabilities and geographical locations as well as causes of the disabilities
- Including a Disability component in all development projects as a mandatory requirement for approval just as it has been for gender.
- Identifying various partner organizations that are involved in disability issues outside UN system and partnering with them,
- Avoid using destructive and humiliating words (e.g. handicap people, deaf, blind, etc),
- Provide livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities through empowering them,
- Promote community-based support services that address the needs of households with members with disabilities,
- Incorporating social security for people with disabilities in Corporate Social Responsibility of various firms and development programs,
- Making the national social security system of the country functional in an efficient and effective manner,
- Creating more NGOs on disability issues and more DPOs and extending activities to rural areas,
- Knowing your HIV status and attending VCTs,
- Self esteem which increases hope,
- Knowing and putting your potentials into use, etc.

3. Development Sport for Persons with Disabilities to Create an Inclusive Community.

By Lukong Evelyn Shuilika.

ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the importance of developing sport for persons living with disabilities. It is very vital and should be considered when planning a curriculum of Inclusive education. In the paper, the concept of disability, inclusion and sport following the views of some authors is discussed. Similarly it examines the requirement for sporting activities for persons with special needs, the need for sport in their lives, the origin of the Paralympics Games and inclusion continuum for sport participation of those with disabilities and the impact to the community. Furthermore, general considerations and guidelines in coaching a person with a disability, sport versus disability to create inclusion in a chosen Rehabilitation Centre in North West Region is X-rayed. Additionally some constraints or setbacks facing the developing of sport for persons with disabilities were looked into, for example, lack of policies / legislation, financial constraints, no or few specialists, lack of self-esteem on the part of those concern, poor attitude of the society, lack of awareness.

In conclusion some proposals were made for a successful development of sport for persons with disabilities in Cameroon in general and North West Region in particular.

INTRODUCTION

In the present educational development, the increasing focus is on the right to “Education For All (EFA)”. It should not only be “Education For All” but also “Sport for All (SFA)”. Sport is vital in the live of all human beings. Sport can generally be considered to include all forms of competitive or recreational physical activity e.g. athletics, basketball, goalball, football, cycling, shooting, boccia, wheelchair race, table and lawn tennis etc. as stated by Little (1994), People with disadvantages as a result of a disability should be integrated in to all aspect of community live including sport. It does not mean that those with disabilities have to compete with or against those who are able-bodied. When we talk of sport, disability for an inclusive community, it means having the various sporting activities adapted for those with disabilities to boast their morals and get them involved and be part of the activities of the community.

Many persons with disabilities are passive and inactive as sport is concern and this has placed most of them at a serious disadvantage in growth and development and may result in lack of physical growth, less strength and retarded posture.

TERMINOLOGY

Disability: Disability simply refers to loss of ability or loss of function. It is made up of two words: dis (lack or absence of) and ability. It can also mean the inability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal in a given setting or community.

Inclusive: Inclusive, inclusion and inclusiveness are often use inter changeable. To include is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “to comprise or embrace as part of a whole. The centre for studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) in Ozoyi (2005) defines Inclusive Education as “the education of all children and young people with or without disabilities or difficulties learning together in pre-primary to universities with appropriate network of support.

In relation to sport for persons living with disabilities it infers that all persons are part of the sport community. They should be provided with the opportunity to participate in sport at an appropriate level and support. They should be embraced as part of the total sport system. Those with disabilities should be recognized as individuals with the right to take risks, make choice, make mistakes, be independent and reap the same benefits of sport participation as any other member of the community.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SPORTING ACTIVITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Prior to setting up sporting activities for persons with disabilities, the architectural designs of the environment should be taken into consideration

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- Adequate Plans – Infrastructure
- Man power
- Effective sensitization of the public and those with special needs.
- Community involvement
- Various categories person with disabilities and the needed sport activity.
- Onset of the disability
- Orientation and training of staff.
- Provision and continuity of support services.
- The ability of the individual and the severity of the disability

WHY DO PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITY PARTICIPATE IN SPORT?

