



**Community Based Rehabilitation  
and the Convention on the Rights  
of Persons with Disabilities**

## International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) Collaborating globally to promote Inclusive Development

IDDC is a global consortium of disability and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mainstream development NGOs and disabled people's organisations (DPOs) supporting disability and development work in more than 100 countries around the world.

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acknowledging diversity, eradicating poverty and ensuring that all people are fully included and can actively participate in development processes and activities regardless of age, gender, disability, state of health, ethnic origin or any other characteristic

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International: Inclusive development through professional insertion: Senegalise woman with disabilities participating at professional insertion programme in Ziquinchor sitting in adapted hand- driven bike surrounded by a man and a woman.

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## Community Based Rehabilitation and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

This document identifies linkages between Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) - based on the CBR Guidelines as the major reference - and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This analysis aims to support development stakeholders in understanding CBR as a strategy for disability inclusive development in line with the Convention and to strengthen CBR programmes.

### 1. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The CRPD, adopted in 2006, is the most significant legal development for persons with disabilities world-wide. It illustrates the shift in attitudes and approaches to persons with disabilities: from seeing them as "objects" of charity and welfare to viewing them as participating, contributing members of society, where they have the same rights as others in their community, and are capable of making decisions for their lives. The Convention is a disability-specific human rights treaty, clarifying how established civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights apply equally to persons with disabilities. It clearly states that all human rights have to be made inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities; it identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to access and exercise their rights on an equal basis with others, and areas where their rights have to be protected. The central tenet of the Convention is non-discrimination; its vision is that of an inclusive society. The text was developed with active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (Disabled People's Organisations).

As a legally binding document for States who ratify it, the CRPD is therefore a powerful tool to "promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity" (article 1).

