

# Evaluation of Enabling Participation: Business development as a tool to promote disabled people's rights in Sri Lanka (2005 – 2010)

APT Enterprise Development

**Lorraine Wapling and P.G.Amarapala**

October 2010

## Contents

Executive summary .....	5
Section 1 Introduction to the project .....	6
1.1 Project context.....	6
1.2 Disability in Sri Lanka .....	6
1.3 Project summary .....	7
Section 2 Evaluation methodology .....	8
2.1 Objectives.....	8
2.2 Methodology.....	9
Section 3 Findings from the evaluation .....	10
3.1 Equity .....	10
3.2 Efficiency .....	11
3.3 Impact .....	13
3.4 Sustainability.....	14
3.5 Replicable.....	15
3.6 Effectiveness .....	15
3.6.1 <i>Output 1</i> .....	15
3.6.2 <i>Output 2</i> .....	16
3.6.3 <i>Output 2.1</i> .....	18
3.6.4 <i>Output 3</i> .....	22
3.6.5 <i>Output 4</i> .....	23
3.6.6 <i>Output 5</i> .....	29
Section 4 Lessons learned.....	34
Section 5 Summary recommendations.....	37
Annex A Achievement rating scale.....	39
Annex B DPO and self-help group case studies.....	44

## **Acknowledgements**

The consultants would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who assisted in this consultancy and production of this report. In particular, we owe a debt of gratitude to Kithsiri Dharmapriya Director of CBTD and project manager for his hard work in organising the schedule of visits and for translating all the meetings. Even in the short time we spent together it was evident the hard work he (alongside others) had put in to realise this project.

Our sincere thanks go to all the disabled people, family members, volunteers, staff members, employers, trainers and all those we met along the way for their time, openness and generosity during the process of review.

A special word of thanks to Amy Possart (BSL interpreter), who apart from sincerely fulfilling her primary role added extra 'life' in the whole process of the review.

We sincerely thank APT Enterprise Development for the opportunity to learn and share.

### **Lorraine Wapling**

Disability and Development  
Specialist  
Beaver Consulting  
[consultant@wapling.me.uk](mailto:consultant@wapling.me.uk)

### **P.G.Amarapala**

Freelance Consultant  
[pgamare@gmail.com](mailto:pgamare@gmail.com)

October 2010

## Abbreviations

BDS	Business Development Services
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CBTD	Community Business and Technology Development
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DPO	Disabled People's Organisation
DSD	Divisional Secretariat Division
EDOL	Entrepreneurial Disability Oriented Livelihoods
GIDES	Giruwupathu Community Development Square
IGA	Income generation activity
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFI	Micro-finance institution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RBA	Rights based approach
SEEDS	Sarvodaya Economic Enterprise Development Services
SHG	Self help group
SPDA	Southern Province Deaf Association
RSDC	Ruhunu Sumaga Circle of the Deaf
UNCRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
VTASL	Vocational Training Authority Sri Lanka
VTC	Vocational Training Centre

## Executive summary

The main purpose of this review was to carry out a final evaluation for the 'Enabling Participation: Business development as a tool to promote disabled people's rights in Sri Lanka' (July 2005 to December 2010) project funded through DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund. In particular we were asked to focus on what the impact and effectiveness of the project has been both in terms of livelihoods development and empowerment of disabled people; and to highlight important lessons learned. In line with DFID recommendations we also focused on the projects contributions to the development of partner capacity, disability rights awareness, gender issues and overall sustainability.

The evaluation will suggest that overall the project has made important progress towards improving the livelihoods opportunities of disabled people in Sri Lanka but has had less success in the area of empowerment and participation in decision making processes. Whilst the overall purpose has not been fully achieved, given the context in which the project was implemented important first steps have been taken. There are more disabled people taking part in livelihoods activities; more mainstream community based organisations are considering disabled people as beneficiaries and clients; more private sector employers are hiring disabled people; and the main providers of social welfare and rehabilitation have started to approach disabled people from a more needs based perspective.

On an individual level the evaluation identified examples of where people have overcome environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers to obtain places in training courses and employment. At an organisational level partners like CBTD, GIDES, the VTC and Navajeevana have made changes to the way they approach disability. Regionally there have been changes to some policies, such as with the VTASL which may in time come to affect national changes. At the level of Provincial government the social services department at least has started to alter its perceptions with regards to the capabilities of disabled people and is in the process of ratifying the provisions of the UNCRPD. Important moves forward have also been effected in the acceptance of sign language as a legitimate form of communication with Deaf people.

Overall though the disabled people who were involved in this project are not yet empowered to make rights based demands collectively or to be representative of disability at the level of decision making. Much of the representation that has occurred during this project has been at the level of the individual and has not affected the 'duty bearer' to any great degree. Levels of dependency are still high, especially with regards to organisations representing disabled people (DPOs) although there are signs that shifts in attitudes have begun.

It is probable that the greatest impact in terms of rights awareness was experienced by non-disabled people, with disabled people experiencing more in terms of improved economic opportunities. Both of these changes are important and given more attention and time could well lead to improved participation by disabled people in the livelihoods sector and beyond.

The project was able to achieve Outputs 1 (developing partnerships and alliances), 2.2 (increasing participation in economic activities) and Output 3 (documenting innovative and practical experiences) and make significant progress towards Output 5 (more effective approaches to the inclusion of disabled people in economic development). However Outputs 2.1 (increased rights awareness by disabled people), and 4 (integration of rights based approaches for the inclusion of disabled people) were not effectively realised largely because they were unrealistic. This calls for greater attention in the future to considering the context in which projects are developed and the skills available to implement them.

## **Section 1 Introduction to the project**

### **1.1 Project context<sup>1</sup>**

Sri Lanka has a current HDI rank of 102 (2009 UNDP) and an HPI rank of 67 (2007) making this country fall well within the medium human development category and well above its largest neighbour India at 134. The overall population in 2008 was around 20m with 85% still largely rural. It has made very good progress towards its MDG targets with all but goals 3 (gender equality) and 7 (environmental sustainability) on track<sup>2</sup>. This is in spite of the 2004 Tsunami which devastated large areas of the south and east coasts.

In economic terms Sri Lanka continues to make steady progress. Recent GNI per capita stood at \$3,730. The official poverty line (August 2010) falls at Rs 3,111/- per person, per month which is what the government estimates is needed to sustain an acceptable level of living. In 2009 of those in employment 65% were male and 35% were female which indicates that there is still some way to go in achieving gender parity.

Unemployment figures nationally stand at 4.3% men and 8.6% women (5.8% overall) but it is interesting to note that the three project areas have relatively high rates of unemployment: Hambantota 10.6% (highest overall), Matara 9.8% and Galle 8.3%. 51.3% population is classified as being economically inactive and disability (alongside illness) is given at 5.4% of this total.

### **1.2 Disability in Sri Lanka**

There is an official prevalence rate for disability (274,711 people) given at 1.6%, broken down: 19% visually impaired; 20.2% hearing impaired; 41.8% physically impaired; 19% intellectually impaired<sup>3</sup>. However UNESCAP estimates the figure to be somewhere closer to 1.4million (7%) and the department for social welfare in Galle reported to us that it tends to use the WHO estimate of 10% to plan its services. In terms of geographical spread Hambantota has the highest prevalence rate for disability, followed by Matara with Galle also high up.

Disabled people are amongst the poorest sector of Sri Lankan society. Limited employment and business opportunities make income generation difficult and banks and credit facilities are often not accessible. With few disabled people able to access education and skills training (31.7% of disabled people have never been to school and only 3.3% have attended vocational training) their options are limited. The single highest livelihood activity for disabled people is to be supported by their family (73.3%). Where they do have skills they are subject to discrimination because of societies negative attitudes towards what they are expected to be able to achieve. Only 14% are in formal employment.

There are social protection measures in place for poor disabled people and their families and it is relatively straightforward to qualify for disability specific payments<sup>4</sup>. Eligibility is based on the 1996 Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 broad ranging definition "any person who, as a result of any deficiency in his physical or mental capabilities, whether congenital or not, is unable by himself to ensure for himself, wholly or partly, the necessities of life". This encompasses

---

<sup>1</sup> All statistics for this section have been taken from Labour Force Survey, 2009 Dept of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

<sup>2</sup> UNDP Sri Lanka MDG progress report 2010

<sup>3</sup> Figures from the General Household Survey 2001

<sup>4</sup> Unlike many countries, including India for example there is no medical assessment required for qualification as 'disabled'

people who have visual, speech, hearing, mobility, intellectual, and psychiatric impairments and disability arising as a result of epilepsy and other causes. It is largely arranged by personal selection – people or families who think they might qualify will approach local Divisional Services Officers. If these Officers agree then their case will be supported with an application to the Department of Social Welfare. Disability payments are available at between Rps 100 – 300/ - per month which make negligible impact on alleviating chronic levels of poverty.

Sri Lanka has some positive legislative and policy frameworks on disability in place. The Constitution states “Nothing in this article shall prevent special provisions being made by law, subordinate legislation or executive action for the advancement of women, children and/or persons with disability.” A Parliamentary Act was passed in 1996 to ‘Protect the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ which amongst other things set out for the creation of a National Council for disabled people presided over by the Minister for Social Welfare but including representatives from the main national DPOs. This Act also gave disabled people the right to legally challenge access issues in a range of sectors like education and employment<sup>5</sup>. Sri Lanka was an early signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) and it is currently in the process of domesticating its provisions through Regional legislation.

### **1.3 Project summary**

The ‘Enabling Participation: Business development as a tool to promote disabled people’s rights in Sri Lanka’ project began implementation in 2005 after local partner CBTD identified a significant level of exclusion faced by disabled people in their working areas. Consultations and field visits revealed a huge need to encourage disabled people away from their high levels of dependency on families and NGOs and challenge the widespread beliefs that they are unable to live independently.

The main purpose of this project was to ‘empower disabled people through developing practical approaches for accessing their right to improve their livelihoods, to participate in decisions which affect their lives and enhance their inclusion by policy makers’. This comes in recognition of the fact that disabled people find it hard to reduce their levels of extreme poverty because of prevailing negative attitudes and discriminatory practices which leave them disempowered and dependent.

The project focus was to demonstrate the capacity of disabled people as effective participants in the economic life of their communities, by facilitating the removal of inhibiting factors (social and environmental) that discourage disabled people from realising their rights. It aimed to work with disabled people, a range of local organisations who support them in various ways, and other organisations who are active in the business development sector, to develop, adapt and demonstrate services that enable disabled men and women to become employed or start their own small businesses.

The interventions were designed around the Entrepreneurial Disability Orientated Livelihoods Model (EDOL) which was being developed and refined by APT and CBTD. Essentially this model focuses on removing the barriers (environmental and social) that prevent or restrict disabled people from realising their right to independent livelihoods. It works with both disabled people (and their carers, family) to build their confidence and knowledge around rights and entitlements (empowerment) and with agents in the livelihoods sector (private, public and government sector employers and training institutions) to encourage them to regard disabled people as employable. Case studies (role models) are used to showcase examples of positive placements which help to break down a lot of the

---

5 N. G. Kamalawathie, AKASA, Sri Lanka Health Exchange 2009

stereotyped negative reactions employers and trainers often have about the capacity of disabled people to work.

This project aimed to pilot the EDOL model using a variety of different implementing partners which at the start included:

- CBR based organisation – Navajeevana
- Disabled people’s organisation - Ruhunu Sumaga Circle of Deaf
- Micro-credit organisation – GIDES
- Business development services organisation – CBTD and Business Creations

Within this model a range of different interventions were offered to participants including:

- Preparatory services (CBR)
- Vocational training
- BDS training - expenditure recording
- BDS training - expenditure analysis
- Employment
- Self-employment
- Grants for business start-up (cash/equipment) Rs5-10K
- Loans for business start-up Rs5-20K

Since this was also about helping to change attitudes and practices of service providers those organisations that agreed to become partners also received training. CBTD carried out a number of early training sessions to help project coordinators and staff from each of the partners to learn about business planning and basic livelihoods counselling. Later in the project issues around a lack of awareness of the rights based approach by partners led to the provision of training (and eventually a very good manual) on adopting a rights approach.

## **Section 2 Evaluation methodology**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The objectives of the evaluation as stated in the terms of reference were as follows:

#### *Impact*

- What it has achieved – the changes that have occurred;
- Has the planned overall objective been achieved and to what extent is this directly due to the project?
- Could the impact have been achieved without the project?
- Are the impacts sustainable? Will they continue after the end of the project?
- What can be concluded about the impact? What outputs were achieved?

#### *Effectiveness*

- Were the project activities relevant and effective?



- How have disabled people been directly involved in project implementation and decision making?
- Have disabled people with a range of impairments been included as beneficiaries? (can these be disaggregated)
- What is the quality and sustainability of the enterprise and livelihood activities the project has delivered for disabled people?
- Has the project delivered value for money and how this is measured?
- Recommend any realistic changes to improve implementation in the final phase to the end of December 2010;

### *Lessons Learnt*

- The lessons learnt that need to be fed back into the design and implementation of new projects. This should address learning that could support development of:
  - livelihood focussed projects that are inclusive of disabled/disadvantaged people (O3 his and O5);
  - projects focussed on empowerment of DP and other disadvantaged groups (O2).