- To reduce ailments e.g. cardio vascular diseases.
- To reduce further disability
- To improve fitness
- Develop new skills
- Increase social contacts
- Experience personal enjoyment and challenges
- Experience the thrill of competition
- Achieve fame and gain recognition within their chosen sport e.g. tri-cycle race, goal ball etc.
- Earn a living or livelihood
- Feel the worth of inclusion
- It can enhance the self confidence and self esteem of persons with disabilities
- Positive attitudes about sport can lead to a positive impact on the quality of daily living of persons living with disabilities.

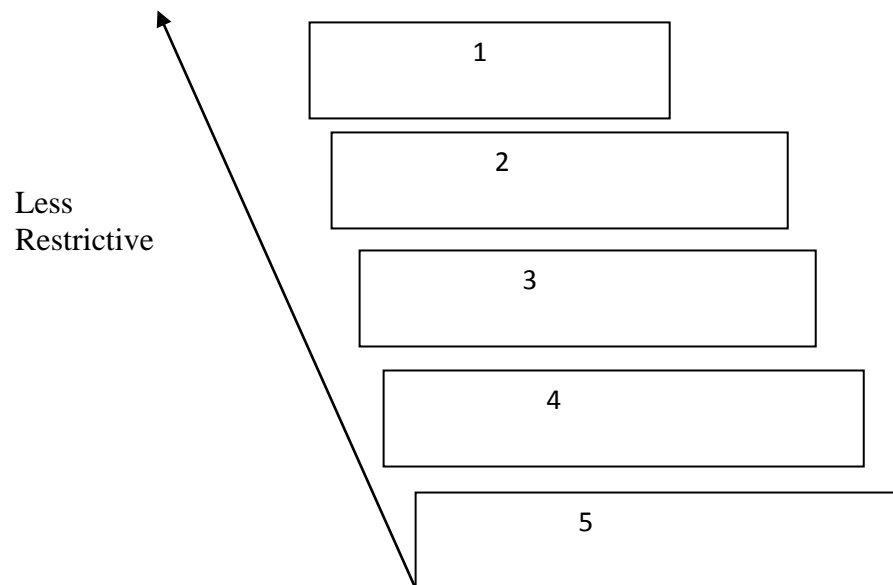
THE PARALYMPIC GAMES

The Paralympic Games are Olympic Games for persons with disabilities. The first paralympic was held in 1960 in Rome. Since then it has been held every four years since 1960, usually in the country hosting the Olympic Games. The name Paralympic came into existence in 1984 prior to this, it was known as “Sport for the Disabled”. This year it was held in London and in 2016 it will be in Brazil.

To prove inclusiveness in Cameroon in general and North West Region in particular, stakeholders on issues considering disabilities, best practices and inclusion towards community participation should organize North West paralympic and we will come out with talents and skills that were hidden in all the corners to compete in Brazil 2016. We should not only wait for 3rd December the International Day of person living with disabilities.

INCLUSION CONTINUUM FOR SPORTS PARTICIPTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Winnick (2000) has developed a model to depict an inclusive participation in sports for persons living with disabilities.



Level 1: Regular Sports

Inclusion (competitive and social) of persons with disabilities into regular sports competitions and clubs within the local community e.g. a person with intellectual (Learning disabilities) may train with, compete and attend the functions of their local club.

Level 2: Regular Sports with adjustments

Inclusion into regular sports with some accommodations / flexibility.

Level 3: Parallel Sports

Inclusion in the same but in their own division or section e.g. wheel chair athlete competing in a marathon even

Level 4: Adapted Sports: Adapted sports in integrated setting.

Level 5: Adapted Sports Segregation. Persons with disabilities participate in an adapted sport in a segregation setting e.g. visually impaired competing exclusively among themselves.

General consideration and guidelines coaching a person with disability.