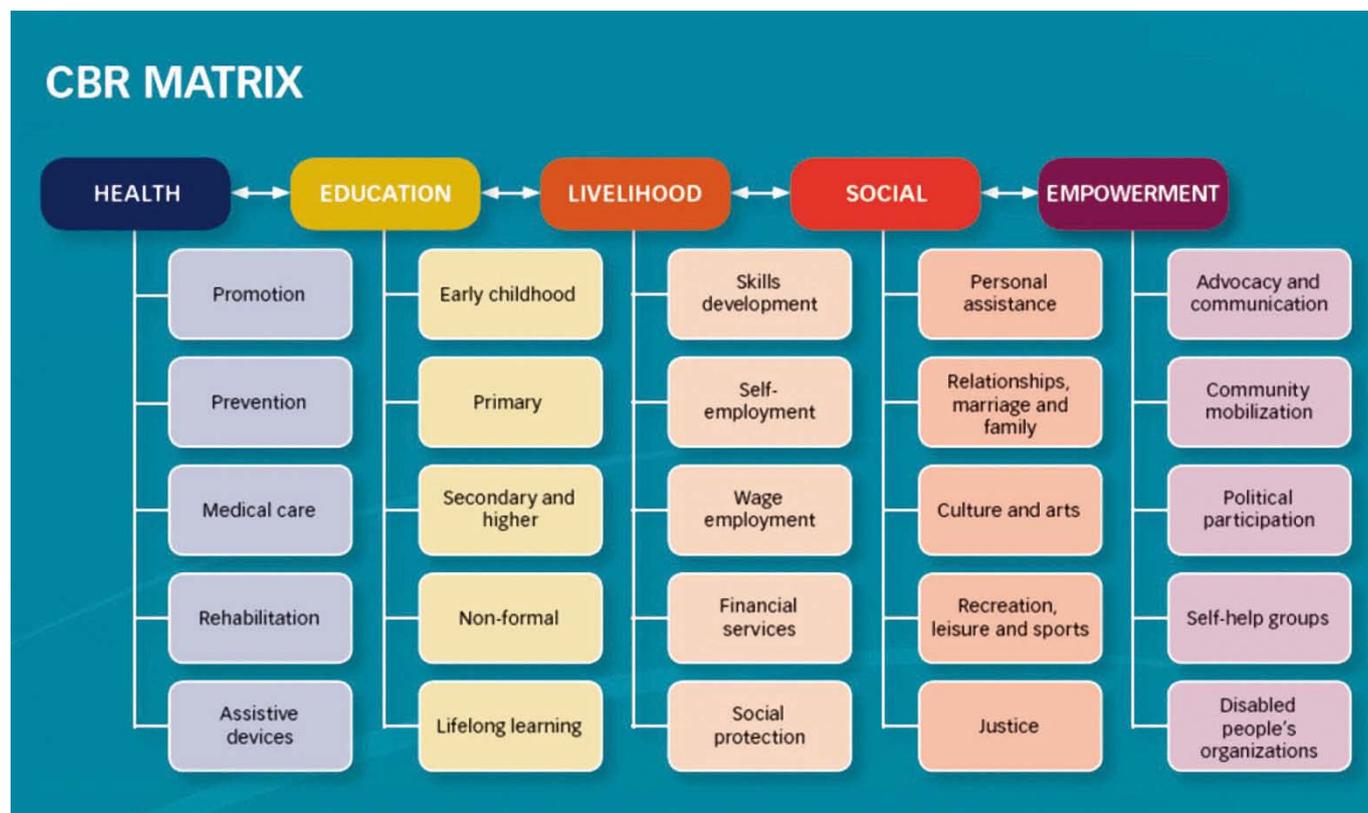
### 2. Community Based Rehabilitation

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is defined in 2004 by the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Health Organization (WHO) as "a strategy within general community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities, poverty reduction and social inclusion of all people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities themselves, their families, organisations and communities, and the relevant governmental and non-governmental health, education, vocational, social and other services."

**The CBR Guidelines** of WHO, ILO, UNESCO and IDDC (2010), developed with active participation of Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), UN agencies, governments

and civil society organisations, provide a unified understanding of the concept and principles of CBR as a comprehensive rights-based approach; they focus on creation of inclusive societies where accessibility for persons with disabilities to all development benefits are based on the principles of the **CRPD**.

**The CBR Matrix** from the Guidelines summarises the five main components of CBR and their subsidiary elements:



### 3. Linkages between Community Based Rehabilitation and the Convention

The CRPD has an explicit development dimension acknowledging the relationship between disability and poverty. This in turn underlines the links between the Convention as a human rights treaty and CBR as a development strategy for inclusion, rights promotion and poverty reduction. The introductory booklet of the CBR Guidelines states that: "CBR is a multi-sectoral, bottom-up strategy which can ensure that the Convention makes a difference at the community level.

**While the Convention provides the philosophy and policy, CBR is a practical strategy for implementation.** CBR activities are designed to meet the basic needs of people with disabilities, reduce poverty, and enable access to health, education, livelihood and social opportunities – all these activities fulfil the aims of the Convention".

The Convention contains implicit reference to CBR in two articles mentioned below:

**Article 19:** States Parties to the present Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

- a. Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with other and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;
- b. Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;
- c. Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs”.

**Article 26:** States Parties shall take effective and appropriate measures, including through peer support, to enable persons with disabilities to attain and maintain maximum independence, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life.

To that end, States Parties shall organize, strengthen and extend comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programmes, particularly in the areas of health, employment, education and social services, in such a way that these services and programmes:

- (b) Support participation and inclusion in the community and all aspects of society, are voluntary, and are available to persons with disabilities as close as possible to their own communities, including in rural areas.

Other articles carry reference to availability of services in the community, for example,

**Article 24 on Education, Paragraph 2 (b)** Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the **communities in which they live.** b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education

**Article 25 (c)** Provide these health services as close as possible to **people’s own communities, including in rural areas.**

## 4. Community Based Rehabilitation as a strategy for implementing the Convention

CBR is considered as a relevant strategy for effective implementation of the CRPD, especially in developing countries. CBR practice can be the vehicle and mechanism for implementing the Convention; while the Convention can be used as a framework to set standards for CBR and strengthen field practice. The table below illustrates the strong linkages between the core articles of the Convention and the CBR Guidelines.