## **2.2 Methodology**

### *Qualitative approach*

Qualitative methods were used to elicit the views of a range of stakeholders: disabled people, carers and family members, CBR workers, partner organisation managers and staff, DPO representatives, employers, local government personnel, and CBTD staff.

Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and home visits formed the basis of the information gathering. A list of questions to guide the interviews and discussions was developed by the consultants in advance of the fieldwork.

### *Review of documentation*

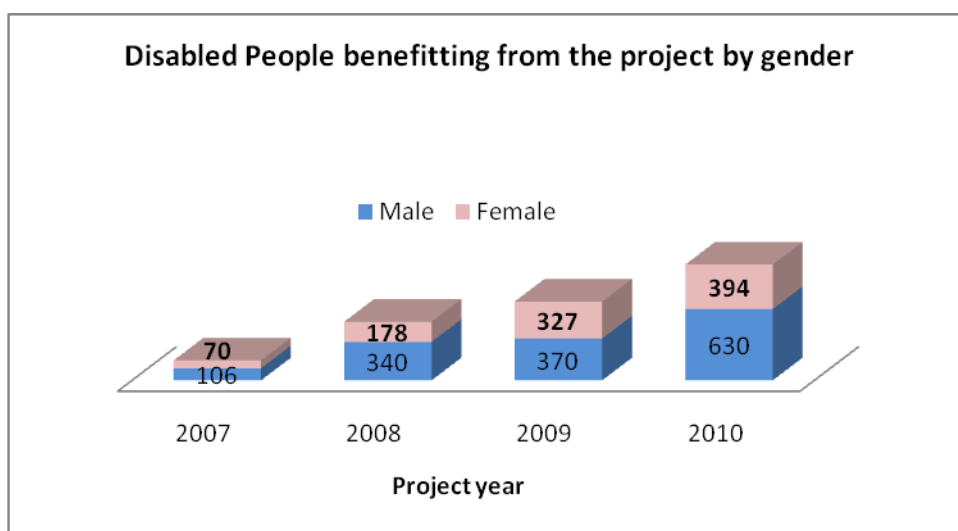
The following documents were provided for the consultants to read in preparation for the field work:

- Original project application and revised log frame
- Annual reports (narratives) – years 2-4, with CSCF feedback
- Financial reports years '07-'08 and '08-'09
- Quarter report (Qtr 1 2010)
- Project mid-term review (March 2008)
- Jan Knight Sri Lanka visit report (March 2007)
- Training Design – Three day course on rights based approach
- Training Design – Six day course on rights based approach
- Selection of training materials linked to developing groups
- CBTD manual on rights based approach (in Sinhala)

## Section 3 Findings from the evaluation

### 3.1 Equity

Cumulatively the project was able to identify 1024 disabled people of whom 62% were male and 38% female<sup>6</sup>. This means somewhat fewer women have been involved in the project than might have been expected. However it is worth noting that nationally of those in employment in 2009 65% were male and 35% were female<sup>7</sup>. Perhaps given the focus on livelihoods this project has encountered a general problem with gender parity over employment rather than a lack awareness or effort on the part of the partners to seek out women.



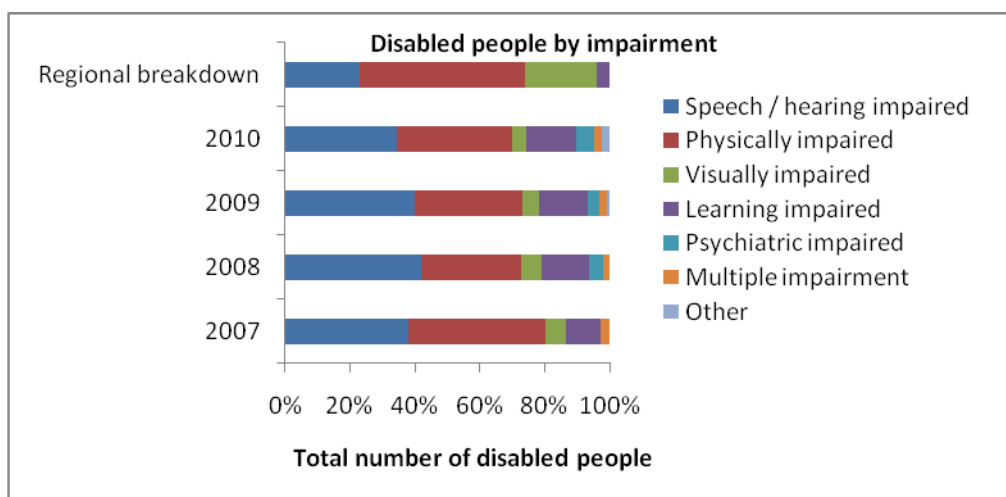
An important first principle of the EDOL model is to encourage all disabled people to seek realisation of their right to work regardless of the perceived severity of their impairments. To this end the project has done extremely well in engaging a range of disabled people including some of what are often referred to as the 'most challenging' – deaf, those with learning impairments and multiply disabled. Cumulative data suggests that by 2010 the project had engaged 36% physically impaired; 34% hearing / speech impaired; 16% learning impaired; 5% psychiatric impairments; 4% visually impaired; and 3% multiply impaired.

If this is compared with regional statistics for impairment prevalence then the project has benefitted those with learning, hearing and speech impairments relatively more than physically disabled people (although they make up the majority of the beneficiaries). The relative lack of people with visual impairments in this project is interesting and something that partners and staff reportedly discussed frequently. Various ideas have been put forward as to why visually impaired people have been largely missing from this project ranging from 'visual impairment only affects older people<sup>8</sup>' to the fact that it did not partner with a DPO focused on visual impairment.

<sup>6</sup> The 2001 National Census ([www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat)) estimates that 58% of the disabled population are male and 42% female

<sup>7</sup> 2009 Labour Force Survey

<sup>8</sup> Navajeevana CBR volunteer



In poverty terms those with speech and hearing impairments are reportedly much more likely to be living on less than \$1 a day (88% / 81%) followed closely by those with psychiatric impairments (72%) and then physical impairments (45%) and those with learning impairments (43%)<sup>9</sup>. Given the poverty focus of this project it would seem positive that it has been able to benefit some of the poorest sections of the disabled community rather than having been too constrained by the need to follow assumed prevalence rates. Nevertheless a more concerted effort by the project to formally research and assess why few visually impaired people were engaging in the program could have taken place even if it simply confirmed a lack of need amongst this section of the population.

### 3.2 Efficiency

The need for this project was identified by the main implementing partner, CBTD during its regular program activities. Although they are a BDS organisation their work brought them into contact with disabled people and their families who were struggling against negative attitudes and lack of access to basic services. This project has enabled CBTD to broaden out their core business to incorporate a wider section of the community and to network with a greater range of agencies.

One achievement of this project has been its commitment to working through multiple partners. This project has brought in lots of different agencies each with their own strengths. The involvement of business development, micro-credit and CBR based organisations has offered a broad base on which to build livelihoods support for disabled people. With different types of organisation involved there have been many networking opportunities and this project has achieved quite a wide range of linkages from local government to private sector. This has given disabled people with an interest in livelihoods an excellent chance to link in with some of the main agents in this sector whether that's through training, advice and group support or formal job placement. This has been demonstrated by the range of livelihoods occupations achieved by project beneficiaries and the spread between employment and self-employment. At the same time disabled people have been able to benefit from access to government grants and rehabilitation support. Finally all stakeholders have been impacted to some degree by exposure to disability rights which has led to changes in perceptions and in some cases policy and practice .

<sup>9</sup> Data quoted from National Paper produced for the UNESCAP/CDPF seminar on the international convention (2003) by W B J Fernando

The concern with an arrangement like this is the difficulties it brings in managing knowledge and information flows. It has been difficult to measure overall impact because with so many different and diverse implementing partners the levels of record keeping and reporting have varied in quality. It was hugely challenging for CBTD to keep in touch with all the progress happening and issues coming up and they had to rely on others to monitor results. There is a possibility therefore that considerably more impact could have occurred than is obvious from records and reports alone. This is a risk factor that could have been identified in the original project documentation. More attention to developing monitoring and evaluation tools, especially those that include the beneficiaries themselves (see comments below) would have improved the overall efficiency of this project and gone some way to mitigating this particular risk.

Another consequence of having such a variety of different implementing partners is the challenge this poses to a project when communicating ideas, especially when they are so new. There were no partner organisations operating at the start of the project who had experience or practical guidance available on how to promote a rights based approach to disability. CBTD itself had very little skills or experience available at the start and as the main implementing partner this created a huge challenge for them in promoting a consistent approach to disability rights.

The lack of local knowledge and experience in disability rights is a risk factor that should have been identified at the start of the project and specific actions put in place very early on to ensure the main implementing partner was sufficiently disability aware itself before going on to influence others. Whilst the project did identify the lack of awareness on disability rights generally in Sri Lanka as being a risk factor it did not highlight that this also applied to project agencies. Critical concepts like the 'social model' of disability, rights and empowerment as they apply to the livelihoods sector should have been formulated early on so that clear, simple messages could be articulated to partners and other stakeholders. This project spent too long working out what disability rights meant and as a consequence has only just produced useful guidance which is now starting to have positive effects (Purpose for Life manual).

As the main beneficiaries identified by the project disabled people could have played a much more prominent role in its implementation and most especially in its monitoring. CBTD did make use of disabled field staff which had a direct impact not only on their office but also on local government and other project partners. It must also have provided a good role model for disabled community members and their families. CBTD were also willing to pay attention to issues like the need for sign language interpreters and made resources available to cover this important facility.

Whilst there were case studies, documentaries and regular newsletter articles documenting and highlighting economically successful disabled people this project did not really create an environment in which lessons were shared and reflected on. Disabled people have remained beneficiaries throughout the project rather than becoming participants because they were not brought into the learning. Field observations identified that disabled beneficiaries were often largely unaware of what others had been doing, even when they were geographically quite close. We did not find any examples of where the project had given feedback on progress or asked for ideas in formulating new activities.

Since rights and empowerment are experienced considerably at the level of the individual it would have been useful for the project to have developed a monitoring tool which paid attention to personal experiences. Not only would it have enabled the project to capture in detail, more qualitative data on changes but the processes employed in collecting this information could have been transformational for those involved. Given that disabled people are rarely consulted on their needs or ideas to have found a way to bring them in to the overall monitoring of a project like this

would have had important and wide ranging effects. Reflecting on changes to the way they perceive themselves, identifying and overcoming barriers and sharing ideas and lessons on ways to improve livelihoods could all have come out from the inclusion of disabled people in the monitoring of progress. Future empowerment projects would do well to consider this element in the design of their activities and progress indicators.

A risk that could not have been foreseen but which did have an impact on the early implementation of the project was the 2004 Tsunami. Although the event itself occurred well before the project began the effect of large numbers of external donors working in the area was to create an increased level of dependency amongst communities. Community members had become used to being given humanitarian relief and expected this project to do the same. It took some time before the project was able to persuade people to take part in events and activities that would lead to them gaining improved livelihoods rather than just being given something.

In terms of overall management the evaluation did not uncover any issues or problems of significance. There were a couple of instances where project money had been granted to partners but which had yet to be used (see page 28) but most resources seem to have been used efficiently and effectively. The relationship between CBTD and APT was reported as being extremely strong and highly supportive.

### 3.3 Impact

At the level of the individual the main project activities have had an impact on transforming lives. There were at least 770 direct beneficiaries – that is disabled people who were supported by training, employment or self-employment activities: 220 of them went on to take up some form of employment or self employment. For many of these individuals the impact of the project has been transformational (see text box). In these cases, especially where it resulted in disabled people taking up economic activities there will have been improvements in family incomes (project data suggests that 52% of direct project beneficiaries were now contributing 10-30% of the family income). This should provide them with the opportunity to break out of the cycle of poverty families in this situation can be locked into, ameliorating intergenerational poverty which often increases the risk of disability.

Given the barriers that exist in Sri Lanka preventing disabled people from taking part in livelihoods activities (including lack of education and training, poor transport and access to the built environment and discriminatory policies and practices) there was a lot to overcome. The fact the project can demonstrate that local industries, training institutions and NGOs are now more willing to take on disabled people indicates that some of these barriers are being challenged. This project therefore has had an impact at the policy level of some local institutions, agencies and government departments that in turn have national connections (see Outputs 4 and 5 for more details on specific changes). If the positive attitudes continue there is the possibility that these local changes could influence national policies and practices.

#### Transforming lives

Ms.H.S.Wijitha Renuka's life has literally been transformed since joining Hakmana self-help group. When her husband left her she decided to move in with her brother because as a visually impaired woman she was too afraid to stay alone. It took the CBTD field officer a long time to locate her and even then she refused to meet on the first few occasions. Eventually the field officer's persistence paid off and even from their first meeting Ms Renuka knew she was with people she could finally trust to listen to her. When she went to a group meeting she left the house on her own for the first time in her life. This gave her increasing confidence to move around the community and eventually they responded by getting together to repair her old house. Now she is back living there independently and has her own small business making rope from coconut husk.

Project records also indicate that at least 2,576 disabled people and 2,958 community members were directly impacted by awareness raising activities and if we assume that each individual is also part of a family and community then the numbers touched by this increases considerably. In time with this more positive environment disabled people will become increasingly visible creating a positive feedback loop that will benefit others in the future.