- Assess the individual strength and weakness
- Set challenging and realistic goals
- Communicate clearly
- Provide positive feedback
- State and healthy environment for training
- Encourage as much as possible
- Demonstrate by touching incase of the visually impaired
- Adequate insurance
- Treat him/her as you will treat a normal athlete.
- Assess his/her level of physiological, psychosocial and emotional readiness.
- First and techniques
- Medical state of the individual
- Find out about his/her objectives and establish goals that are challenging yet achievable.
- Assist when and where requested
- Provide accurate and reliable feedback
- Give appropriate reinforcement
- There should be follow up

Sport Vs Disability to Create Inclusion in Saint Joseph's Children and Adult Home (SAJOCAH) Mambu Bafut

There is an adage that "Learning without play makes Jack and dull boy". Sporting activities in the resource room for the visually impaired SAJOCAH Bafut are in and outdoor. Indoor games include dominoes, adapted cards, Ludo, draft, sorting and matching, etc. Outdoor e.g. track events, athletics and goal ball.

To boost the worth of inclusiveness in SAJOCAH the sighted and visually impaired danced Njang, bottle dance and the sighted are taught games such as dominoes. During competition they are blind folded and they compete with the visually impaired.

Some Constraints or Setbacks to Sports for Persons With Disabilities In Cameroon

According to the writer, in Cameroon there is legislation or Law NO: 2010/002 of 13th April 2010 relating to protection and welfare of persons with disabilities. In Capter IV concerning participation in sport and leisure activities it is well stated in section 36 and 37

- . Unfortunately the law is not yet ratified.
- The attitude of the general public towards with disabilities is yet to be positive.
- Lack of self esteem amongst those with disabilities
- Financial constraints
- Stigmatization of persons with disabilities
- Lack of well equipped training facilities e.g. good wheel chairs, tricycles. In Bamenda goal ball is played on the lawn tennis court which has neither the dimension or a good terrain.
- Seldom practice and competition
- Few or no specialist or coaches
- No research in the area of sports and disability
- Lack of pavements on the streets where available broken into gutters.
- Public sympathy. The public feel is additional suffering so they prefer to offer them gifts.

SOME PROPOSALS

- The 2010 law on the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities should be ratified and implementation like the public law 94-142 in America.
- Sensitization of the public, through media, gathering, churches, workshops etc.
- Encourage those with disabilities to develop self esteem; this can be done through workshops etc.
- Organization or stakeholders should try and set the various sporting facilities.
- People of good will or sport fans can sponsor.
- Students in the Field of special education should be encouraged to carry out research in the area of sport and disability.
- Pavements should be provided on our streets.
- More volunteers or specialists are needed in the area of paralympic games in Cameroon.
- Under the Ministry of Sports and Physical educations, a department for sports for persons with disabilities should be created with its own personnels.

CONCLUSION

For psychomotor development of any human being, we need to develop interest on recreational activities and sport. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to participate in Sport if not for competition, for individual benefits as physical fitness. Create awareness in the community, social contact, gain fame and earn a living. Why not have a cyclist, a goal ball team from Bamenda to participate in the next paralympic games in Brazil in 2016. "There is ability in disability".

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The 7th Annual Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation

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4. Disability Welfare Rehabilitation Movement – DIWEREM: A New Voice in Bafut.
 by Wanchia John Ngwa and Diodienne Nfobusi.

Lyrics to the song that DEWEREM sang

A DREAM FOR ALL PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
 A SONG for the Bamenda 2012 Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation
 Written and performed by the DEWEREM Choral Group, BAFUT

We are the foundation of the new world
 Vision and hope for the underprivileged
 We are the mouthpiece of the an inclusive society
 For all the vulnerable,
 For all the vulnerable.
 So if you are here today, listen to our stories and support our vision

Chorus:

Forward ever, Centre for Inclusive Studies
 Backward never, Coordinating Unit for Persons with Disabilities,
 Thank you all stakeholders,
 Respecting this conference today

We hope our stories will inspire you today
 In our society of today
 Stigma, exploitation, discrimination against the special needs –
 We are soldiers of the above mentioned in our generation today.
 We are calling on you
 To join us in this fight,
 Against these unwanted ills.