CBR Guidelines	CRPD core articles
Introduction of CBR	<b>03.</b> General Principles <b>04.</b> General obligations
Main cross cutting themes: Women with Disabilities; Children with disabilities; principles of CRPD	<b>03.</b> General Principles <b>04.</b> General obligations <b>06.</b> Women with disabilities <b>07.</b> Children with disabilities
Health	<b>20.</b> Personal mobility <b>25.</b> Health <b>26.</b> Habilitation and rehabilitation
Education	<b>24.</b> Education
Livelihood	<b>27.</b> Work and employment <b>28.</b> Adequate standard of living and social protection
Social	<b>12.</b> Equal recognition before law <b>13.</b> Access to justice <b>14.</b> Liberty and security of person <b>15.</b> Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment <b>16.</b> Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse <b>17.</b> Protecting the integrity of the person <b>19.</b> Living independently and being included in the community <b>23.</b> Respect for home and family <b>30.</b> Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport
Empowerment	<b>04.</b> General obligations <b>05.</b> Equality and non-discrimination <b>08.</b> Awareness raising <b>09.</b> Accessibility <b>15.</b> Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment <b>16.</b> Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse <b>17.</b> Protecting the integrity of the person <b>21.</b> Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to
information	<b>22.</b> Respect for privacy <b>29.</b> Participation in political and public life
Mental Health	<b>25.</b> Health
Emergencies and Disaster	<b>11.</b> Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

## 5. Experiences - Making the Convention a reality through Community Based Rehabilitation

The following examples from different regions show the role of CBR practice in implementing various provisions of the Convention. The examples illustrate the roles of key stakeholders including persons with disabilities, disabled people's organisations (DPOs), government and civil society; and the importance of partnerships between stakeholders in implementation of the CRPD.

### Advocacy for national disability law in Peru in line with the Convention<sup>1</sup>

The CBR consortium of Peru is a group of four organisations working in the departments of Cuzco, San Martin and the municipality of Lima in Peru. The consortium realised that only with a good national disability law it would be possible to effectively bring about real change in the lives of people with disabilities. The consortium together with DPOs and other civil society groups gathered 130,000 signatures (57,000 were required) to lobby with the Peruvian Congress through social media, sit-ins and other means. An essential step for the law to be introduced into Congress was the validation of signatures by the National Office for Elections. The CBR consortium financed this process and lobbied with the Congress to revise the law through consultations with relevant institutions. Finally, on 14 June 2012 the Peruvian Congress approved a progressive disability law, with many provisions based on the Convention. The initiative was successful through strong partnerships and active participation by persons with disabilities, backed by the strong conviction that the local implementation of the Convention is possible. The CBR consortium is part of a civil society network that is committed to monitor the full implementation of this law.

### Implementing the Convention through CBR- examples from Pakistan and Nepal

In Pakistan the project "Inclusive Community Development through Mainstreaming People with Disability in Social Mobilization in District Jhelum, Punjab Province, focused on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the Convention. Local Citizens' Community Boards were formed with membership from persons with disabilities, a mainstream development organisation, one Disabled Persons Organisation and the relevant government departments of health, education and social welfare, to support CBR implementation. The project was able to provide access to health, education, livelihoods and recreation opportunities for people with disabilities in their communities.

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<sup>1</sup> With thanks to Action and Development India, CBM, Handicap International, LIGHT FOR THE WORLD, NAD and Sightsavers for providing the case studies and supporting the CBR projects.

In Nepal, twenty local organisations, including DPOs implemented a project to promote empowerment and social change for inclusion of persons with disabilities in fourteen districts.

Using the rights-based and holistic approach, more than sixty Community Disability Workers were trained on disability rights and on improving access to services for people with disabilities.

As a result, persons with disabilities became aware of their rights, gained more access to rehabilitation service, assistive devices, education institutions, vocational training, livelihood programmes, and community groups.

At the national level, the project contributed to policy changes to enshrine the rights of people with disabilities in the country's new legal framework, and also ensured that these rights would be enforced through concrete actions.



@Marion Steff/ Sightsavers:

Fourteen-year-old Neeta in her shop with her family in Theekri village (India). She got enrolled in one of the inclusive education units, was taught Braille, and appeared for 10th grade open school examination. She successfully passed the exam and had opened a small family shop.

## Capacity building and training on the rights of persons with disabilities in a CBR project in Burkina Faso

### 🔗 Article 8

In its CBR projects in Burkina Faso, OCADES uses the Convention to train and build capacity of CBR agents - persons with disabilities, and DPOs - to advocate for inclusion. The CRPD training focuses on access to and knowledge of legal instruments and how to use them in practice. Extracts of CRPD articles are copied and distributed to the participants. The project also raises awareness on rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities through various media. Local radio stations carry broadcasts on the CRPD and the national disability law to make the public aware of rights of persons with disabilities. Informal chats and discussions are held with local communities on participation of persons with disabilities in cultural life, sports, marriage, education and vocational training. Videos are used to illustrate rights according to the CRPD and to stimulate debates in the communities.