This project has had an impact therefore on helping to reduce extreme poverty (as experienced by disabled people and their families) and in its inclusion of disabled women has helped promote gender equality. The focus has contributed to the promotion of awareness over entitlements and rights; improving the quality of service delivery (especially to a difficult to reach section of the community) and building the capacity of southern civil society to engage in local and national decision making.

The intended target of this project were disabled people with an interest in livelihoods. Results show that this group were reached with the majority of direct project interventions (especially training and work placements). In addition however there was evidence from the field observations that family members, carers and partner staff also benefited from these project interventions. Carers (often family members) were attending courses with their disabled clients / relative to provide assistance and as a result gained skills and knowledge also. In at least one example this led to the family member starting up a small business themselves with the intention of using it as a way to provide employment for their disabled relative. Other examples were also identified in which project staff had used new business skills to set up a small production unit – again with the intention of providing training for disabled people. A lot of the awareness raising and rights based approach work targeted non-disabled people and there was evidence to show that disabled people benefited less from this aspect of the project (see Output 2 for more details).

### **3.4 Sustainability**

The project activities themselves were not designed to be sustainable but the changes they effected were intended to last well beyond the project. The changes in attitude (especially at community level) which were noticeable from the field observations and as documented in reports will indeed be permanent. The changes in approach noted by some organisations (such as CBTD, GIDES and the VTC) will continue if there are resources available<sup>10</sup> and the demand for inclusion continues. Some initiatives like the VTC link with garment factories are highly resource dependent so although attitudes may have changed practices may not yet be deeply enough embedded (see Output 1 for comments on this). Changes to policies and practices certainly offer the opportunity for wider inclusion in the future. The work with VTASL is likely to be a permanent change and there are some indications this could have national implications (see Output 5 for details).

No project funding was used to make specific adjustments for physical access to buildings. Where this was required, such as in the case of Ananda and the VTC placement (see Output 5) it was the training authority or business owners who took on the costs. If the agency can be persuaded to make the adjustments themselves it is an incentive for them to work with more disabled people so that doesn't remain a 'one-off' cost but something that will increase access for future clients. It also means they can be used as powerful examples to prove to others that access does not have to involve prohibitively expensive adaptations which can only be made with the support of projects and are an excellent example of the social model principles in action.

---

<sup>10</sup> For example to pay for staff, support and access services, new initiatives

### **3.5 Replicable**

The basic principle of the EDOL model this project was testing is highly replicable although as the recommendations section indicates its success is in part linked to how well the implementing agencies understand disability rights and livelihoods. Nevertheless it is a model which could be used by either the mainstream livelihoods or disability sectors with provisions made for outsourcing the weaker skills. Its basic simplicity makes it especially appropriate for community based work and could be scaled up with ease.

Approaching disability rights from the perspective of livelihoods has offered some excellent opportunities for challenging existing attitudes even within a country which has not widely adopted rights terminology. Traditionally rights have only been referred to within the context of land disputes and are regarded as being somewhat confrontational. So the project has had to deal with both an absolute lack of rights and a culture in which talking about rights is rare. But the project adopted a very simple approach, starting with the premise that disabled and non-disabled people share the same basic needs, wants and desires for fulfilment. They then used this to begin discussions around what it would take for disabled people to be able to meet these needs for themselves - all done in the context of livelihoods.

The effect of this was to challenge the view that disabled people have to depend on others; rather they have started to see that in fact they can contribute. Once disabled people and their families/carers recognise they have a right to expect to be able to work then the issue of confronting the many barriers begins.

### **3.6 Effectiveness**

#### *3.6.1 Output 1: Development of partnerships and alliances with the stakeholders in both disability and business development sectors in Sri Lanka with the interest and capacity to serve disabled people and their caregivers*

By the closing months of the project 22 links with diverse organisations / fora had been established, representing both disability and livelihoods focused engagements. They are divided between 6 implementing partnerships; 13 resource sharing partnerships and 2 forums for sharing general information.

The early implementing partnerships of CBTD, GIDES, RSDC and Navajeevana were augmented during the project to include SPDA, Business Creations and latterly Consumer Action Forum and Creative Action (note however that some of these partners were only involved for fixed periods of time). In addition Thelambuyaya Vocational Training Centre and the Vocational Training Authority became key agents in helping to prepare more disabled people for formal employment and themselves benefitted from sign language training and support. Important links and allies were also created within the department for social welfare, Galle where they have benefitted from rights awareness.

Several important examples exist of partners sharing skills and knowledge amongst themselves and using this to create better opportunities for disabled people. These have been well documented by the project in annual reports, as case studies, in the production of a short video, in the regular newsletter (which had an average circulation of 7,500 individuals) and later for use in the rights based approach manual and training.

Probably the alliance with the greatest immediate impact was the relationship that developed between Thelambuyaya VTC and the garment factory RME Apparels. The technical training and material support provided by RME Apparels (facilitated by CBTD) and the willingness of the VTC to accommodate a short course (3 months instead of the usual 2 year courses) has enabled a relatively high number of disabled people (mostly deaf) to gain work in several garment factories in the area. To date 18 students have completed this course and 14 (10 deaf and 4 physically disabled women) have gone on to secure employment in the field. As a consequence garment factories are the highest single employer of disabled people in the project (accounting for 49% of the total).

However there are some questions as to how sustainable this initiative will be since the course at the VTC has now stopped. The Principal believes it has been a really interesting initiative which has enabled them to link in with the private sector (especially factories). He is in no doubt that this has helped with the placement of their students once they leave. Unfortunately since their trainer left for maternity leave they have been unable to replace her and there are no immediate term prospects of that happening.

The collaboration has had a lasting influence on the way that the students are supported into employment. The Principal attended a three day rights based approach training course and although he has not formally shared his experiences of this with staff or students it has had an effect on what he feels about the students' capacity. For example, in the past the VTC never considered helping to find employment for the students completing their courses. Now they consider finding employment part of their responsibility even though there is no mandate as yet from the Department of Social Services (in fact this is an area that the project could look into as a point to lobby in the final stages). The centre also conducted a business awareness seminar for a group of 20 past students with the assistance of the Hambantota Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This initiative is something they intend to provide on an annual basis in future.

### *3.6.2 Output 2: Disabled men and women more aware of their rights, empowered to voice their needs and address issues that hinder their access to basic human rights, in particular their right to improving their livelihoods*

It has been difficult to evaluate the extent to which disabled people are 'more aware of their rights' as project partners have been carrying out different interventions which might lead to this outcome but the data is hard to assess. Additionally the concept of 'disability rights' and the processes involved in promoting it amongst disabled and non-disabled people was not clearly articulated in the project documentation leading to log frame indicators that are vague.

According to project documentation, by the end of 2009 "2,576 DP and 2,958 community members more aware of their rights"<sup>11</sup> but this seems to represent the total number of people who have had some exposure to rights based discussions. There is an implicit assumption in data like this that workshops, meetings or training events will necessarily lead to an increase in rights awareness. However this was not borne out in many of the discussions the evaluation team had with interviewees leading to questions over how effective the work in this area has been. During interviews with both disabled and non-disabled project participants it was clear that disability was still being viewed as an issue of individual impairments.

---

<sup>11</sup> CSCF 311 Annual Report 2009-2010



When we asked disabled people how they defined disability it would typically be expressed as:

*'it's a physical or mental deficiency' - Devpura DPO secretary*

*'Hopelessness; helpless; barriers in everyday life because of mental or physical condition; someone who has to ask for help, has learning disability and is not able to learn; not able to perform like normal person'*

*Quotes from Dickwella DPO members*

---

Even the relatively active Beliata DPO Chair responded by saying:

*'..we don't feel the need to define it. We just refer to people's impairments that is the disability. Whether someone is deaf or can't walk that is what makes them disabled.'*

*Chair Beliata DPO*

---

Likewise field observations found examples of employers who had made no attempts at all to adapt workplace conditions or induction programs to enable disabled staff to function on an equal footing with non-disabled colleagues. When we asked the manager of Lanka Fishing Flies Ltd (which has employed 20 disabled people since its founding in 1992) if she had ever made any adjustments to accommodate disabled people she replied:

*'We never make adjustments to accommodate the employment of disabled people, they have to fit in themselves. We could employ more deaf people but no one knows any sign language. I have been very grateful for the visits from the Navajeevana field officer because at least she can communicate with our deaf employees.'*

*Mrs Malani, Lanka Fishing Flies Ltd.*

---

The project struggled throughout with the issue of what rights actually mean in the context of disability and livelihoods. It was not until the second year of implementation that this issue was even identified delaying progress on this particular output. Various training courses, study tours and visits from external consultants helped the project team and some partner staff to gain a better insight into the rights based approach to livelihoods. A consultation process was devised which helped partner coordinators to prepare communities for the idea of disabled people working and often involved meetings with significant local representatives (for example from government, religious institutions, service providers, and local businesses). This got underway during the 2007/08 project year and continued as a way to engage new communities in the project.

From field observations this approach seems to have had a greater impact on partner staff and carers / community volunteers than on disabled people themselves. Staff from Navajeevana report they now approached their work differently (see Output 4 for more details on this). The value of this approach seems to have been in making project staff more willing to listen to the actual stated needs of their disabled clients or more willing to engage with disabled people in general.

But for disabled people it appears as though only those who already had a sense of empowerment or self-determination could make use of this new form of engagement (see for example Beliata DPO and SPDA). For those unused to perceiving themselves as independent, proactive, political citizens the awareness raising techniques employed appear to have had limited benefit. What we saw in the field observations and what the data is suggesting is that more disabled people are now coming forward to ask for services and entitlements for themselves but they are still 'individual focused' and they are still largely welfarist. They still perceive themselves to be the problem that needs fixing or supporting and there is not yet a general sense that disabled people share common barriers or experiences of discrimination. There remains a reluctance (or lack of confidence) to do anything independently of supporting agencies like Navajeevana and the DPOs that we met with were dominated by strong, non-disabled care workers and family members<sup>12</sup>.

Examples of lobbying mostly involved helping individual disabled people to access the services to which they are already entitled (grants, training or rehabilitation for example). Whilst this is very important and helps keep 'duty bearers' accountable it tends to emphasise the individual approach and pays far less attention to the social consequences of impairments.

So whilst it is possible to say more disabled people are talking about 'accessing their rights' these rights are being expressed in terms of rehabilitation services or social protection (disability grants or grants for housing for example). Some DPOs mentioned lobbying schools for inclusion and others talked of the success they had had in gaining acceptance to local social events (most especially religious ones). Beliata DPO has done some good work, especially around developing access audits and lobbying for access to local voting stations for physically disabled members. But these examples are few (well short of the 500 targeted in the log frame) and it is not entirely clear how much of this lobbying was initiated, planned and carried out by disabled people themselves.

An important step forward was made in 2009 when an excellent resource book on the rights based approach to livelihoods was developed by the project. This is a very simple step by step approach to gradually encouraging disabled people to understand and express their needs and promotes self reflection in a group based format. The focus of the needs expressed are on livelihoods and it leads people into a realisation that they can expect to earn an independent income and that many of the barriers to this are with society, not themselves. Unfortunately it has come very late but where it has been used we noted a significant contribution to raising the awareness of disabled people. During the field observations it was noticeable that disabled people in the groups that had gone through the book (Hakmana SHG and Consumer Action Forum) were considerably more engaging.

We identified one example of direct participation in government decision making with a senior representative from the SPDA attending a recent local government five-year planning meeting. This is significant, he had an interpreter with him (although that was supplied by CBTD not local government) which enabled him to make a positive contribution to discussions raising issues linked to the needs of disabled people.

### *3.6.3 Output 2.1: Disabled people demonstrating increased participation in economic activities*

Data indicates that up until 2007 the vast majority of project beneficiaries were earning ≤Rs 5,000/- but by 2010 this had changed considerably. Now 52% of those engaged in the project earn >Rs 5,000/-. Although the project did not quite achieve its target of 200 disabled people earning ≥Rs 5,000/- data does indicate that 165 people have achieved this target which is a considerable achievement given the low starting point. At least 20% of those earning >Rs.5,000/- were heads of

---

<sup>12</sup> With the important exception of SPDA

households (33 in total) and it is also worth noting that *all* of those disabled people who were earning >Rs.5,000/- were making contributions of between 10-30% to their family incomes. In this respect the project has achieved its aim of increasing disabled people's ability to make significant contributions towards family incomes. This will have an important impact on reducing their overall dependency, improving their status and self-esteem within families and communities as well as reducing the overall poverty experienced by households.

The total number of interventions offered up to 2007 was 288 but by 2010 it had reached 905. Given the total interventions compared to numbers of individuals directly served (777) it must indicate that a significant number received more than one intervention<sup>13</sup>. It is interesting to note that even by 2010 the single most commonly offered intervention was CBR services. The next most common was self employment followed closely by livelihoods training. Navajeevana accounts for the highest proportion of CBR services and this is still for them the most commonly offered service to disabled people. Perhaps this indicates that whilst they are making progress towards broadening their scope of available services they are still very much focused on the core business of CBR. There was evidence of this from our field observations too with CBR staff and volunteers still most comfortable when discussing direct medical services rather than income generation, business planning or marketing.

