

# DEVELOPING CBR THROUGH EVALUATION

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## ABSTRACT

*Evaluation is not an activity which comes easily to most community based rehabilitation (CBR) managers. Evaluation is often viewed as being both a requirement of external agencies and as not contributing significantly to CBR development. Consequently, evaluation methods have not been well incorporated into CBR managers' practices. This omission is in sharp distinction to other CBR management skills such as training and supervision. One can quickly blame this gap on the lack of responsiveness of external evaluators, or perhaps on the desire of local CBR managers to avoid unnecessary criticism. However, there are very important similarities between the issues of disability and evaluation that make them very compatible. The authors suggest that CBR cannot survive without appropriate evaluation mechanisms to explore and understand the information base upon which CBR lies. Furthermore, evaluation, if appropriately conducted, can actually help the development of community programmes. This chapter begins by clarifying the information links between disability, rehabilitation and evaluation and discusses the need to evaluate the key characteristics of CBR. As an example, the authors refer to evaluation of issues in community participation, which is the key characteristic of the CBR approach that distinguishes it from other forms of rehabilitation. It is shown that issues of community diversity, community needs, and community mobilisation all have important implications for evaluation in CBR. The chapter also identifies potential approaches to CBR evaluation which take it beyond the traditional styles of human services evaluation and participatory evaluation in which the field is currently mired, to emerging styles of empowerment evaluation that address the explicit values of community rehabilitation programmes. Investigating these values allows CBR programme managers to not only be responsive to community interests and needs, but also to use the process of evaluation to facilitate the real development of the community.*

## INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is not an activity which comes easily to most CBR managers. Evaluation is often viewed as being both a requirement of external agencies and as not contributing significantly to CBR development. Consequently, evaluation methods have not been well incorporated into CBR managers' practices. This omission is in sharp distinction to other CBR management skills such as training and supervision.

One can quickly blame this gap on the lack of responsiveness of external evaluators, or perhaps on the desire of local CBR managers to avoid unnecessary criticism. However, there are very important similarities between the issues of disability and evaluation that make them very compatible. We suggest that CBR cannot survive without appropriate evaluation mechanisms to explore and understand the information base upon which CBR lies. Furthermore, we believe that evaluation, if appropriately conducted, can actually help the development of community programmes.

This chapter begins by clarifying the information links between disability, rehabilitation and evaluation and discusses the need to evaluate the key characteristics of CBR. As an example, we refer to evaluation of issues in community participation, which we have suggested in an earlier chapter is the key characteristic of the CBR approach that distinguishes it from other forms of rehabilitation. We show that issues of community diversity, community needs, and community mobilisation all have important implications for evaluation in CBR.

Next, we identify potential approaches to CBR evaluation which take it beyond the traditional styles of human services evaluation and participatory evaluation in which the field is currently mired, to emerging styles of empowerment evaluation that address the explicit values of community rehabilitation programmes. Investigating these values allows CBR programme managers to not only be responsive to community interests and needs, but also to use the process of evaluation to facilitate the real development of the community.

### **INFORMATION AS THE LINK BETWEEN DISABILITY, REHABILITATION AND EVALUATION**

There are key similarities between disability, rehabilitation and programme evaluation in their dependence on, and utilisation of, information. Programme evaluation has been defined as “ a systematic and continuous process of information provision for the purpose of determining the value of a programme from a decision making point of view” (1). In other words, evaluation is a process for providing information for ongoing programme re-design. There are many texts on evaluation available, and some CBR managers have backgrounds in well-known evaluation methods such as needs assessment, programme monitoring, management information systems, and impact assessment. These managers appreciate the need for information in programme evaluation. However, programme evaluation at its worst is nothing but masses of information. How can this information be organised and utilised?

There are two basic assumptions in any programme evaluation. First, an actual programme must exist - that is, a set of activities intended to improve a given situation for a group of participants. The programme should be definable and able to be replicated elsewhere. Second, one must be able to compare the programme to reference points to allow decisions to be made which may improve the programme.