© Priscille Geiser/Handicap International:  
A Nepalese student learning Braille in an inclusive school in Pokhara, Nepal

## Improving children's with disabilities lives in Borana pastoralist society **Articles 19, 7, 26**

In Borana pastoralist society in Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, the CBR project of Gayo pastoralist organisation found many children with disabilities in a state of neglect, deprived of attention and proper care from their families. One mother of a child with cerebral palsy was taught by the CBR worker to wash and feed her child properly; she was given a wheelchair so that the child could sit well and observe her surroundings. The mother was happy with the intervention of the CBR worker, as her child looked better and she was able to re-enter her community that had hitherto ignored her family because of her child. By working with families, CBR initiatives have managed to include hundreds of children with disabilities into family and community life. This project relates to CRPD Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community; Article 7 – Children with disabilities; and Article 26 – Habilitation and Rehabilitation.

## Including children with disabilities in schools in Mozambique

OREBACOM is a local NGO implementing CBR in Beira, Mozambique. Beira has several special schools for different types of disabilities. While visiting houses of children with disabilities the CBR workers realised that these children were not attending school due to negative attitudes and lack of knowledge on the part of teachers and parents. OREBACOM carried out awareness raising with schools, family members, Education Authorities of Beira and the general community, on the right to education for all children. Following this, OREBACOM developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Education Authorities to allow the organisation to work directly with schools for inclusion of children with disabilities. OREBACOM has managed to send children with disabilities to general schools, start literacy training for youth with intellectual disabilities and to conduct training to school teachers to work with children with disabilities.

## Improving children's health in South Sudan **Articles 25**

In Western Equatorial Region of South Sudan there is a high prevalence of epilepsy and a disease related to epilepsy called 'nodding disease'. Children with this disease have epilepsy associated attacks which causes a deterioration of their mental capacities and leads if untreated to death. The supply of epilepsy medication was often interrupted causing further deterioration of the children and loss of trust in the medical system. In the context of its CBR project, the local NGO SEM collaborated with the hospital to set up an epilepsy clinic where children would be better monitored and epilepsy medication would be available on a regular basis. An association of parents of children with nodding disease and epilepsy was formed to lobby for the proper care and rights of their children.

South Sudan being a new and developing nation the regular supply of medicine has again been interrupted, and the struggle to get systems functioning again is to be resumed.

## Accessing credit programmes in Malawi and improving food security and livelihood in Niger ➔ Articles 27 and 28

In Malawi, one of the key objectives of priority policy area 7 (Economic Empowerment) of the National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities is to improve access by men and women with disabilities to loans and credit opportunities. To this end, the Government of Malawi's CBR programme promotes mechanisms for small and medium enterprises to ensure that persons with disabilities can access business loans. The loans are granted to groups of community members with and without disabilities.

One of the key actions has been the inclusion of a committee member with a disability who is responsible for implementation of the government's newly established Malawi Rural Development Fund. This fund provides low interest loans for people from rural areas living in poverty. This representative links up with CBR programmes to increase the number of eligible persons with disabilities being identified to access loans and to ensure adequate business management training for loan beneficiaries. Available statistics indicate that a total of 490 persons with disabilities in 75 groups from 18 of the 28 districts have accessed loans from

the Fund, amounting to the equivalent to US\$85 000. Most of the individuals are running profitable business ventures with considerable positive impact on their lives and the lives of their families.

The "survival yard" programme is a result of collaboration between the "Projet de Réadaptation à Base Communautaire des Aveugles et Autres Handicapés" of Niger and the local community. The project began in response to the famine in the region and provides food security for persons with disabilities and their extended family



@LIGHT FOR THE WORLD Austria: Eleven-year-old Tamiru from Ethiopia was born with club feet. He was only able to crawl until a field worker from the Arba Minch rehabilitation center discovers him. After amputation of his right leg, Tamiru received rehabilitation and with prosthesis and crutches, is now able to go to school on his own.

throughout the year. Persons with disabilities and their families develop 25 by 25 meter survival yards with a well and simple watering canals.