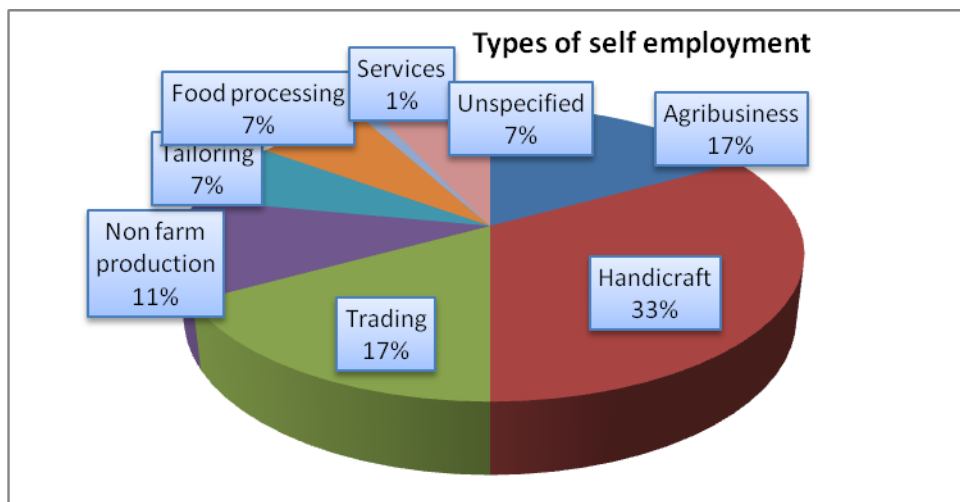
Partner	# identified		# served		Jobs created		SE introduced		CBR offered		Financial assistance / links		Livelihood related training	
	2007	2010	2007	2010	2007	2010	2007	2010	2007	2010	2007	2010	2007	2010
CBTD	-	278	19	180	11	22	5	25	-	73	0	6	3	30
Navajeevana	-	224	78	224	22	38	24	55	-	224	13	27	19	58
GIDES	-	144	42	118	9	13	12	23	-	71	1	13	20	33
Business Creations	-	198	124	119	10	9	91	87	-	0	17	17	6	6
RSDC	-	122	25	81	16	20	2	2	-	0	0	0	7	11
SPDA	-	26	-	26	-	5	-	4	-	4	-	1	-	10
Creative Actions	-	30	-	29	-	0	-	2	-	13	-	1	-	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1022</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>150</b>

In terms of livelihoods training the majority were 'technical' in nature. Interviews with DPOs confirmed that they had benefitted from a considerable number of specialist short courses. The most commonly mentioned were shoe-making / leather work, broom and mat making, and improved agriculture. These were resourced from local providers and have enabled partners like Navajeevana and GIDES to build important links.

It is interesting and important to note however that these courses not only benefitted disabled people but also their carers (family members), local CBR volunteers and partner staff. In all examples discussed during the field observations disabled people were accompanied to training sessions. Assuming these people have not been recorded in the project statistics it implies more individuals have benefitted from this training than the data shows. It is unclear to what extent these people have gone on to establish their own enterprises although we found two examples of this happening. In one case the parent of a disabled person attended training and subsequently went on to set up a home-based production unit for a small number of disabled people. In another a project officer went on to establish an apprenticeship style home production unit hiring young disabled people.

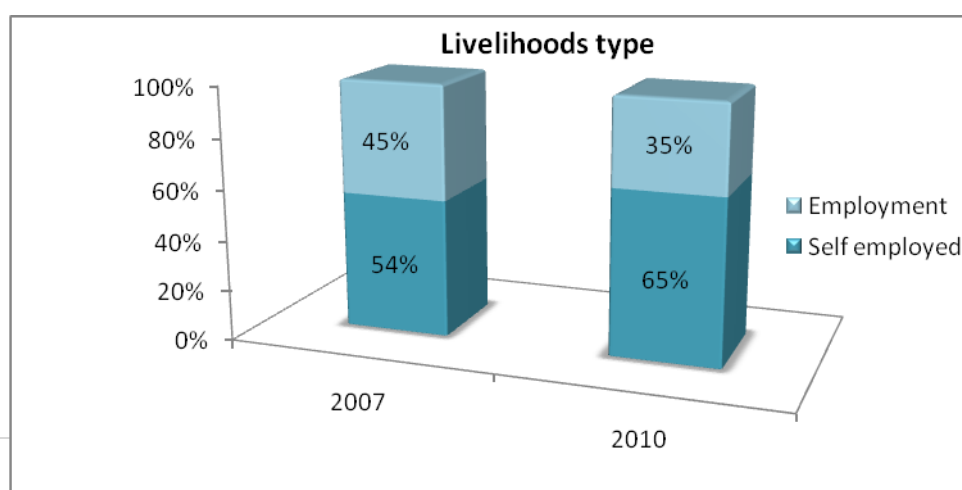
<sup>13</sup> According to the 2007 Mid Term review at that stage 41% of those directly benefitting had received 2 interventions and 25% three. No similar data was made available during this review.

Technical training was the preferred form of livelihoods training provided by Navajeevana, SPDA and Creative Actions. The next most commonly offered training was technical /business management which was provided through CBTD and GIDES. Field interviews suggested this most commonly involved family (household) expenditure analysis and counselling on small enterprise development. Some people benefitted from very specific guidance (as in the case of the ornamental fish businesses). There was less evidence of training in business planning, market analysis, profit analysis or business expenditure recording (see review of DPO below). This might account for why handicraft seems to dominate the type of small enterprise disabled people are setting up rather than being something based on market analysis and personal strengths / interests.

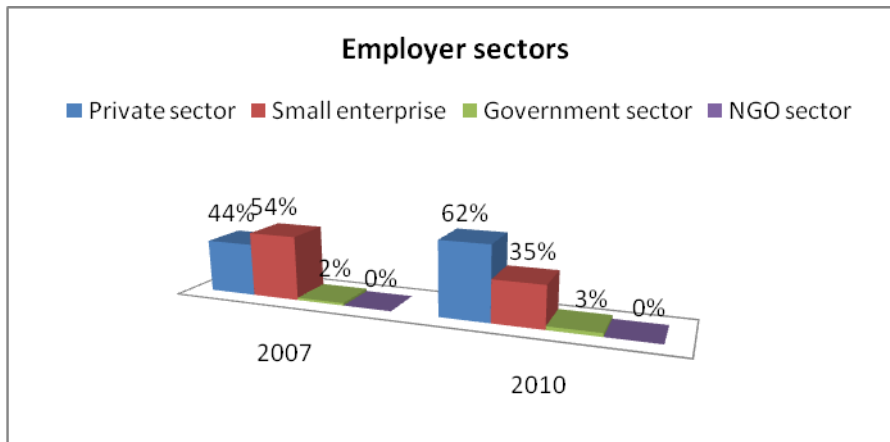


Business Creations were able to offer very specialised training (using the ILO’s Start and Improve Your Business [SIYB] model) which they managed by paying attention to the way it was delivered. Their involvement in the project however only lasted for two years. SPDA was the only partner that directly offered vocational training according to the project data. This was achieved in conjunction with the Vocational Training Authority and resulted in the establishment of a short course in Juki high speed sewing machine production (used in garment factories) from which members have been benefitting. Another initiative not mentioned in the statistics is the gardening program at Thelambuyaya VTC facilitated by CBTD which may lead to improved prospects for home gardening for a number of intellectually impaired individuals.

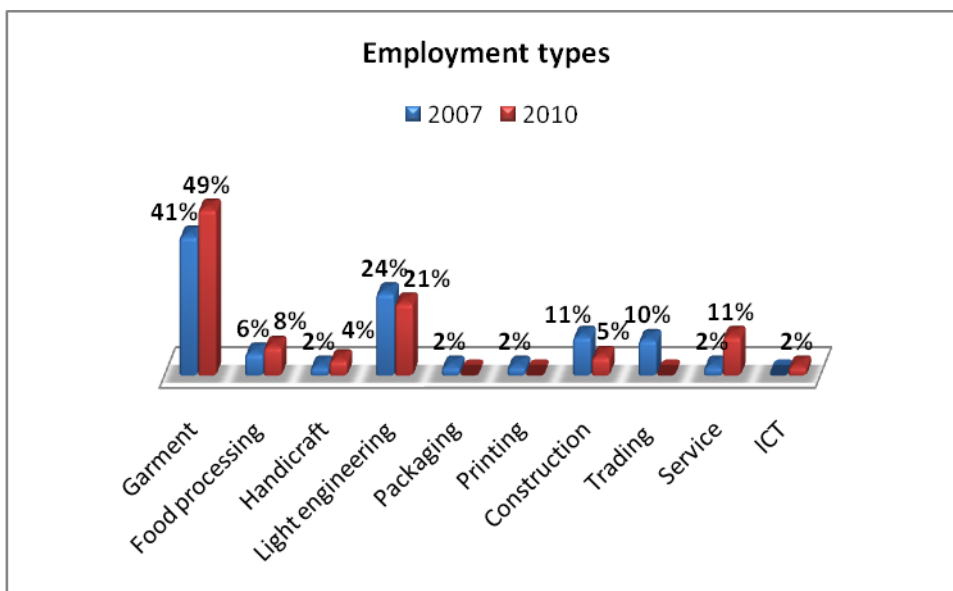
Of the 220 disabled people who chose to take up livelihoods opportunities through the project by 2010 the majority (65%) had opted for self employment. This is in contrast to the situation in 2007 when a slight majority (54%) had chosen formal employment.



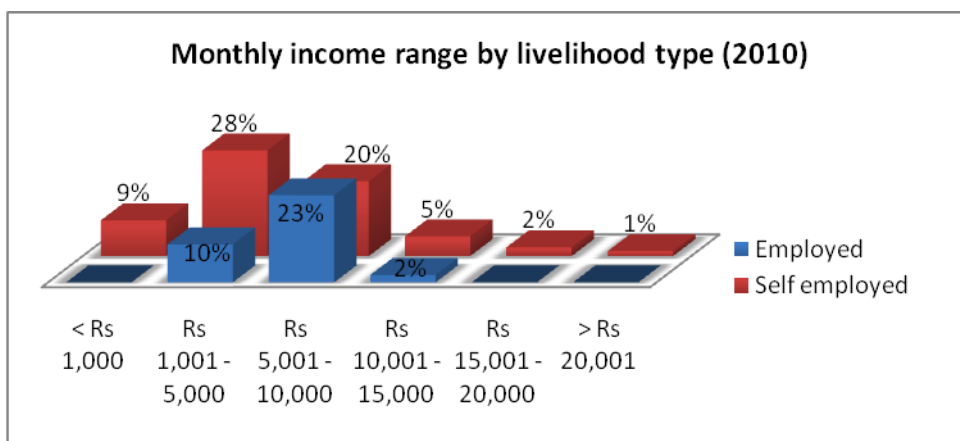
What has been interesting to note about this project is the success it has had in influencing the private sector. In 2007 it was still the small enterprise sector that was willing to take on disabled people but by 2010 this had been strongly replaced by the private sector which as the table below shows now accounts for 62% of all placements.



The most popular type of employer has consistently proved to be the garment industry. It seems the project has made considerable progress in influencing many local garment factories to take on disabled employees. Some of this has been the direct result of the link with the VTC to produce trainees with specific skills needed by the garment industry. Successful placements have contributed to a positive feedback cycle with both employers and disabled people now more willing to consider this option. What the graph below also shows is the diversity in employment types – there are an increasing range of options available to disabled people which will hopefully continue well after the project ends.

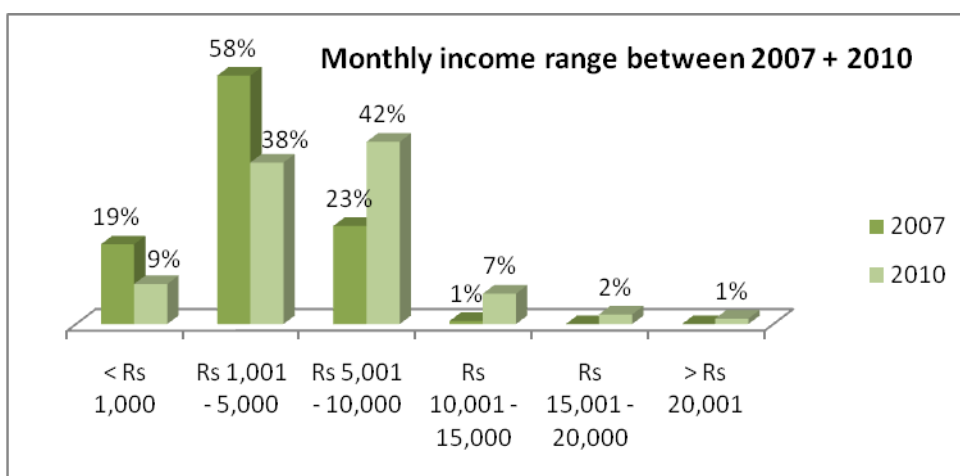


The government’s official poverty line is currently Rs 3,111/- and the latest project data suggests that just 24% of those engaged in the project fall below that level (<Rs 3,000/-). In fact some 44% earn between Rs 3,001/- and Rs 7,000/- with the majority earning between Rs 5,001/- and Rs 6,000/- a month.



The graph above indicates that currently people who have opted for self-employment can expect to earn more than those in employment although they are also more likely to be found at the lowest end of the income scale. Employment appears to offer a greater minimum income but less prospects for higher levels.