Assuming that a programme exists and a comparison can be made, there are two general goals for programme evaluation - accountability and effectiveness. With respect to the accountability goal, there is a generally correct perception that programme organisers and participants have a vested interest in their programmes and are susceptible to bias in their judgements. Relying solely on these judgements may not provide sufficient accountability for publicly funded programmes. With respect to the effectiveness issue, CBR programmes involve complex personal, organisational, social and cultural factors which are not easily ‘controlled’, in contrast to clinical practice and laboratory settings. Methods of investigation are needed which can accommodate these complex factors to allow determination of specific programme effectiveness and thus contribute to valid decisions on future planning. In the evaluation of traditional human service programmes, these assumptions and goals have led external reviewers to develop certain evaluation methods, performance standards and evaluation criteria for decision making.

Traditionally, evaluation aims at *description* of the context, input, process and output of programmes as well as *analysis* of why the programmes occur in a particular way. In addition, traditional evaluation moves beyond these research objectives to *evaluate*, or make judgements about the value of the programme, and then to make recommendations for change (2). It is this evaluative component which makes programme evaluation important to decision-makers and which requires evaluators to be clear and explicit about their value base. Programme evaluation is sometimes believed to be neutral, or value-free (3). However, many evaluation experts recognise that there must be values present in programmes if there are standards and criteria being applied (4,5).

We believe that evaluation methods are either implicitly or explicitly based on values and a theoretical understanding of the programme. For example, university accreditation standards and methods are based on theories of education and organisation. Hospital management analysis methods are based on systems theory. Social policy analysis is based on a variety of political and economic theories. Thus, evaluation standards and methods are usually linked to a theoretical base. In planning an evaluation, it is critical to state the theory underlying the methods, and the plan for analysis, so that the evaluation sponsor and audience can decide whether these values and assumptions are relevant to their perspective of the programme.

What are the theories which underlie disability and rehabilitation and how are they used to guide CBR programmes? And how will the belief in a particular theory affect evaluation in CBR? The traditional focus in rehabilitation has been on function and independence - with an emphasis on evaluating functional outcomes of treatments for individuals. A second rehabilitation focus developed twenty to thirty years ago and claimed the importance of social integration for persons with disabilities. This focus led to an emphasis on de-institutionalisation and mainstreaming in Western societies and to CBR in the Third World with responsibility being taken by the community - and an emphasis on evaluating the development of services in the community (6). More recently, a third focus claims that community integration, without adequate referral services or knowledge, merely shifts responsibility onto an unprepared community that lacks resources to allow disabled persons to achieve either optimal independence or integration. The central resource which is lacking is information about disability and rehabilitation (7).

In this recent focus, rehabilitation is understood as an information system (8). Information about various personal aspects of disability, such as the individual experience of disability, about consuming rehabilitation services, and about local solutions is created and stored with disabled people and their families. On the other hand, information about providing rehabilitation services, about research in disability, and about technical solutions is created by and stored with various professionals. If these information sources do not exchange data or complement each other there can be an 'information gap' that limits the progress of both groups. Such mismatches can also lead the way to conflict between these groups, whose goals may actually be more complimentary than are their methods.

The idea of disability being a fundamental problem of information, rather than of impairment, continues to develop in the West (Independent Living Movement) and in the Third World (Information Based Rehabilitation) as a complementary strategy to professional and community based approaches to disability.

An information based approach to disability has a number of advantages. It can appreciate the benefits and value in any number of rehabilitation strategies (professional care, community programmes, CBR, community development) since it emphasises the information in these strategies. In theory, information is an unlimited resource and can be shared, unlike financial and human resources. Information can multiply through the process of feedback between individuals, groups and systems. Information transfer can utilise the technology of communication systems. Finally, information transfer in usable forms is less costly than training professionals and establishing individualised services

However, an information based approach can also have disadvantages. Access to information can be restricted, especially to disadvantaged groups such as disabled persons. Information must be at an appropriate level depending on the user's background. Information alone is not sufficient to replace therapeutic skills or technical expertise. And finally, as we have suggested earlier, information is never entirely value-free and may be used to advance non-complementary goals held by different interests.

How is an information based approach to disability different from traditional community education methods? Most importantly, an information based approach focuses on maximising both information content and dissemination to as wide an audience as possible (8). In areas where professional skills and community resources are insufficient to meet the needs of more than a small number of disabled persons, an information approach offers an appropriate, affordable rehabilitation strategy.

