



Challenging Assumptions

CBM Australia

The Jharkhand CBR project was started in 2010 by Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra in response to significant gaps in services and inclusion of people with disabilities in the project area. Jharkhand is rich in natural resources, however as a relatively new Indian state (formed in 2000), infrastructure and services are still very much developing. Jharkhand has one of the highest poverty levels in the country and one of the lowest literacy rates (66.42% in Population Census 2011 (male literacy: 76.84%, female literacy: 52.04%). People with disabilities are rarely included in education, social or employment activities. For example children with disabilities are often kept at home and do not participate in the community or attend schools as families and schools do not always recognise the rights and potential of people with disabilities.

Challenging Assumptions

Background

The project, funded by CBM Australia and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, focuses on access to health, education and rehabilitation for children with disabilities through primary health care and education workers. The project has also been developing Disabled People's Organisations and self-help groups with adults with disabilities and families of people with disabilities to enable income generation and awareness raising in the community.



Innovation

The project specifically encourages marginalised people with disabilities to participate in communal events. As part of this, the project initiated sports days, where people with disabilities come together to play games. Upon commencement, it became evident that the broader community was keen to become involved in these

sports days with many people observing and showing interest in participating. The need for such days for the whole community was recognised by the project. As a result, the sports days have now emerged into inclusive events with all members of a community invited to play sports and games together. Sometimes the days are organised to mark a specific event such as World Disability Day or Children's Day. The games are inclusive of everyone in the community and engage people with and without disabilities.

Impact

At a local community level, sports days have challenged assumptions about people with disabilities being less able. Some games have highlighted the high level of skill involved in compensating for impairments through development of observational skills and directional sense. This has raised community awareness about the capacities of people with disabilities and the strategies that can be used to engage all community members in sporting activities.

Sports days are potentially changing attitudes of people

with disabilities themselves, their families and the broader community through people with disabilities being publically present and active in a community activity. Inclusion goes both ways. In designing activities and events for people with disabilities it is worth considering excluded community members who may want to participate. In this case the need was for a whole community to work and play together and be included in such activities.

At a recent sports day, one of the games played was "hit the target with the stick". Children with vision impairment and children wearing blindfolds played the game together. Children without vision impairment gained an appreciation for the skills and directional sense of the children with vision impairment, who were the ones most able to hit the target!