The project did make considerable progress in enabling more disabled people to earn a higher average monthly wage as the graph below illustrates:



### 3.6.4 Output 3: Proven experience clearly documented experience of innovative and practical approaches for mainstreaming the rights of disabled people to access their livelihood

CBDT staff to date have documented well over 40 case studies outlining successful examples of disabled people transforming their lives from dependency to independence. Some have been developed by staff others have been done in collaboration with partners like Consumer Action Forum. The project has been able to use these case studies in a variety of different ways including:

- Consultation meetings – as the basis for presentations at forums like the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Social Services Officers (SSOs) and international events such as the 2006 Leonard Cheshire conference the APT international conference in Uganda in 2008 and a SEEDS international workshop in 2010.
- Media articles – throughout the project there has been regular production of a quarterly newsletter, “vata pita” containing disability issues, case studies, and general information. CBTD produced a CD called “signs of change” early on in the project which helped to explain

the purpose and raise awareness. Since then they have gone on to record videos and stills photographs of various different interventions which are used to raise awareness amongst new partners or interested organisations and often play a role in training programs. Two longer documentaries were filmed - "A day of Ananda" and "Story of Karolis" which provided much more in-depth analysis of the examples of Ananda's training at the local VTC and the ornamental fish project being implemented by Thissamaharama self-help group.

- Training materials – many of the case studies have gone on to influence training materials and some have been incorporated specifically into resources. The self study rights based approach manual called "Purpose for life" (first produced in 2008) contains three inspirational case studies of project beneficiaries and forms the basis for important discussions with disabled people<sup>14</sup>.

A lot of this important material has been used to good effect in raising awareness with potential stakeholders and partners. However one potentially powerful use of this material is with disabled people and this particular aspect of information sharing seems to have been used less often. One very good example of this missed opportunity came up during discussions with Devpura DPO in Thalalla-North. During discussions it became clear there were some important potential employment opportunities in the area despite the fact that it was relatively rural. There are three factories in the area, a food processing factory employing around 50 people and two garment factories (employing around 100 each). However attempts to approach these employers has been minimal and having been turned away initially no further lobbying or negotiations were conducted. This group have no experience or skills in lobbying or negotiating with potential employers (that includes DPO members and Navajeevana staff and volunteers) hence their reluctance to pursue this option. The project however has a lot of accumulated knowledge, contacts and experience in negotiating in this kind of situation, especially in the garment industry and yet none of this learning seems to have been shared with this group.

Generally field observations noted that the sharing of learning and information with project beneficiaries was almost entirely absent (beyond the case study examples in the rights based manual) which has implications for how well beneficiaries can engage proactively with the project. If learning (both challenges and successes) are regularly and widely discussed with project beneficiaries then it is possible to help transform them into participants. Shared ownership of knowledge and information is an important part of that transformative process and it's something that does not come across very strongly in this project. Disabled people are still very much regarded as beneficiaries – the people to whom the project is dedicated. Disabled people's active participation in the project interventions was limited.

*3.6.5 Output 4: CBTD and other local organisations (CBOs, DPOs, BDS providers and governmental organisations) will integrate a rights based approach into their programs, planning and decision making processes to be inclusive of disabled people's needs. DPOs will provide livelihoods development services in addition to services previously provided*

This output has been problematic for the project team and equally difficult to evaluate. Our process was unable to determine whether 5 mainstream organisations have been successful in ensuring 2% of their clients are disabled people. Project and partner records have not systematically recorded this level of detail. Mainstream organisations directly consulted during the evaluation included GIDES, CBTD, Business Creations, the VTASL and the Department of Social Services. Whilst they were

---

<sup>14</sup> See section on Hakmana self help group for example

citing examples of disabled people benefitting from their activities in ways that were not seen prior to the project, actual numbers as a percentage of total cliental were not provided.

In many respects the log frame indicator was a very challenging one even when it was reduced from 15 to 5 organisations and required close monitoring on the part of the project<sup>15</sup>. Increasing the numbers of clients being served by mainstream organisations is an indicator that their policies and practices are more rights based as they relate to disability. However given the early lack of clarity and experience on the rights based approach from within the project team alongside the generally negative cultural attitudes towards disability; limited positive legislation; and weak lobbying or advocacy from the disability community it would seem unrealistic that this project would ever have been able to influence practices to this degree.

A more realistic approach would have been to survey organisation(s) at the start of the project (or the partnership) to determine the baseline levels of engagement with disabled people and then set agreed targets reflecting the barriers that needed to be overcome. The log frame indicator therefore should have mentioned the need for a baseline survey and actual targets set as and when organisations were engaged. Other indicators that could have been measured might have included increasing references to disabled people in organisational strategies, situational analyses, monitoring frameworks or as target participants for example. Similarly organisations might be expected to demonstrate their inclusiveness through increasing the numbers and visibility of explicit statements such as disabled people are welcome or encouraged to apply for training or services.

Likewise determining whether 5 disability focused organisations were able to provide livelihoods services in addition to their usual activities has been equally hard to assess. Records do not make clear distinctions between agencies like Navajeevana, GIDES or CBTD and the organisations they support (e.g. Dickwella, Devpura and Beliata DPOs, Hakaman SHG) when it comes to livelihoods services so it is hard to understand exactly who has been delivering the services and therefore at what level to make the assessment. It appears also that most of the disability focused organisations involved in the programme already had a mandate to deliver livelihoods services even if they were not very effective.

In this sense the log frame indicator has not been helpful in determining the degree of change that has been affected by the project. A more helpful indicator would have been based on a baseline assessment of the quality and range of services being offered by disability focused organisations with individual targets set to determine the extent to which they were to be improved. Such a generalised indicator has been difficult to measure.

Indicators aside it has been possible to see that some changes have taken place in the way organisations are approaching their programmes, making them more inclusive of the needs of disabled people. Anecdotally organisations like CBTD and Business Creations claimed limited experience with disability issues prior to this project. As a result of this project both organisations employed disabled people<sup>16</sup> and both claim there is no way they would go back to making the kinds of assumptions about disability that they made before.

The training on how to carry out household expenditure analysis seems to have been especially helpful in several organisations (e.g. Navajeevana, CBTD, GIDES) for starting discussions on understanding the needs of disabled people. This is because it raises the possibility that disabled

---

<sup>15</sup> Which did not appear to happen

<sup>16</sup> The office assistant hired by Business Creations has since left – but to get a better paid job.



people can become active contributors to family incomes rather than dependent beneficiaries and opens the way for discussion around what they would like to do.

Also introducing the concept of the rights based approach with these partners and local government departments has raised awareness and encouraged some of them to engage with communities with a view to assisting more disabled people. For example Navajeevana held consultation workshops with 5 DPOs (they support 9 in total) during which the needs of disabled people (relating in particular to services and livelihoods) were discussed and training to meet those needs was sourced<sup>17</sup>. As a result 47 skills based workshops were provided (the most commonly cited being shoe making, broom making, and mat making).

There were also several unanticipated positive side effects from the consultation workshops hosted by Navajeevana. For local officials like the police, social services officers and other village leaders there was a general realisation from amongst them that disabled people are really like a marginalised group. This had never really occurred to them before (which is typical in situations where the medical model of disability is prevalent). This new awareness has helped them to connect with the issues of disabled people more appropriately and even given them the opportunity to meet directly with disabled people. For example local police are now much more willing to talk to disabled people and offer help if needed where in the past they would simply have ignored them<sup>18</sup>.

GIDES now works in Suriyawawa and Thissamaharama DS division where they have been able to directly benefit 185 disabled people. Benefits include offering direct services like: referral for rehabilitation; school placements; access to government grants; self employment and employment advice. Even though they have always been mandated to work with the most vulnerable, disabled people were never previously included as a target group. In the past if they met disabled people they would refer them on to others – often the social welfare department or to Navajeevana.

*There was no money linked to working with disabled people so we had no program. We have learned about rights, learned about disabled people and we realise that a great deal needs to be done. That's why we have started our inclusion program so they can benefit alongside normal people.*

*Director, GIDES*

---

GIDES staff were aware of disabled people in the communities but did not include them as savings group members: family members with disabled relatives would join on their behalf. Since receiving the training and support from CBTD they report that GIDES now tries to make sure disabled people join as members in their own right.

The process of engaging directly with disabled people has been innovative for GIDES and other local officials. GIDES staff carried out eleven consultation workshops with the specific aim of identifying the needs of disabled people within Suriyawawa and Thissamaharama DS divisions. The Social Service Officer, Samurdhi Officer (under the government official poverty alleviation program) and village Officer all helped conduct the workshops. All meetings were attended by disabled people, carers, family members and community representatives which was a unique experience for the area. One important immediate impact was on the social services officers who were shocked to discover

---

<sup>17</sup> Note that these workshops included disabled people along with carers, family members and key community figures

<sup>18</sup> Navajeevana field officer

that disabled people had such varied needs so similar to those of the community in general – something they had never considered before.

GIDES believes one important result of this greater connection between the department of social welfare and disabled people is that now disabled people are coming forward to ask for services themselves rather than waiting for them to be offered to them. And social services officers are much more willing to travel and meet people in communities.

However this ‘inclusive approach’ is only being offered in two of the six GIDES program areas. In the other four divisions they have identified an additional 340 disabled people but have not included them in their main project activities. Rather they have referred them on to others like the department of social services or Navajeevana. This calls into question the extent to which the inclusion of disabled people has been incorporated into their programmes and planning.

Business Creations were linked to CBTD and the livelihoods program between 2006 and 2008 and were at this time able to target a number of disabled people through their mainstream programmes<sup>19</sup>. Their role was to bring an element of BDS services to disabled people which they did by appointing a field officer whose task was to identify disabled people then provide them with training in areas like business planning, record keeping (expenditure analysis) and any technical training they needed. They also trained 10 disabled people in ILO – SIYB (business management training package).

In terms of how they came to identify disabled people to work with they employed a range of approaches including meeting with village officers, poverty alleviation program staff, teachers, Navajeevana volunteers or other NGOs like Handicap International for example. Often they found the Divisional Secretary’s office very helpful as they have a basic database of disabled people in their areas. They did not connect directly with any DPOs however being unaware that such organisations existed.

In terms of the impact on the organisation itself Business Creations reports it has gained from working in this project and its senior staff seem to have changed their beliefs about disabled people. The Chair of Business Creations said this project had ‘genuinely shocked them’, they never considered disabled people before.

*It simply never occurred to us that they could work or could be clients of our services. This project has shown us that disabled people can work and can be successful.*

*D.M. K.K. Kamal Siri, Chairman, Business Creations*

---

Some of the training they organised involved having to make specific adaptations to enable disabled people to participate. They spent time considering how the courses were going to be delivered and discussed different adaptations, sometimes also with disabled people. However the one example cited to the review team was the case of a physically disabled man who was due to participate in an IT course. He was unable to use a mouse himself so they organised for someone to hold the mouse with him. Whilst this obviously made his participation in the course possible it was not exactly

---

<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately they could not provide specific data to the review team on numbers of disabled people targeted or services provided because ‘the project manager no longer works with them’

adapting the course and it's not clear whether subsequently this man was able to go on to use his new skills independently.

Whilst the project was running they did try to make their working environment more accessible and employed a disabled person as office assistant for a while (although they have now left for a better paid job). One additional outcome for them is they are now involved in a Big Lottery funded project (focusing on livelihoods development and hygiene awareness) where the target is to benefit at least 5% disabled people. They believe this would not have been possible for them before but now they have the skills to identify and consult with disabled people they actually think they can exceed the project target and reach about 7%.

Despite the experiences gained during the time they were involved in the project the Business Creations website does not advertise any of its courses as being accessible or open to disabled people calling into question whether there have been any longer lasting strategic level changes to this organisation as a result of the project.

As a disability focused organisation Navajeevana were an important link to the disabled community for the project but as a service provider they were not used to approaching disability from a rights based perspective. One of the positive impacts of this project has been to make some of their staff rethink the idea that as the professionals they know what disabled people need. In a very open discussion with field coordinators they explained that before the project started the belief was the CBR worker had to do everything, provide everything – the disabled person needs to go to hospital, needs physiotherapy, needs full time care etc. Now they understand that disabled people have individual needs which are far more similar to their non-disabled peers and that their impairment is not the only issue in their lives. This new understanding has fundamentally changed the way they consult and engage with disabled people.

*Before we would do home visits and see the disabled person just there in the home and assumed that was right. We make them comfortable in their own home. We never thought to ask about whether they wanted to work, or live independently. When we ran the RBA training for many disabled people that was the first time they had left their family home. It was the first time anyone had really asked them to directly express their needs or have them listened to.*

*Navajeevana field worker coordinator*

---

The evaluation however also found some staff (ranging from very senior to CBR volunteers) within Navajeevana who were far less inclined to believe that disabled people could be included in decision making processes. There is no question that it has dominated the establishment of DPOs in the project area and there is still a very strong sense of dependency being expressed. There is some considerable resistance to allowing DPOs to run independently of their influence as shown by the requirement that non-disabled people must be part of all the Boards and management committees of these groups.

*Disabled people are very backward and not aware of the world – their committees won't move forward unless they have normal people on them*

*Navajeevana staff member*

---

There is evidence to show that disabled focused organisations, including DPOs have been offering livelihoods opportunities to their members and clients (output 2.1 outlines many examples of the types of support being offered). The evaluation identified 3 disability focused organisations providing such services - SPDA, Hakmana SHG and Navajeevana although this number increases to 6 if the DPOs supported by Navajeevana are considered independently (see comments below for the problem with this however).