Chorus:

Forward ever, SEEPD Program of CBC
 Backward never, University of Toronto, Canada.
 Thank you all stakeholders, respecting this conference today
 We hope our stories will inspire you today.

Welcome song:

Welcome dear guests to this conference
 We welcome you in the glory of the Lord, We welcome you in the glory of the Lord
 The blessing of the Lord shall be your reward
 The blessing of the Lord shall be your reward
 Welcome, High Commissioner, to this conference,
 We welcome you in the glory of the Lord, We welcome you in the glory of the Lord

The 7th Annual Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation

5. SHARING OUR STORY TO CREATE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES: DISABILITY WELFARE REHABILITATION MOVEMENT (DIWEREM – A NEW VOICE IN BAFUT)

DIWEREM is a Community Based Organization created and approved in 2010 under Cameroon laws, with Head Quarters in Bujong-Bafut Sub-Division. DIWEREM is of disabled persons, for disabled persons, and by disabled persons with a, "Nothing about us without us!" Temporary able persons are not excluded. Our vision is, "A society of completely rehabilitated, integrated, independent, socio-economically empowered disabled persons". Our mission and objectives revolves around advocacy on, and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, mobilization and sensitization, as well as capacity building. Our strategy is partnership with other organizations, goodwill donors and individuals for financial, technical and material support. Our interventions target socio-economic empowerment of members in the domains of local craft production, traditional embroidery, omo production, animal husbandry, and agriculture depending on the different needs of members involved. So far, we have witnessed some historical events in our lives as a group, put together from our archives for the appreciation of others. Captured highlights of our activities and accomplishments so far, despite our tender age are shared. Our focus is on creativity, unity and we hope to inspire others as well as to have others inspire us through their constructive criticisms.

6. Disability and Press Coverage in Cameroon: A Personal Perspective.

By Martin Jumbam

Even though the topic of my discussion is on press coverage of disability in Cameroon, in general, I however intend to focus attention more on my personal approach to disability as a journalist for the Catholic newspaper L'Effort camerounais and as an employer, having served a four-year stint (2004-2008) as the General Manager of the Catholic Media House in Douala, generally known by its French acronym, MACACOS.

I must start by admitting that persons living with disability have never struck me as an exciting subject for media coverage. I do not remember ever having assigned any reporter to cover a story on people living with a disability although I have, on two occasions, written about it myself – once, when I interviewed Reverend Father Roland Berngeh, current Vicar General of the Diocese of Kumbo, who organized a program to cater for the welfare of mentally challenged individuals in Kumbo, and the second time when I attended a meeting of the Parent-Teacher Association at Saint Augustine's College in Kumbo and was challenged by a dynamic woman about our attitude towards children with a disability.

I guess I have come to accept the generally negative view of people living with a disability that appears so often in the Cameroonian media (written, spoken or audio-visual), as it is the case in the media in many parts of the world. Persons living with a disability of one sort or another are generally seen as either sinister, evil, violent, or objects of pity, curiosity, ridicule or even sexual pleasure.

A few years ago, when the then French President Jacques Chirac was scheduled to visit Cameroon, the authorities of the two main cities of Yaounde and Douala, which our 'illustrious' guest was to visit, seemed to have decided that people with mental disability, beggars and cripples were a sore sight on the streets.

Overnight, truckloads of gendarmes and police swooped down on the streets of these two cities, carting away these unfortunate individuals, and the press literally had a field day. One press coverage after another weighed in, not on the impact of the move on the disabled persons but rather on the ridiculous side of the action. For example, humour-laden stories described how the 'mad' people were fleeing from the police through the streets or how hard it was for the police to lift up a cripple from the ground to 'dump' in the waiting trucks that took them away to unknown destinations. The important thing was to

The 7th Annual Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation

have them away from the streets and as far away as possible. Some cripples were said to have been abandoned in forests and villages far away from these two main cities, the reasoning apparently being that by the time they crawled their way back to the cities, our 'illustrious guest' and his entourage would have long gone back home.