CBR evaluation could be based on this concept of information. CBR strategies could be evaluated in terms of information content, and the quality, quantity, dissemination and feedback of the information systems used in the programme. As an example of how information in CBR is useful in evaluation, we turn to the concepts of community participation in CBR - community needs, community diversity, and community mobilisation. Community needs implies that one evaluate the breadth of disability programmes through an appropriate needs assessment and description of CBR activities. Community diversity demands that we evaluate whether stakeholder interests are met by using valid outcome assessments. Finally, community mobilisation requires that we evaluate the methods of involving participants through an in-depth examination of process.

In sum, evaluation in its broadest sense is a fundamental strategy for creating information, managing and organising information, and disseminating information. The needs of CBR and evaluation are complementary since neither evaluation nor CBR can function without information. The real question for CBR managers is not whether to evaluate, but how to gather and disseminate this information.

## **MATCHING CBR MODELS AND TYPES OF EVALUATION**

We have suggested that CBR evaluation be specifically linked to particular characteristics of CBR to improve the relevance of evaluation. We now will explore the methodologies which can be used in CBR evaluation. Michael Patton asserts that: ...the values and methods of any particular evaluation should be matched and be appropriate for the programme being evaluated. When a programme is exploratory and developmental, therefore, the evaluation should be exploratory and

developmental. Where the programme aims to be empowering of participants, the evaluation should likewise be an empowering process” (9, p.26). Evaluation methodologies have usually incorporated values and assumptions implicitly, rather than explicitly, with the result that programmes have been evaluated against standards which may not actually reflect the programme philosophy and objectives (10). This mismatch of methodology to programme objectives may explain the inability of evaluation to demonstrate the impact of many community based programmes.

How CBR is envisioned by the developers and participants of a project will obviously have implications for who is active in running the programme, and how it is run. But the vision of CBR also affects who does the programme evaluation and how the project is evaluated. At the risk of being simplistic, two general CBR visions, with their corresponding approaches to evaluation have been:

1. CBR as a managed service delivery project and a systems approach to evaluation
2. CBR as a communal activity, and a participatory evaluation approach

These two approaches will be described initially, and then a third option for CBR will be advanced:

3. CBR as empowerment, and a values approach to evaluation.

### **1. CBR AS SERVICE DELIVERY, AND A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO EVALUATION**

From its early days, CBR has been promoted by WHO as a method of providing rehabilitation services to disabled people in communities which have few resources. In this view, CBR is placed within the health and social service sector, and parallels primary health care’s focus on prevention and treatment roles in a human service program format (6, 11). This model of CBR focuses primarily on individual problems rather than community wide problems. The focus on individuals is partly a fact of demographics and the low geographic prevalence of disability, but also is related to the common perception of disability as an ‘unnatural’ event, to be either avoided or treated. Disability is not considered to be a natural event, in contrast to childbirth, which is celebrated and dealt with as a community concern in primary health care.

Consistent with this view, the WHO Training Manual focuses on individual outcomes:

The purpose of any rehabilitation programme is to help people with disabilities to do what others do in the home and the community and to become socially integrated. Therefore, the evaluation of a CBR programme should determine whether people with disabilities are doing more as a result of the programme... [including] self-care, communication, moving around, and participation in play, school, social, and work activities. It should also assess whether the goals of full participation and equal opportunities are met (12).

The strategies which evaluation can use to improve knowledge and practice in this service delivery model of CBR are broad and include: applied behavioural analysis, observational evaluation, management analysis, economic evaluations, meta evaluation and social policy analysis. These strategies can be used for planning and monitoring programmes, describing programme utilisation, assessing overall staff performance, improving caseload management, assessing client satisfaction,

and comparing programmes. This traditional language and form of programme evaluation has emerged from a systematic, management-oriented perspective on programmes (including their targets, activities, participants and direction).

Generally, systems oriented evaluation involves an internal or external evaluator who is, or becomes, familiar with a programme, and controls the evaluation process by:

- examining the goals of the programme,
- determining which indicators will be used to measure the extent to which goals are met,
- formulating a research design which incorporates these indicators and is based upon assumed cause-and-effect relationships,
- collecting the data,
- interpreting the data,
- arriving at a judgement and suggestions for the programme to better reach its goals, and
- reporting these to the programme managers (13).