There has been an increase in the opportunities available for disabled people in terms of livelihoods (see output 2.1 for details) and partners like Navajeevana have been using DPOs as the forum through which to organise livelihoods support. Partner staff and volunteers have become more effective at seeking out potential employment options for disabled people and in sourcing appropriate technical training for those wanting to set up a business.

*Before this program came along it was very rare for us to provide successful livelihoods support. This has made a big difference to what we can offer and it will carry on. All the links are established, we know where we can go for external support and we have things we can offer so we will not stop doing it.*

*Navajeevana program officer*

---

In total Navajeevana report directly enabling 187 disabled clients (5.34% of total number of clients<sup>20</sup>) to obtain employment or self-employment.

Unfortunately most DPOs do not keep records (or only very limited ones) so it has been difficult to determine much about the livelihoods services being offered by them or whether in fact they are 'additional'. Interviews with DPOs such as SPDA, Beliata, and Dickwella suggested that providing livelihoods support has always been a feature of the kind of services they provide.

Whilst DPOs are reporting their members are benefitting from livelihoods training and support it is hard to prove that DPOs are actually delivering these services or that they have the skills and experience to do this independently of external support (with the notable exceptions of SPDA and Hakmana SHG). An interesting illustration of this concern came up during interviews with Dickwella and Devpura DPOs. Dickwella for example were given Rs 200k/- via the CBTD project two years ago to use in support of livelihoods development but to date this has remained in the bank - no one is quite sure how to use it.

CBTD gave Navajeevana Rs 100k/- to support the establishment of livelihoods activities in Devpura DPO but in a similar way to Dickwella it has yet to be used. In this case however the executive committee were unaware that Navajeevana had this money for them. There has been no business planning or marketing training offered to this DPO although expenditure analysis has been worked through. Discussions around what they might use the Rs 100k/- for revealed this DPO does not have practical business experience<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>20</sup> This figure was not broken down by age however so it's not possible to estimate how many eligible disabled clients have been targeted

<sup>21</sup> The interview revealed they would like to use Rs 25k/- to start up a group shoe-making business. But they have done no market analysis, have not identified suppliers or equipment and were unaware of the risks involved in setting up a group business

3.6.6 *Output 5: At Regional and National levels, at least 10 BDS organisations (including INGOs) and government authorities will be implementing more effective approaches to promote the inclusion of disabled people in the economic development process, in response to the needs of poor people.*

The project has had some success in this area as regards to influencing organisations to accept disabled people as employees / clients and in changing policies and practices. By 2010 the project had influenced at least 47 different organisations, 10 of which implemented changes to policies or practices positively favouring disabled people. Exact details of what the changes are have not been provided however so it is not possible to determine what the impact of these changes might be in the long term or how significant they are in comparison to what existed before. Once again the log frame indicators could have been improved by mentioning the need for baseline information. More specific indicators could then have been developed during the early phase of the project focusing more on the types of policies or practices targeted for change.

According to the data provided below, government sector agencies appear to have made the most changes with the NGO sector not being influenced at all. Overall project partners identified private sector institutions, business development organisations, government institutions and small enterprises who could be supported to provide opportunities /services to disabled people suggesting that the project was able to influence a wide range of agencies.

**Mainstream Institutions participating**

	<b>No. provided employment</b>	<b>No. collaborated in piloting the model</b>	<b>No. changed policies &amp; practices</b>
Government sector		17	6
Non-government sector		12	
Private sector	16	1	3
Social/religious institutions			1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>

The evaluation noted several organisations which had made some changes to the way they include disabled people as a result of training and support from CBTD and the project. Probably the most significant in terms of impact and potentially the most sustainable was the influence the project had on local and Provincial government services including the VTASL, Thelabuyaya VTC for disabled students and the Provincial Department for Social Security. Awareness raising has had the effect of changing perceptions on the economic capabilities of disabled people in all these agencies to the extent that they are now willing to support economic activities which include the needs of disabled people.

Whilst the Provincial Department for Social Security made it clear to the evaluation team that there is only a limited amount of resources available for work specifically with disabled people they are now aware of the need to consult directly with them and are very open to lobbying from representative groups. They are also keen to collect more accurate data on numbers and for more staff to undergo rights awareness. It should also be recognised that the Southern Province are set to ratify the provisions of the UNCRPD at local level (facilitated by the Director of the Southern

Provincial Department for Social Services) which is an important step. It is unclear whether the project itself influenced this decision directly (since there have been no reported activities directly aimed at ratification<sup>22</sup>) but it is likely that the increased attention<sup>22</sup> to disability rights generated by the work will have had some impact on this decision.

The attention paid by the project to improving recognition and use of sign language has led to its realisation and acceptance as a legitimate language. In conjunction with the SPDA the project has managed to influence the creation of a Diploma in Sign Language under the National Institute of Education and a number of short course options which allow for lower level entry requirements. In time this should lead to the identification of more people to train as interpreters. Overall it will help deaf people in the longer term with lobbying for the provision of interpreters and sign language in education and other important services.

A good example of the impact the project has had on changing policies is demonstrated by the Vocational Training Authority of Sri Lanka which was seriously challenged over a training request raised by Mr Ananda of Suriyawewa. In fact this particular case study has generated considerable national interest with the papers and TV stations widely covering the story.

Ananda is a young disabled person who made a request to the Hambantota District office of the Vocational Training Authority to follow an electronics course. As the VTA did not at that time have a mandate to train disabled people, his application was turned down. CBTD took up the issue with Mr. Nimalsiri of Galle VTASL office and after some negotiations with his Chairman he agreed they should provide the training. But there were a number of challenges they had to overcome:

- Environmental barriers

The college had to identify a suitable place in close proximity to the training centre for Ananda, his sister and mother to stay. They also had to modify the toilet and bathroom facilities to take account of his physical impairments. In the training centre they had to make a number of structural changes in the classroom to enable him to comfortably follow the course.

- Institutional barriers

Ananda did not have the required level of formal qualifications for entry onto this course because he had never attended school. Given his self-taught knowledge and skills however the VTA agreed that formal qualifications were not needed.

Both Ananda and the Galle VTASL Training Director mentioned that attitudes were more positive than they had expected. After some initial briefings with staff and students Ananda was relatively easily integrated into the college. This has given the VTASL and the local college confidence that they can accept disabled people in future. Ananda not only learned radio, TV, and tape recorder repairs but also formed important and lasting friendships with students and staff and is now running a repair business from his family home with the aim of setting up a shop in the near future.

This example however has not only impacted on these individuals but has gone on to change the way the VTASL approaches applications from disabled people. After Ananda successfully completed his course in 2008, the VTASL's attitude towards disabled people changed. Since 2008 they have provided vocational training for 12 young disabled people in welding, carpentry, electronics, motor

---

<sup>22</sup> Worth noting is that a CBTD field officer hired for the project regularly visited the Director of Social Services and as a disabled person himself had an important personal impact on the staff in the department

repair and IT. The Colombo head office has now started an IT course specially aimed at disabled youths. The office has also gone on to start a vocational training centre at the SDPA centre in Hikkaduwa providing sewing machine operation training to deaf girls.

GIDES is an example of a BDS organisation that has been influenced by the project. GIDES was established in 1992 having developed from the work of a large rural integrated development program that ran during the 1980's. It's primary vision is of meeting the needs of the community and promoting an equal and peaceful society. They have a constitution which outlines their mandate to support vulnerable groups which they have tended to regard as consisting of women, children and youth. They also aim to work with like minded organisations (networking); to implement eco-friendly sustainable programs; and to take part in disaster risk reduction and management activities.

They work on a membership basis so they have individual family members who are encouraged to join local self-help groups. The SHGs link to village committees who in turn link to divisional CBOs. All these representative groups comprise the General Assembly. They cover six Divisional sectors with 56 villages and believe they have a total of 15,890 family members<sup>23</sup>.

Since joining with CBTD and the livelihoods program in 2006 GIDES believes they have received considerable benefits as an organisation and this has been translated into improved services for their client members.

Specific benefits received by GIDES include:

- Two officers trained in the use of the "Purpose for life" manual (who have since gone on to use this with 17 members in 3 groups);
- Four officers trained on the rights based approach;
- Two officers went to India on a study tour to learn more about rights;
- One officer participated in a workshop on the rights of disabled people;
- Three have received training on counselling;
- One followed a one year diploma course on psychology.

GIDES field staff have used SHGs to help identify training needs for some disabled people, and others have been matched to employment opportunities. Six disabled women are now employed in local garment factories (3 are deaf [2 sign language users], 2 hard of hearing and 1 is physically impaired). Worth noting is that a VTC graduate got herself a job at one of these factories because they were accepting disabled people (not actually GIDES supported). All these placements were followed up initially by GIDES staff although a lack of sign language amongst them made communication with the deaf employees difficult.

In terms of livelihoods and self employment support for disabled people they have offered technical training in tailoring, screen printing, vegetable stores, boutiques, mobile phone and electronic repairs, ornamental fish farming and home gardening. They have also provided credit (linked to SHGs) and where possible links to buyers and markets for produce.

In terms of impact on the organisation itself GIDES has certainly benefitted from disability rights awareness and increased links to government services. They now know how to identify and consult directly with disabled people and are less inclined to discriminate against them. However it is unclear whether they have really developed an inclusive approach because despite their increased engagement with disabled people it's still largely done on an individual needs basis. The programs

---

<sup>23</sup> This organisation does not appear to keep consistent records

they have been running in Suriyawawa and Thissamaharama are only for disabled people – they do not offer this level of support or guidance to anyone else. They usually only work at the level of the SHG not the individual. With the ‘disability program’ they work at the level of the individual because ‘we need to personalise the service’<sup>24</sup>.

As an organisation they do not seem to have made lasting strategic level changes. None of their general training techniques have been altered in any way to accommodate disabled people according to the Director and the only time they have made specific adjustments to enable disabled people to attend meetings, training or consultations was to change the location of a venue to enable two wheelchair users to attend.

Business Creations is a private sector Business Development Service organisation established in 2002. They have 86 employees and two branch offices in Monaragala and Ampara with plans to open a third in the near future. The services they provide includes basic management training; organisational development; technical training; business counselling, planning and credit brokering services. They have a selection of different packages on offer and charge clients according to the package. They have a wide ranging network of past clients and donors locally and abroad. Many of their clients are NGOs and INGOs.

The following additional examples of policy level changes were provided to the review team by CBTD staff but were not interviewed by the evaluation team:

a. Tea Research Institute, Kottawa

Until lobbying from CBTD the TRI had never provided tea nursery training for disabled people. After lengthy negotiations they agreed to provide nursery training for 46 disabled people, 6 of whom have since gone on to start their own tea nurseries on a commercial scale (over 5,000 plants). The TRI usually expect around 10% of their graduates to become commercial growers but had a very pessimistic view of disabled people – they estimated about 1% would go on to set up their own nurseries which was why they were reluctant to take them on. However the actual success rate was about 10% and the TRI were so impressed they have now given disabled people a special quota of additional tea plants and arranged for a rapid registering process as tea plant growers.

b. SANASA Development Bank

The Galle branch of SANASA development bank consistently refused to allow disabled people to open accounts. After lobbying by a CBTD field officer one physically disabled person has subsequently been successful in applying for a loan. Deaf people are still discriminated against but discussions are continuing.

c. Village Development Society under the Department of Village Development

The Village Development Society in Hakmana recently organized a one year sewing course for a group of unemployed women in the village with assistance from the department of village development. One deaf girl in the village also applied for the course but her initial application was turned down specifically due to her disability. The CBTD field officer intervened and eventually she was recruited for the training. The deaf girl successfully completed the course and in fact graduated with the highest marks. Since then the department has started promoting the inclusion of disabled people on similar training courses.

---

<sup>24</sup> GIDES Director



d. National Youth Services Council, Hakmana

A physically disabled person's application for a place on an ekale and broom making training course organized by the NYSC office in Hakmana was initially rejected as a direct result of his disability. The CBTD field officer intervened and eventually he was admitted on the course. Despite some initial reluctance on the part of the trainer he eventually worked hard to adapt the training environment to enable the disabled student to follow the training in full. He has since gone on to establish a successful broom making business. He was so good in the course that the NYSC now use him as an outside resource person when they conduct ekale and broom making training programs. This test case has resulted in the NYSC allocating a special fund to provide skills development training for disabled people. So far they have provided skills development training for 15 young disabled people.

e. Prajashakthi Foundation, Yakkalamulla, Galle

This is a local NGO operating with over 500 members. They have never offered membership to disabled people but after lengthy discussions with the local CBTD field officer they were persuaded to open up membership to disabled people. Since then they have taken on 6 disabled members each of whom has now been offered the full credit facilities. They have now amended their Constitution to allow for the enrolment of disabled people.

f. Gamidiriya program

Gamidiriya is a government sponsored village development project. The project promotes the formation of village societies by local people in order to carry out small development projects. Each society is managed by a Board selected from local villagers. In the past disabled people were not represented on these Boards at all but after discussions with CBTD they have since amended their policy to reflect the need to ensure disabled people are represented.

g. Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services (Guarantee) Ltd (SEEDS)

Work by CBTD has influenced SEEDS to include disabled people in their development initiatives for the first time.