A border of bushy trees creates a micro-climate that protects the garden from the harsh winds of the Sahara. The garden provides vegetables and fruit to eat and sell, fodder for livestock, and firewood and continue to flourish even in the hot season. Alongside, a package of services is provided to the persons with disabilities and their families, including education on disability inclusion, health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene; access to immunisation, improved pre- and post-natal care, schooling, rehabilitation services; construction of latrines and wood efficient stoves; creating access to markets; loans of donkey carts and animals for income generation. The outcomes reported by people include greater access to food, improved income, improved hygiene and improved attitudes towards persons with disabilities on the part of the community.



© Marion Steff/ Sightsavers:  
Eleven-year-old Vikkas is demonstrating his reading skills, Saudia village (India)

## Candidates with disabilities won local elections in India

### 🔗 Articles 29

In India, Panchayats are the local government decision making bodies for development for a cluster of villages with a population of about 100,000. Panchayat institutions are a meaningful entry point for persons with disabilities to be involved with decisions made at local level for development programmes and to exercise their political rights. In 2006, in Tamil Nadu State in Southern India, 52 leaders of Disabled Peoples Organisations were given orientation on Panchayat Raj Act on the procedures to contest the election to the Panchayat, and the responsibilities entailed on being elected. The orientation included case studies, focus group discussions and questionnaires. Subsequently, 18 out of the 52 candidates who contested won the election. The grass-roots movement of DPOs promoted through CBR contributed largely to the success of the candidates who won, ensuring that persons with disability had the opportunity to participate equally with others.

## 6. Principles - how to align Community Based Rehabilitation programmes with the Convention

The CBR Guidelines provide a comprehensive overview of CBR and its different components. CBR programmes are not expected to implement all the components outlined in the CBR Matrix, but rather to select context relevant interventions.

The CBR Guidelines focus on persons with disabilities' individual access to a range of services. This should not divert from the need for systemic changes and reforms to build inclusive communities and societies in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### How CBR programmes can effectively contribute to realise the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD:

- CBR programmes are designed, implemented and monitored in close consultation with persons with disabilities and their organisations, representing various groups of persons with disabilities (e.g. women, children).
- CBR programmes target changes at both individual and systemic levels.
- CBR programmes hold governments accountable to fulfill their obligations under the CRPD. CBR programmes search synergies between (I)NGOs for efficiently using resources and advocating.
- CBR programmes employ persons with disabilities to become change agents in CBR projects and programmes.
- CBR programmes contribute to extend access to ordinary and disability-specific support services for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others and ensure the best possible quality of services.

## 7. Conclusion

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Community Based Rehabilitation have the common goal of promoting the full and effective realisation of human rights for persons with disabilities, through inclusive development practices, accessible to all.

The positive experiences of applying the Convention through CBR in different countries provide a very good basis. CBR programmers and practitioners can use them to advocate for effective implementation of CRPD-compliant CBR programmes with key stakeholders such as Disabled Peoples Organisations, governments, mainstream development organisations and agencies to reach the goal of community based inclusive development.

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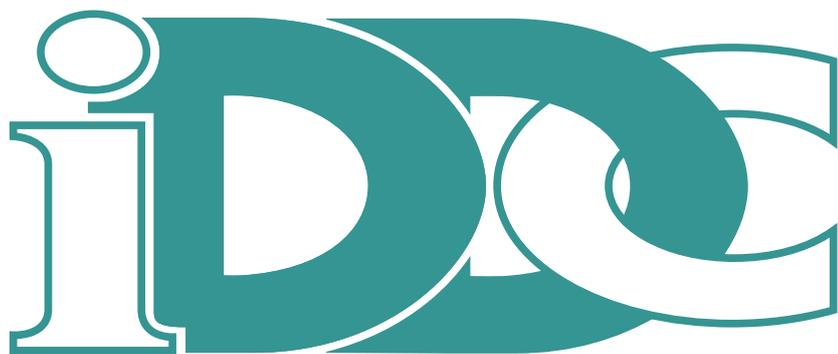
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'**Making it Work**' database of good practices [www.makingitwork-crpd.org/good-practice-database/](http://www.makingitwork-crpd.org/good-practice-database/)



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