In the human service delivery model of CBR, the WHO manual addresses evaluation by providing a check-list framework for answering questions of individual and programme accomplishment. The Local Supervisor takes the primary role in answering for him/herself, and in helping the family to answer about their disabled family member. Recommendations for action then follow logically from the shortcomings that are identified.

As CBR concepts have expanded in the human service delivery model, an emphasis on rights and opportunities for disabled people has increased, as well as the need for integration of social and governmental sector interventions in education and employment (14). This vision of CBR asserts the need for a broad co-ordinated system involving all levels of society: community, regional and national.

On assumption of the need for a broad-based system, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has designed an extensive systems analysis procedure for the evaluation of CBR programmes called Operations Monitoring and Analysis of Results (OMAR) (15). This method uses a statistical database approach to assess change, based on the WHO model of CBR training.

More recently, the Guidelines For Evaluating CBR Programmes (16) provide a framework to assist CBR programme staff at the local, district and national levels in the why and how of both monitoring activities and comprehensive evaluation. Indicators (numbers or facts, sometimes stories) are sought in order to:

- interpret, discuss, and make plans to improve the programme (monitoring)
- answer questions of progress, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability (comprehensive evaluation).

In summary, a systematic, management-oriented approach to evaluation is commonly used for human service programs and prioritises outcomes, or individual change. The central question for this approach, however, is the relevance of the findings to the lives of disabled persons.

There have been many criticisms of the systems approach to evaluation. These criticisms suggest methodological inflexibility and lack of attention to the human elements of community programming. For example, a well known evaluator has stated categorically that:

Evaluation itself is a methodological activity which is essentially similar whether we are trying to evaluate coffee machines or teaching machines, plans for a house or plans for a curriculum. The activity consists simply in the gathering and combining of performance data with a weighted set of goal scales to yield either comparative or numerical ratings, and in the justification of (a) the data gathering instruments, (b) the weightings, and (c) the selection of goals. (3, p.123-4)

The result of using such a 'methodologically pure' approach is that evaluation findings may not be relevant, nor utilised by programme planners. In response to the problem of the lack of utilisation of evaluation findings, systems evaluation turned to an action research approach. In action research, professional evaluators encourage a greater involvement of practitioners, to make evaluation research more directly relevant to programs. This includes a formal stakeholder approach, in which stakeholders' views are incorporated into the evaluation to meet concerns that evaluations are narrow, unrealistic, irrelevant or unused (17).

Although systems evaluation has made an effort to shift the usual pattern of authority relationships surrounding programme evaluation, and thus to alter evaluation priorities, drawbacks to action research and the stakeholder approach include the facts that:

- inequity of stakeholders is not addressed and assumptions are made regarding their ability to provide input. This is particularly a problem where disadvantaged persons such as disabled persons are asked to state their priorities when they have had little experience in doing so
- few supports are given to the less advantaged to participate equally, such as training in the technical aspects of evaluation
- the degree of real decision-making actually afforded to the different stakeholders is limited within the confines of scientific principles
- justification for this approach is ultimately to increase the use of evaluation findings in decision-making that is, to remedy problems of utilisation, and not to deal with issues of inequity.

Overall, the fundamental focus of service oriented CBR, which aims at the individual level, ultimately may restrain its impact. Evaluation is mostly outcome driven and focuses on the impact of services, assuming that these are the key to changes in the lives of disabled persons.

## **2. CBR AS COMMUNAL ACTIVITY, AND A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO EVALUATION**

Another model of CBR stresses community activities, emphasising the participants as active developers rather than passive, albeit grateful, service recipients. In this model, development of the community is stressed, in addition to training people with disabilities. Thus, service provision takes place within the context of community based programmes which aim:

- to create a situation that allows each disabled person to live a fulfilling, self-reliant, and whole life, in close relation with other people
- to help other people — family, neighbours, school children, members of the community — to accept, respect, assist (where necessary), provide equal opportunities for, and appreciate the abilities and potentials of disabled people (18).