## **Section 4 Lessons learned**

### **4.1 Inclusive livelihoods opportunities can be sought from a wide variety of different sectors.**

One of the major achievements of this project has been to influence the take up of disabled people as employees in the private sector. Whilst the majority of project beneficiaries took up self-employment options overall of those who opted for employment the majority found placements in the private sector. Having been persuaded initially to take on disabled employees many of the factories involved in the project have since become keen to employ more. Where such potential exists therefore it is worth focusing lobbying efforts on the private sector.

Similarly where there is potential for links to develop between training institutions (like VTCs) and the private sector a lot of more market oriented benefits can be created.

### **4.2 Care needs to be taken to ensure that when disabled people are taken on as employees in contexts where there are less legal rights that they are not exploited (whether intentionally or not)**

Field observations and conversations repeatedly raised concerns over the motivations behind employing deaf people. On the positive side there is no doubt that many deaf people have gained employment who were not working before and many of the people we met in training (at the VTC and the garment apprentice training centre for example) were very enthusiastic about their new skills. However it is worth noting that a small degree of caution is needed when evaluating the outcomes of this because most interviewees talked in terms of employing deaf people 'because they are highly productive as they don't get distracted or talk to others'. Many also talked in terms of deafness being 'easier to accommodate' because deaf people can travel independently and are not as badly stigmatised as those with physical impairments.

The case of Lanka Fishing Flies Ltd is worth investigating in more detail because the field observations appeared to uncover a worrying lack of attention to the needs of deaf employees. When people start at the factory they undergo induction training which takes between 1 and 2 days after which they would be put onto the assembly line and can start earning a wage (wages are determined by productivity). Deaf staff however are not provided with any communication support so at a minimum it can take well over a week before they are familiar with the processes and can start to work on the production line during which time they are not able to receive a wage. The longer they take the less they earn but the employer makes no attempt to support communication during this important time. If communication support was available there would likely be no difference in the time it takes for deaf people to learn the skills necessary for full productivity. The factory should consider hiring an interpreter for the few days this would take, especially if they are keen to employ significantly more deaf people in the near future.

We would urge that the project reassess what the experiences are like for deaf people working full time, especially where they are in placements on their own. They may well be highly productive but that could be to the severe detriment of their psychological well being and where there is no effort paid to enabling deaf staff to communicate with supervisors or bosses then they may be at risk. They will not have the opportunity to complain if there is something concerning them, to gain new skills and go for promotions or get up to date information on wages, benefits and other entitlements.

There is a small possibility that employers have been keen to hire deaf people as part of this project because there is no responsibility on their part to make any kinds of adjustments (communication not being regarded as a necessary change). In the final stages of this program it is recommended that some investigation be carried out to ensure deaf people are not being exploited as a result of their impairment.

#### **4.3 Disabled people and their employers benefit from work based preparation and support in the early stages**

It should not be underestimated how difficult it can be to integrate disabled people into the workforce in situations where welfare is the norm. Disabled people who have been so excluded from the social context will have little awareness of what to expect, or how to behave and conform which makes the transition into full time employment difficult in the initial stages. It is therefore important for projects operating in situations like this to consider including activities which focus on helping both the employer and the disabled person to adjust to full time employment.

At the start of this program there was a 60% drop out rate from formal employment. When CBTD researched the issue they found a significant mismatch between the expectations of employers and the general knowledge of workplace culture and understanding amongst disabled people. This meant that employers (and the project) did not know how much they needed to support disabled people institutionally and socially focusing attention instead on issues around their impairments. What became clear however was that disabled people had missed important socialisation processes which their peers would have been exposed to in families and the education system. So they were largely unprepared for what was going to happen once hired. Different examples of how this impacted on the success ranged from things like disabled people being unaware they had to ask permission to leave work to issues over how and when they could expect to get paid.

##### **The importance of pre-placement support**

One young deaf woman left her full time job after the second month claiming to the project officer that although she enjoyed the work and felt well accepted she was not being paid the same as her co-worker friend. Further investigation found that according to their pay slips they were paid the same wage and the employer confirmed this was the case. After some considerable time they worked out what the problem actually was. When the salaries were being handed out, the young deaf woman had been paid in Rs 1,000/- notes, but her colleague had received her salary in Rs 500/- notes so it looked, visibly as though she was receiving more. Discussions with the employer resulted in them agreeing to pay people in the same denomination notes and the young woman is back enjoying her work.

In the end the project introduced an element of work preparation – helping disabled people to understand to expect, roles and responsibilities in the workplace, etc. As well as helping employers to prepare.

#### **4.4 Livelihoods discussions with disabled people can help to break the strong cultural tendencies towards dependency and introduce the concept of rights even within a context in which ‘rights’ are not generally talked about**

In Sri Lanka ‘rights’ are not openly discussed (other than in the context of land disputes) and tend to be associated with confrontation. It is a difficult context in which to operate a rights based programme and yet this project did manage to begin the debate with communities, local government and the local private sector.

There is a strong sense in Sri Lanka that disability means dependency; that families (and the State) are obliged to 'look after' disabled relatives, children or siblings which is manifest in a deep welfarist approach. As a consequence disabled people find it very difficult to break away from the sense that they need special services, social protection and long term care. They are not expected or expecting to contribute to the family or to strive for independent status.

Perhaps the most transformational aspect of the project approach was the focus on household expenditure analysis. Although this is most often used as a preliminary exercise to discussions on loans and credit in this context it became a way for families to identify where the dependency of disabled members was impacting on their levels of poverty. When they began discussions on family expenditure and income it became more obvious that if all members were contributing their status would be very much improved. For disabled people it became quite an individually empowering process because it gave them their first chance to understand what family incomes were and to think about how they might contribute. Just taking part in those kinds of discussions enabled them to think about what they could give in terms of upkeep and this helped break assumptions and attitudes about dependency. Disabled people are beginning to realise it is possible for them to keep a family. Essentially although not discussed in terms of rights it has the same effect as learning about rights.

**4.5 Dependency (as it relates to disability) is a very difficult behavioural tendency to break requiring action focused on both those who are dependent and those who seek to care. Staff working on projects seeking to affect this relationship must have a solid awareness of the social model of disability before starting activities**

Early in the project it was noted that whilst supporting agencies like Navajeevana, CBTD and GIDES were certainly increasing the numbers of disabled people participating in economic activities this was not an empowering process. There were concerns that the partner-led approach was resulting in agencies seeking opportunities on behalf of disabled people and then facilitating the links that the agency believed was in the best interests of the client. Despite separating out the original Output 2 to make it easier for project staff to see the empowerment element it seems as though this general approach did not fundamentally alter. The reason for this appears to have been because project staff themselves were unaware of the social model of disability and were not confident in being able to identify where dependency was still strong.

This is not an unusual situation, especially where there is significant involvement by medical based agencies (such as those delivering CBR services). The tendency to 'drift back' to the individual approach, focusing on impairments and the need to help disabled people is often very strong.<sup>25</sup> Staff in this situation need to be highly vigilant to the possibilities of this occurring and for this to happen they have to be confident themselves in the social model approach. Future projects that focus on the empowerment of disabled people must start with a solid understanding of this approach and ensure that key project personnel have the skills and tools available to promote this throughout the intervention. Regular monitoring of the approach being used by partners needs to be kept and actions taken to rectify any drifts.

**4.6 Empowering disabled people to take part in livelihoods activities is a good approach to improving their economic potential and integration into communities. However it does not necessarily lead to improving disabled people's ability to make general rights demands**

---

<sup>25</sup> S.Coe and L Wapling *Practical Lessons on inclusive development* – Development In Practice: Issue 27, September 2010, pp 879-886.

There is no doubt that the project contributed to enabling a number of disabled people to take up livelihoods activities and therefore improve their economic potential. Without the project it is unlikely in the short term that they would have been able to break out from their dependency. The fact that a number of different private sector employers, training institutions and community development organisations have now accepted disabled people as 'deserving' of work is an achievement. It has helped to demonstrate to disabled people that they have the right to work and that their specific needs should be accommodated.

What this project has not been able to do however is to broaden this experience out beyond the individual disabled people themselves to encourage them to think in wider rights terms and this has implications for the way future projects might be structured. Although the project activities included elements of awareness raising a lot of the focus of interventions with disabled people was on meeting their individual needs as related to livelihoods. They were encouraged to talk about what their needs were, what ideas they had for how to generate income and this helped them to gain confidence. But this new confidence is not transferring itself into feelings about how the system can be challenged or changed through collective action. This is probably because there has been limited attention paid to raising awareness on rights with disabled people themselves. So whilst they may be better off individually they are not coming together to make demands on employers for better working arrangements for all disabled people; they are not talking about how to reduce barriers within the system to improve access for all they are largely focused on how to meet the needs of individuals within the system that exists.

Field observations suggested that private sector employers for example were not making any adjustments to their working environment to accommodate impairment needs relying instead on the ability of the disabled person to fit in. Similarly training institutions (even those designed for disabled people) had been reluctant to make adjustments until the project provided the necessary resources.

The issue here is probably linked to the fact that (within the context of this project) improving livelihoods is an individual activity - it is not inherently collective. In a context like Sri Lanka where there is not yet a strong enough disability movement there is no structure within which to promote general rights and empowerment with disabled people. In future it might be worth considering more carefully what the initial context is so that project outputs can reflect more accurately what kind of changes might be needed. Where there is a limited (or no) disability movement more focus could be spent specifically on rights awareness with disabled people and on building the capacity of groups of disabled people (for example DPOs) to lobby and advocate for rights. Where there is a stronger disability movement there may be less need for the provision of awareness raising but more focus on how to support their lobbying activities. Embedding the project within the disability movement structure itself (as was the case with the APT project in Uganda) can enable the empowerment and rights element to be much more successfully attained.

## **Section 5 Summary recommendations**

- Where projects are designed to promote the empowerment of disabled people implementing agencies should be able to clearly articulate the social model approach and ensure their staff have the appropriate skills and tools available to carry this out.
- At the start of projects like this a baseline survey should be provided which accurately measures and records the context. This will enable more realistic indicators to be set and opens the way for more involvement by project 'beneficiaries' in the monitoring process.

- Where projects are aimed at assisting disabled people into the workforce some form of work-based orientation and support is helpful in making the transition into full time employment easier.
- CBR service providers need to be challenged more directly on their approach to disabled people to ensure that they are not contributing to their continued dependency.

## Annex A Achievement rating scale

1 = fully achieved, very few or no shortcomings

2 = largely achieved, despite a few shortcomings

3 = only partially achieved, benefits and shortcomings finely balanced

4 = very limited achievement, extensive shortcomings

5 = not achieved

	Achievement rating	Log frame indicators	Baseline values for indicators	Progress against indicators	Comments on changes over the whole project period, including unintended impacts
<p><b>Purpose</b> To empower disabled people (DP) through developing practical approaches for accessing their right to improve their livelihoods, to participate in decisions which affect their lives and enhance their inclusion by policy makers</p>	<b>2</b>	Levels of participation of DP and carers in decision-making processes e.g. no. of representations, increased inclusivity, changes in livelihood policy/practice at local and national levels. Increased access to resources/skills for livelihoods.			This project has made important progress towards improving the livelihoods opportunities of disabled people in Sri Lanka but has had less success in the area of empowerment and participation in decision making processes. Most of the changes have been in the way non-disabled people view disability rather than with the empowerment of disabled people.
<p><b>Outputs</b> <b>O1.</b> Development of partnerships and alliances with the stakeholders in both disability and business development sectors in Sri Lanka with the interest and</p>	<b>1</b>	20 diverse links/networks/fora developed and sharing information			A diverse network of organisations was established representing both disability and livelihoods focused engagements. The number and diversity of partners involved in implementing this project is

capacity to serve DP and their caregivers.					to be commended.
<p><b>O2.1</b> Disabled men and women more aware of their rights, empowered to voice their needs and address issues that hinder their access to their basic human rights, in particular their right to improving their livelihoods.</p>	4	<p><b>2.1.1</b> 2,000 disabled men and women more aware of their rights etc.</p>			<p>There were problems evaluating the extent to which disabled people are ‘more aware of their rights’ because the concept of ‘disability rights’ and the processes involved in promoting it amongst disabled and non-disabled people was not clearly articulated during the project. The log frame indicators are vague. Although the project records increased numbers of disabled people ‘accessing their rights’ these rights are mostly expressed in terms of rehabilitation services and welfare provisions made on an individual basis. Most awareness raising activities have had a greater impact on partner staff and carers / community volunteers than on disabled people.</p>
		<p><b>2.1.2</b> 1,000 disabled men and women making rights based demands of duty bearers.</p>			



<p><b>O2.2</b> DP demonstrating increased participation in economic activities.</p>	<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>2.2.1</b> 200 DP with a broad range of impairments (including the hearing, visual intellectual and psychologically impaired) with monthly incomes of over 5000 rupees and are saving money for their future.</p>			<p>The project has achieved good results with regards to getting a range of disabled people into employment or livelihoods activities. Although it failed to achieve its numerical targets considering the very low starting point the fact that some disabled people are now employed by the private sector, and have been taken on by mainstream vocational training centres suggests that some barriers are being removed. The only area of concern with regards to employment in the private sector was the extent to which any real, structural changes had been made. Disabled employees are still the ones to make the adjustments needed to work rather than the workplace adapting to their requirements.</p>
		<p><b>2.1.2</b> 25 of the 200 DP who are heads of households supporting 75 family members.</p>			
		<p><b>2.2.2</b> 100 of the 200 DP contributing more than 25% of their income to their families.</p>			