For their part, the mentally handicapped were either interned in the mental wards of the psychiatric sections of the Laquintinie in Douala and Centre Jamot in Yaounde, giving unprepared workers much stress to cope with them, or in police cells. The press was around to describe for an eager readership the ridiculous side of the story.

Newspaper headlines carried pictures of this 'urban cleansing' exercise that received general approval from the population. Radio and television talk-show hosts and their guests discussed the city council action in detail, the generally tendency being to applaud the police action to rid our streets of what many saw as an eye sore. It was rare to hear anyone talk of the violation of the rights of those persons living with a disability, many tending to believe that their disability had deprived them of the basic rights to live in our cities.

Disability and sexual violence

It is not rare to read stories in the press, especially in Douala, of mentally-challenged men and women being objects of sexual exploitation by individuals rumoured to belong to cults, religious or otherwise. Men, apparently wanting to grow rich overnight, are particularly guilty of having sex with women with mental disability. No doubt the number of mentally-challenged young women carrying a pregnancy is not a rare sight in our city streets. The culprits are usually said to belong to satanic or occultic groups that require that members commit such acts as a condition for gaining instant wealth. Women said to seek instant riches are also reported to harass mentally-challenged men for sex, sometimes in broad daylight. The press delights in such details.

Students living with a disability

As I mentioned earlier, as a man of the media myself, I never questioned reports or stories about persons living with disability in our society until a few years ago when I attended a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting in Saint Augustine's College, Kumbo. Shortly after calling the meeting to order, the Principal informed us that he was giving the floor to someone to talk about children living with disability in the school. I remember that almost immediately my mind went to my wallet as I wondered how much I had to spare as I was sure the speaker was going to stand in front of the assembly, hat in hand, to ask for money.

What followed, however, came as something of shock to me and, I believe, to some who might have been thinking like me. The woman walked to the podium and for over thirty minutes she talked to us about the necessity to give children with disability a chance to study under normal conditions. She said not a word about money, nor did she beg for any, as I had feared she would. Instead she challenged us with soul-searching questions about our attitudes as parents and teachers to children living with a handicap.

We were then discussing ways of helping the school administration renovate the toilet facilities in the school. In fact, the PTA had just then completed the building of a new toilet, which the PTA President dubbed 'ultra modern' and we were all proud of what we had done for our children. Then the woman in question asked us if we had a child who was on a wheel chair, for example, did we see him or her using the toilet facilities we were all so proud of with ease? No one had thought of it before.

As we sat humbled by her question, she then continued by asking us to examine our attitude towards children with disability, not only at school but every we went. She urged teachers in school to avoid calling a student with visual impairment as a blind student, especially to their hearing. Instead call him or her by name and urge the other students to do the same. Also avoid calling a child with a physical disability as that lame boy or girl, or that cripple. No! Call them by name and that would make them feel accepted in the school community.

The 7th Annual Bamenda Conference on Disability and Rehabilitation

When she finished, we all stood up and gave her a standing ovation. I personally felt very humbled and somewhat ashamed because I had earlier dismissed her as a beggar of charity while, on the contrary, she had a positive message that challenged the hardened and largely negative attitudes some of us had developed over the years towards people living with a disability among us, particularly children. The story I later wrote for the media definitely took a different slant from what it would have been had that lady confirmed the rather stereotypical mindset I had before about disability, namely, equating it with begging.

The Apostolate of Mentally Disabled Persons.

On the 18th of December 1990, Reverend Father Roland Bernegh, the then Rector of Saint Aloysius Minor Seminary in Kumbo, saw his dream come true. He had always been intensely disturbed by the lamentable spectacle of mentally disturbed individuals, roaming the streets of Kumbo and surrounding villages, without anyone seemingly doing much to help them. On that day, he convened a meeting of other concerned individuals and 39 of them attended, thus laying the foundation stone of what has come to be known as "The Apostolate of Mentally Disabled Persons" of the Diocese of Kumbo. Mental disability was beginning to catch the attention of the Catholic Church through the action of a concerned priest who, with the approval of his bishop, created an apostolate to cater for the wellbeing of a particular type of disabled persons: those suffering from mental disability.