When put into practice, the community development model of CBR emphasises a greater focus on community change than on the rehabilitation of individuals. This model also emphasises that systems approaches are not the only ways to conduct credible, rigorous evaluations. Participatory evaluation methods, which are used in many international development programmes, rely on local development of community level processes. Such participatory evaluation often is more relevant to communities with the result that they accept the findings of evaluations and readily support decisions on program changes. While this model also assesses traditional human service issues, evaluation of such programmes attempts to gain the real participation of those involved in the programme. Thus, participants have varying degrees of control of the evaluation process. The central issue for this evaluation approach is how much control do participants have and how does it affect the ‘objectivity’ of the findings?

Participation of programme participants is advocated at all stages of the participatory evaluation approach: deciding to evaluate, determining the evaluation objectives, selecting evaluation co-ordinators, choosing evaluation methods, writing the plan, preparing and testing the methods (including training the data collectors), collecting the information, analysing the information, preparing and reporting the findings, and deciding how to use the results.

The inclusive philosophy of participation in evaluation lends itself to using different sources of knowledge and forms of information, so that naturalistic observation and qualitative methods are often used (19). However, incorporating participants within the evaluation process does not mean avoiding the use of statistical or quantitative measures of change.

There has been a real evolution in the development of participatory approaches to research and evaluation. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which has its base in participatory action research (PAR) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA), has been described as “a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.” (20, p.67). PRA is used in the fields of natural resources management, agriculture, social programmes, and health. This research approach within rural development was intended to evolve evaluation from eliciting and extracting information by outsiders, to creation of information to be shared and owned by local people. PRA in CBR has offered an expanding menu of methods for acquiring information, from the tried-and-true semi-structured interviews, to more unconventional

group discussions, exercises and activities (21). However, in practice, PRA has often become one more set of tools for the practitioner to use to extract information. For example, field staff often refer to “doing a PRA to provide us (programme staff) with needed information” (22).

As with the Stakeholder and Action Research approaches of system evaluation, a participatory element within evaluation seeks to address relevance and utilisation, and it is an improvement in terms of gaining different sources of knowledge and experience. However, the inclusion of disabled persons in the evaluation process does not guarantee that all useful forms of knowledge will be gathered. Such evaluation can generate a narrow experiential base of information which does not take advantage of outside knowledge or technologies. Furthermore, programme staff and beneficiaries may be merely incorporated into a systematic evaluation structure, and their participation may be used simply for increasing productivity or efficiency of the evaluation (23). At its worst, participatory evaluation can be an exercise in co-opting a compliant group of disabled persons to fulfil a professional agenda.

Finally, what is called participatory research need not address issues of social justice. Justice is not addressed when participants in evaluation activities are exactly those who have been able to afford the time to participate, who reap greater benefits from the program in the first place, and now continue to do so by influencing the evaluation too (24). Thus, a participatory evaluation does not necessarily address the roots of social inequity.

### **3. CBR AS JUSTICE, AND AN EMPOWERMENT APPROACH TO EVALUATION**

It has been stated that the political tendency of evaluation is basically reformist and looks toward modest change, rather than fundamental restructuring (25). The participatory evaluation, although emphasising consensus and involvement among participants, may make assumptions that are no different from a systems approach, that is, being uncritical of the basic dimensions of the ‘problem’. (26, 27). Many disabled persons believe that the world is a discriminatory place where they are oppressed and marginalised (28). If CBR is to play a role in the development and transformation of society towards greater justice for disabled people (29,30) then underlying values regarding empowerment must be made explicit in CBR programmes. The perspective and methods for CBR evaluation must also reflect values about a just world for disabled people.

In the empowerment model, evaluation becomes more than a determination of whether programme goals are being met or whether disabled persons are involved. A key distinction between systems or participatory evaluation and evaluation in an empowering style of CBR is the emphasis on evaluation as a development activity in itself, that is, an activity intended to change social injustice in a setting. In re-visiting the earlier definition of an ‘empowerment’ style of community participation in CBR, we note the crucial importance of people increasing their abilities to influence social conditions and to improve their disability situations.

