Community
Action
Research on
Disability in Uganda

HOW INFORMATION IS SHARED AMONG CBR SERVICE PROVIDERS IN UGANDA

Background and justification:

CBR Service Providers in the course of their work acquire a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if shared is likely to benefit policy and practice. However, there are international concerns about whether information is being effectively shared and put to use (1). Information sharing and networking is an important part of development programmes '…publication is motivated by the need for practitioners to share their experiences and perspectives and then to evaluate and learn from them in order to improve practice…"(2). Oral tradition dominates the communication process in Africa (3)

Aims and objectives:

1. to know how info is shared within and between CBR programmes
2. to identify challenges in information sharing
3. to develop strategies on how to improve information sharing based on the data collected

Methods:

Within 19 organisations where the study was carried out in Mbale, Mbarara, Masindi, Lira and Kampala districts, a total of 42 respondents were interviewed. These were Managers, Information Workers and Community Development Workers in each organization based on their experience with information management programmes in their organisations. The informed consent of the individuals and the organizations was acquired and semi-structured, tape recorded interviews (face to face or telephone interviews) using a framework of questions were used. Documents shared by organizations were requested and scrutinized to identify the kind of information organizations share

A workshop using focus group discussions of these results developed ideas for improving information sharing. The workshop had 20 participants in total, 11 representatives of organisations, 1 Sighted Guide, 2 Sign Language Interpreters, the 5 Researchers and the CARD Administrator.

Respondents and researchers at the end of a dissemination
that led to formulation of more strategies for improved
information sharing

Results:

1.Information was shared about programme activities, challenges in implementation, target population, achievements, planned activities and disability specific information. It was shared by Information Workers, Managers and Community Development Workers. It was mainly used by managers in evaluation, development of strategies and avoiding duplication of resources. Information was documented in form of newsletters, brochures, handouts, periodical reports and   financial reports. Small organizations had less documented information mainly due to financial and human resource limitations however they often received documented information from larger organisations. Some organisations had a lot of information to be shared but this was often left unprinted on their computers. Oral modes of sharing were considered most appropriate for sharing both externally and internally due to low literacy levels. There are many popular FM radio stations operating in local languages and are far reaching within the communities Some respondents cited email communications as a best practice for sharing information yet in most rural areas of Uganda there isn't any internet infrastructure to support it.

2. Limited resources for production of documented materials. The non-existence of well developed ICT infrastructure especially in rural areas also hindered sharing with partners at grass root levels. Low literacy levels affecting the sharing of documented information rarely reached the deaf, blind and illiterate audiences.

3. Suggestions for improving sharing information were: a) production of directory of CBR organizations in Uganda to be led by the Ministry of Labour, Gender and Social Development and CBR Africa Network b) increased research into CBR in Uganda c) integrated work planning d) exchange visits e) carrying out an information needs assessment e) producing materials in Braille, and providing Sign Language interpretation

One of the researchers carrying out an interview with respondents at a Disabled People's Organization

Conclusions:

- Information sharing is quite limited due to insufficient funds for documentation of information.
- Many people depend on oral means to secure information. Generally in rural areas people prefer radio as a source of information

There is a general lack of understanding and awareness of the most cost effective means of sharing information

Challenges faced during the study

- coordination of a big research team
- scattered respondents – not easy getting them all in one place for dissemination workshops
- inaccessibility of some key respondents

Recommendations

- There is need for development of strategies that support oral means of sharing information like community workshops, music, dance and drama especially when sharing information with beneficiaries at the grass root Radio programmes should be used to disseminate information
- There is need to increase awareness among CBR service providers on cost effective means of sharing information.
- There is need for use of modes that reach people with special needs e.g. Braille, sign language interpretation, community theatre, dance, drama etc.

What the study has added

- That information sharing can be improved
- There's need to increase awareness about cost effective means of sharing information
- A directory of 27 CBR organizations in 5 districts of Uganda is now available as a direct result of this study

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References
1: IRC BUS Handbook Section 10 Process Documentation and Information Sharing. http://www.irc.nl/page/27742
2 *CBR A participatory strategy in Africa* (Hartley, S Ed. 2001)
3: www.afri-can.org/reports.html CBR Africa Network Strategic Plan 2006 - 2011

Names and addresses of the Research Team :
Joan Okune, Coordinator, CBR Africa Network joan@afri-can.org
Francis Kasozi, Volunteer, Mental Health Uganda frankasozi@yahoo.co.uk
George Kutosi, Lecturer, Kyambogo University geowikuts@yahoo.com
Harriet Ntege, Librarian, Kyambogo University harrietnn@yahoo.com
Shepherd Kyagaba, Media Technician, Kyambogo University rskyagaba@yahoo.com
Mentors: Drachler Malu, University of East Anglia ,malu.drachler@uea.ac.uk
Aisha Yousafzai , University of Agha Khan Pakistan**,** aishayousafzai@hotmail.com
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