He explained to the Catholic weekly *L'Effort camerounais* that prior to creation of this apostolate in 1990, he had been feeling particularly challenged to do something for the poor people of our community. He thought particularly of the mentally disabled people who seemed to be really neglected by society. Even though he felt sorry for them, there did not seem to be much he could do for them. But on further reflection, he became inspired by the scriptural text where Jesus was accused of being mad (Jn 10: 20). It was then that he decided that instead of sitting around and only pitying these unfortunate brothers and sisters was not enough. He needed to do something concrete for them and that was when I brought together people to see what they could do together for the mentally handicapped in our society, and that is how the Apostolate of Mentally Disabled Person saw the light of day in the Diocese of Kumbo.

Asked how information about his apostolate became known to the public, Father Roland said he first made an announcement in the Catholic Church and the people who attended the first meeting began to spread the news by word of mouth far and wide. Before long, people from other denominations began to join them as well. From the initial 39 mainly Catholic Christians, who showed up for the first meeting, membership has grown considerably to include people of other beliefs and religious convictions, a clear indication that mental illness is not only the concern of only one religious group.

The fear that persons with mental disability are prone to becoming violent is fairly widespread in our society. Father Roland dismissed this fear as baseless. "No, strange as this may sound," he said, "they haven't posed any particular danger either to individuals or to Cathedral property at all. Instead, many of them show a lot of respect when in church. We have been motivated by what the Psalmist tells us, that is, that God does not build his house in vain and that is what motivated us to begin praying for them and with them in God's own house. During Masses organised for them, they themselves do the readings and make lectionary and offertory processions. This was also a kind of eye-opener to the mentally ill people themselves, who came to realise that they are worth something. They were being asked to contribute to something positive in God's own house and many of them responded very positively to that.

Asked what he discovered as the common cause of mental disability is among the people he attended to, Father Roland said that some patients were born mentally unstable; others - the majority - could be said to be largely responsible for their condition, especially drug addicts, who formed the bulk of those with mental disorders in Kumbo. They were, for the most part, young men and women from stable homes who

had indulged themselves in smoking Indian hemp, marijuana, or other more potent drugs, and had been finding it quite difficult to kick the habit.

Asked if family members were ever contacted and sensitized as to the need to take care of their loved ones with mental disability, Father Roland said such contacts were necessary, especially as there were no structures to receive their sick relatives. “We try to educate them on the necessity to take their loved ones back into their homes and take care of them, instead of leaving them to run wild in the streets,” he added.

Asked where financial assistance came from to enable the apostolate to continue taking care of persons with mental disability, Father Roland said they relied mainly on charity. They made appeals for help from the public and would occasionally receive positive feedback from benefactors. “Our prayer is that, by God's grace, some good Samaritan somewhere - and we know there are many out there - would hear our appeal and come to our help to enable us to build a centre where we can care for our brothers and sisters with mental illness. We are also looking forward to receiving assistance from psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors, who can give their time to help us. We appeal to people to be conscious of the fact that they should show love and understanding to our unfortunate brothers and sisters, who are suffering from mental disorders. We have to take care of these people, whether they are responsible for what has happened to them or not. We should all show respect for the dignity of man and it's not because someone is in such a broken state that he or she ceases to be human”, he concluded.

Conclusion:

The media in Cameroon, as elsewhere, continue to either ignore persons with disability, or portray them, whenever they do, from a negative angle, generally informed by stereotypes of disability either as a curse, a sin or a burden to society. However, the media can reverse the prevalent view of disability that is largely negative and re-focus the public's attention on the positive side of persons with disability, portraying them as persons who are also in need of love, caring and understanding, just like everyone else.