For example, some key elements of CBR as justice could include:

- the self-organisation of rehabilitation services by disabled persons
- explicit, open partnerships with service-providers and non-disabled persons
- advocacy for changes in legislation, policies, and programme guidelines

- local determination of CBR activities, e.g. freedom to choose economic activities versus therapy or public education

Thus, CBR as justice has goals towards the self-development of disabled people, who can and should be enabled to conduct their own analysis of their own reality. Fernandes and Tandon (31) propose evaluation as a method to achieve these goals when evaluation is a process of liberation and when it affirms the community's ownership of knowledge:

“the approach is an effort to check the present trends of (a) professionalisation and centralisation of knowledge in its generation and utilisation since it can be used to manipulate the actors of a social setting without their having any control over it; (b) the neglect of the actors in the situation not only as sources of knowledge but also as its legitimate owners.” [p.21]

House (32) states that it is necessary for evaluators to assume a deliberate theoretical position since evaluation is a political activity and is involved in the distribution of goods in society. House further suggests that evaluation should be founded equally on the principles of truth and justice. Current evaluation methods tend to focus on the determination of 'truth' and assume that 'justice' will be served automatically. However, there is evidence that justice cannot be achieved in an evaluation unless it is specifically addressed. A just evaluation requires a unique set of assumptions and methods of investigation.

As previously noted, one problem for evaluators in community settings has been to devise a methodology for evaluating programmes which have conflicting goals held by different constituents. The stakeholder approach has traditionally treated these conflicting goals as perspectives of equal merit and attempts to provide a balanced view of the programme. However, this does not necessarily resolve conflicts among diverse groups (17). The stakeholder approach also fails to address the degree of influence and power which some participants possess. Those with the greatest resources, or alternately the fewest needs, are more likely to have their perspectives prevail (32). Evaluation methodology can address this problem if it recognises that both the collection and interpretation of evaluation data are systematically biased in favour of those with influence.

An alternate evaluation paradigm has been proposed which explicitly identifies social justice and equality as values which can underlie inquiry (33,34). This critical evaluation perspective assumes that, in addition to focusing on questions of power differences and social justice, the methodology itself must incorporate new methods and analytic tools that are based on an empowerment paradigm (10).

Paulston (35) applies the empowerment paradigm in a comparative evaluation model. Assessment under this comparative model focuses on asking questions from different perspectives. Questions under the 'efficiency' paradigm inquire whether the programme has achieved its goals efficiently. Questions under the 'empowerment' paradigm inquire whether the programme has altered power relations and inequities between dominant and subordinate groups. But when is this information gathered and considered?

Sirotnik (10) has developed a critical inquiry model for evaluation. This model proposes a hierarchy of evaluation methods. Initially, explicit descriptive material is collected about quantifiable

aspects of the programme. These data are then used as catalysts, or sources of information, from which programme participants offer their perspectives. At this stage, the meaning and worth of the data within participants' personal contexts is explored to yield qualitative material. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative data are interpreted together, within a social and historical context, and through reflection on power relationships within the setting. Sirotnik's model represents a significant advance in critical evaluation and is intended as a means for resolving conflicts in programmes. However, it assumes that influential interests will agree to the proposed hierarchy of methods prior to viewing evaluation data. The model also focuses primarily on methods for interpretation of data and ignores the question of bias in initial data collection.

In recent years, the term 'empowerment evaluation' has been discussed. In this model, also known as developmental evaluation, evaluation expertise is incorporated within the actual team designing and implementing a programme. Set evaluation goals are minimised, being over-shadowed by the aim of on-going change and improvement (36). In such cases, Patton notes that:

... the evaluation process has had to be highly flexible and responsive. Taking a 20-year, developmental perspective, where the locus of accountability is community-based rather than funder-based, changes all the usual parameters of evaluation (p.315).

In the area of disability advocacy, there are numerous examples of empowerment evaluation (37,38). However, in the field of rehabilitation, empowerment evaluation is very new, perhaps because of the entrenched interests of professional rehabilitation programme evaluators. One example of empowerment evaluation does appear in the CBR literature. Project PROJIMO in Mexico is using in-depth and structured interviews as anthropological techniques for eliciting life stories, which provide the basis for analysis of the disability situation of project participants. Evaluation is described as an informal, co-operative, continuing group activity, without clearly defined roles for the group members. Members of the group participate in collecting and reviewing quantitative and qualitative data, with the aim of monitoring and improving the programme (39). Whether this evaluation has actually contributed to Project PROJIMO's social justice goals is unknown.

### **III METHODOLOGY OF AN EMPOWERMENT APPROACH TO CBR EVALUATION**

In the spirit of critical inquiry, we pose some key questions that should be addressed in an empowerment approach to CBR evaluation. We leave the development of answers to these questions ultimately to programme stakeholders.

#### **Who should participate?**

How do we address the actual participation of those whose input is hardest to get? This is a realistic dilemma when working in the field of disability. One may need to be pragmatic and start somewhere. It is helpful to begin with programme personnel and organisations of disabled persons. One cannot expect that disabled people will always be able to participate fully, but one use the mobilisation of disabled people to its fullest when it is there.

#### **What goals should be evaluated?**

If the overall aim of a programme is empowerment, then progress in this goal must be explored, even though empowerment is an unclear term and highly dependent on the local culture. Focusing

on concrete programme objectives which involve ‘stepping stones’ to empowerment may include changes in:

- Community and family attitudes
- Integration into public institutions and private enterprises
- Transfer of knowledge and skills through self-help
- Services that directly respond to needs expressed by disabled persons, family members
- Models of partnership and co-operation among staff, disabled persons, community
- Community decision-making and accountability
- Appropriate technology
- Referral network to other services

The need for information to assess these objectives is clear and principles of information based rehabilitation could be valuable here. The key question for empowerment evaluation is how deeply we analyse the findings.

#### **What should be the role of the evaluator?**

Can CBR programmes have empowering partnerships with external evaluators? The evaluator would be a resource to those in the programme. The evaluator would be a collaborator, with a role partly as learner and partly as teacher, in the style of developmental evaluation. The evaluator need not have a role in reporting to external groups, nor in accountability. The evaluator instead would assist participants in understanding the context of the programme, how programme activities affect disabled persons’ problems, and how to change the programme.

#### **What method should be used?**

There are five steps in empowerment evaluation. All are essential and cannot be missed or addressed out of order. However, the steps can be repeated over time. Key questions are addressed at each step.

- ***Understanding the problem:***

What are we doing now? How did it come to be this way? Why are we really running this programme as we are now?

- ***Reflection:***

Whose interests are being served by the way things are? What is the nature of a just society? How does what we do (or not do) fit into this picture?

- ***Identifying needed information:***

What information and knowledge do we have, or need to get, that bears on the issues? How many disabled people are and are not reached by the programme, and why? Do certain people benefit more than others? Which activities work well? The evaluator may speculate on how this information will actually be useful.

- ***Getting and summarising the information:***

The evaluator can help to develop realistic plans for getting the information in a usable form. Can we assess the information in an open way?

- ***Taking action:***

What are we going to do about all this? What are our options and do they improve the situation?

## **CONCLUSION - SOME PROBLEMS WITH EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION**

Although empowerment evaluation is a new approach for CBR, we should be aware that other approaches, such as participatory evaluation, were also new in their time. There are a few issues which need to be discussed by those interested in CBR as justice and the use of empowerment evaluation to address injustice. First, there is a fundamental issue of whether the external evaluator's primary responsibility lies with the sponsor of the evaluation or with the group being evaluated, especially if it is a disadvantaged group such as disabled persons. There is no easy answer to this question. Perhaps it is worth keeping in mind that the beneficiaries of the programme must be satisfied in the long run or the evaluation will be pointless.

Second, empowerment evaluation is often seen to be either 'unscientific' and not believable, or 'threatening' and not acceptable. These issues are more significant problems of perception than actual problems. We believe that their solution lies in demystifying empowerment evaluation by increasing peoples' familiarity with it.

Third when is the evaluation over? Empowerment evaluation is not a set of applied, time-limited research technologies but rather an ongoing, collaborative, value-driven process of organisational change and improvement. It is a continuous process and becomes part of the CBR manager's tool kit.

Finally, a basic assumption of this evaluation style is that the force of the better argument allows participants to reach a justified consensus. While this is an oversimplified description of the process of critique, the basic requirement for empowerment evaluation is unlimited opportunity for discussion, free of constraints from any source. However, people do not always interact with one another in the way we suggest, except perhaps in the most honest of relationships. Can CBR actually succeed with this approach?

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