<p><b>O3.</b> Proven experience clearly documented of innovative and practical approaches for mainstreaming the rights of DP to access their livelihood.</p>	<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Case studies and guidance documents to include: audio visual material; quarterly newsletters; workshop papers; training programmes; 10 diverse inspirational DP client case studies.</p>			<p>This project has used a whole variety of different methods from newsletters and videos to media articles and awareness events. They have documented over 40 successful case studies and produced a new manual 'Purpose for Life' to encourage the inclusion of disabled people in livelihoods activities. The area in which they could have made more of an impact would have been to share this learning more widely with the disabled beneficiaries. More focus on involving disabled people in the learning process might have improved overall progress towards empowerment.</p>
<p><b>O4.</b> CBTD and local organisations (CBOs, DPOs, BDS providers and governmental organisations) will integrate a rights based approach into their programmes, planning and decision making processes to be inclusive of DPs needs.</p> <p>DPOs will provide livelihoods</p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>4.1</b> DP make up at least 2% of clients of 15 mainstream organisations.</p>			<p>This output has been problematic for the project team to implement and equally difficult to evaluate. Part of the problem was a lack of clarity over what the rights based approach meant in practice and then a lack of capacity amongst implementing agencies to carry it out. Influencing mainstream service providers to adopt the social model</p>

<p>development services in addition to services previously provided.</p>		<p><b>4.2</b> 5 DP focussed organisations providing livelihoods development services.</p>			<p>approach in their policies and practices is a long term process and requires considerable lobbying. It is unlikely a project like this could have achieved this result. Similarly the lack of clarity over what disability organisations were already providing in the way of livelihoods means it is not possible to discern to what extent these are now being offered in addition to their regular services. Research at the very start of the project setting targets on an individual organisational bases may have increased the likelihood of more progress towards this output.</p>
<p><b>O5.</b> At Regional and National levels, at least 10 BDS organisations (including INGOs) and government authorities will be implementing more effective approaches to promote the inclusion of DP in the economic development process, in response to the needs of poor people.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>5.1</b> 10 national/ regional organisations changed their practices in response to the rights of poor disabled people. CBTD's and partners skills/experiences will be shared with them.</p>			<p>The project records 10 national organisations as having been influenced to change their policies and a number of the partners involved also made adjustments to increase the participation of disabled people. The concern is over the sustainability of these changes and the depth to which they have made practical differences. It is likely that continued lobbying and advocacy is needed to ensure these are not one-off adaptations made in response to the project.</p>

## **Annex B DPO and self-help group case studies**

### **DISABLED PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS**

#### **Southern Province Deaf Association**

SPDA was registered in 2000 and has 750 members, 200 of whom are active. It is a local branch of the Central Federation of the Deaf based in Colombo (established in 1995) and takes in members from Galle, Matara and Hambantota Districts. Its overall aim is to fight against the discrimination faced by Deaf people, to help them access language (through the teaching of Sign Language), education and employment. All their activities are focused on these basic aims.

They have a Constitution which governs their structure with an annually elected committee to oversee the management of the organisation. They have their own relatively large premises which has space for an office, meeting hall, several training rooms and a carpentry workshop. The majority of their activities take place from their centre which is open daily.

Their main source of funding currently comes from the Rs 300/- annual membership fee and any income they can generate from small business activities. For example several members can teach sign language and sometimes earn money for the organisation by running courses. Otherwise most activities are run on a voluntary basis with members providing whatever time they can spare.

Until recently the Central Federation of the Deaf (CFD) was providing member branches with grants to cover administration costs, computer equipment, a fax and the salary of a sign language interpreter. However this program was donor funded and the project ended in 2009 and since then there has been no more funding.

Livelihoods support has been a central activity of SPDA since its establishment because this is an area which Deaf people find the most difficult to achieve. The other significant activity is education. They run a small school for deaf children who are either unable to attend mainstream classes or who struggle to cope. It's open every afternoon and helps support the children in basic numeracy, literacy, and religious guidance. They teach sign language (to adults and children) on a regular basis and there is also a vocational training centre which covers carpentry, IT, sewing machine skills and batik making. The VTA recently formally recognised this VTC so all graduates will receive official certificates from their courses.

From their VTC about 10 people a year go on to secure jobs on graduation. About 30 members now have their own tailoring business.

Their vocational training centre was recently featured in three newspapers during an exhibition of student work. The publicity from this event had a big impact when the President took a close interest. It enabled them to demonstrate that sign language is a real and useful language not just a series of gestures and this has gone a long way promoting its official recognition.

In addition to the services they provide at the centre they also help identify job placements for members and support people as they take up employment. They do this mainly through personal

connections and networking since they do not have formal skills in business or employment services. An important part of job placement is the support members provide to those in employment. Where there are problems members are always willing to help try to resolve them by using their own past experiences. Most of the time they are only able to counsel the deaf person – they can only meet supervisors or employers if there is an interpreter available. However what they tend to find is that it is usually the deaf person themselves who creates issues because of their lack of understanding around work practices and expectations. For example many factories have targets for production which deaf people are often unaware of at first. What they experience is their supervisor ‘constantly bullying them’ but in reality it’s just a normal part of the working culture. Once this is properly explained to the deaf person they no longer feel bullied.

In the past SPDA have tried to run a credit program but this failed completely when no one paid back the loans. They were actually given Rs 200k/- to use but the Deaf members had no idea about interest on loans and thought the organisation was trying to cheat them. Consequently they refused to pay back the loans and the money quickly ran out.

Although CBTD and the livelihoods project have not provided SPDA with any direct funding they have benefitted from their participation. One of the most important benefits has been the regular provision of a sign language interpreter. The interpreter that works at the CBTD office is also available for SPDA and this has improved their opportunities to lobby and attend meetings and training. Being connected to the project has also enabled them to benefit from learning about the rights based approach and other livelihoods related activities like expenditure analysis, good record keeping and effective use of IT. CBTD also audited their accounts for them. Overall they also feel that being part of a wider network has helped them to raise the profile of deaf issues and in particular sign language and it seems to have increased their confidence to lobby.

One recent example of this increased confidence is their participation in the Provincial government’s consultation workshop for their new 5 year plan. The SPDA Secretary attended one of the consultation meetings with an interpreter and as he explained, he didn’t just sit and listen but actually contributed to the discussions.

#### NAVAJEEVANA SUPPORTED DPOs

##### **Beliata DPO**

Beliata DPO was registered in 2001 and currently has a membership of around 250 people, 144 of whom are active. Its main purpose is to help secure CBR services and livelihoods support for disabled people in the local area.

The DPO has a Constitution which governs their overall structure. There is an elected executive board and management committee and a patron from Navajeevana. The current executive committee has just been elected and have received some training in how to carry out their official roles from Navajeevana. The committee expects to meet every month to discuss plans and progress but formal reviews are held every quarter and annual reports and plans are approved by Navajeevana. It is worth noting that disabled and non-disabled people are eligible for membership and positions on the executive. In fact there are several carers and CBR workers on the committee.

Their main activities include CBR programs, livelihoods development and organising social / religious events. They work very closely with Navajeevana to implement all their activities, on whom they are extremely dependent. In terms of funding they have a Rs 25/- per year contribution from members and have received Rs 28k/- from the Sri Lanka - Canada Development Fund to run a micro-credit program although this has been channelled through Navajeevana. CBTD also gave them project funds to carry out a small survey on issues linked specifically to disabled women which enabled them to carry out field visits and interviews. Despite having been established for almost ten years they do not have access to their own funds and have never been given training or support in organisational fundraising.

This DPO has some experience in supporting livelihoods work. With the help of Navajeevana they have set up 20 small self-help groups through which the micro-credit program is being run with small loans being made to group members.

Beliata DPO have benefitted from the livelihoods and rights based training offered through Navajeevana and in this way some of their members have secured better greater economic independence. In the past year 11 members have been offered technical training (with home gardening and shoe making seemingly the most popular). One member described how after the home gardening training he intended just to grow produce for himself but it's done so well he now has enough to sell.

The Secretary has been running her own small business since 1997 (running a school canteen) but was recently able to get training to help develop a business plan which she will use to secure a Rs 10k/- loan. Her business is doing so well she is able to look after six family members. Another member described how he is now employed full time at the local library as a result of the livelihoods support program.

Several members have benefited from accessing government poverty alleviation grants – 1 family received Rs 50k/- and another the full Rs 100k/- to help rebuild / renovate their houses. Two people have received Rs 5k/- self employment start up grants and eight have received food aid (milk powder).

As an organisation they are still relatively service delivery focused in their activities although there have been some notable exceptions. They are extremely dependent on Navajeevana for guidance, planning, and funding as well as program implementation despite having been established for almost ten years. This would seem to indicate that up until this point Navajeevana have not focused on the organisational development of the DPO but rather have been using it as a focus point for carrying out their CBR activities.

Since the organisation is very service delivery focused this will make it difficult to maintain in the longer term. Implementing CBR services is expensive and resource intense so unless the government contributes significantly then it is unlikely this DPO will be able to sustain this role independent of an external agent like Navajeevana ( or any donor willing to directly support CBR activities).

There is evidence however that some disabled members of this DPO have started to pursue more rights based activities to some degree of success.

Recently the Chair and some committee members were involved in lobbying to improve the accessibility of the local election process. They assessed physical accessibility of village polling stations and found six to be inaccessible. With this evidence they wrote to the divisional authorities (divisional electoral commission) with copies to the President and the Minister of Social Services.

Local officials responded by saying it was their responsibility to make polling stations accessible but unfortunately it would not be possible this time around because of the short timeframe. Nevertheless they promised to make 'resources available to ensure everyone can access the polling booths'. In the event that meant people standing by with chairs ready to carry disabled people in but it did at least enable ten DPO members to vote for the first time and served as a very good tool for raising awareness.

The project itself has offered them the chance to learn more about the rights based approach. A total of fifty members have received the training (Aug 2010) and two members have been trained to facilitate the course. In terms of the impact of this awareness training the Chair believes it has given them a chance to see things from a different perspective

*It has changed how we organize ourselves and our activities. We are much better at sharing things out more equally. We also learned to take pride in our rights, we are no longer afraid to raise issues it has given us extra strength.*

*Chair, Beliata DPO*

---

However the overall approach still being adopted by members and the executive is individual model based not social model based. They do not feel the need to define disability from the social model perspective but prefer to see it in impairment terms. This DPO is not yet aware of the potential power which lies in collective action, joining with other disabled people to expose the discrimination they face and are happy to allow non-disabled people to fill executive, decision making positions within their organisation. Although some members are aware of the UNCRPD the Chair explained that it is rarely referred to.

### **Devpura DPO - Thalalla-North**

Devpura DPO was registered in 2007 and currently has a membership of 139 people. Its main purpose is to secure CBR based services from Navajeevana and other local providers. Its founders were keen to set up this organisation because they were aware of the difficult and isolated situation most disabled people find themselves in and felt a group like this would enable them to link to services more effectively.

In fact the founders put in a lot of work to publicise its creation with an awareness raising event to mark its official launch. Over 500 people came including villagers, police, divisional authorities, carers, and disabled people. So many people came that they had to ask Navajeevana to help them facilitate the meeting. During this event they elected the first set of officials and registered interested disabled members.

They claim to have a diverse range of members including non-disabled people and a mix of different impairments. No one knows sign language on the committee however so the only way they can communicate with deaf people is through gesture ('or we write things down' says one CBR worker).

They have a Constitution which governs the structure of the organisation although the current committee were not very aware of what it contained. They have an elected executive committee (the same one from the 2007 launch) which meets quarterly to discuss issues that have come up, new needs / people that have been identified and try to link them to services. This meeting also enables Navajeevana to pass on information about any training or other services being offered .

There are about 15 village level self-help groups consisting of around 5 members each. These self help groups meet monthly and focus in particular on how to share out labour resources, plan social activities or talk about the kind of training needs they have. CBR volunteers are involved in supporting discussions in these groups.

They have no independent source of funding and have not received any organisational development support in areas like leadership, management, planning or fundraising.

All the activities they have been involved in to date seem to have been facilitated through Navajeevana and are either CBR or livelihoods based (with some social activities). They have benefitted from technical training in areas like mushroom cultivation, broom and mat making, leather work and home gardening. Some members have now been successful in accessing grants from the department of social services and have been able to complete construction of their own homes.

This DPO is not well supported by Navajeevana field staff or volunteers currently. There has been no systematic attempt to pass on the rights based approach training to this group and the staff, volunteers and carers were very dominant throughout the whole field visit. CBTD have given Navajeevana Rs 100k/- to support the establishment of livelihoods activities for this DPO but it has yet to be used. In fact the executive committee seemed unaware that Navajeevana had this money for them. There has been no business planning or marketing training offered although expenditure analysis has been worked through. It appears from the field observations that Navajeevana support workers are not at all confident in tackling livelihoods work.

From the 139 members 17 are now recorded as being self employed as a result of the support offered through Navajeevana's involvement in the project. So far none of them have really improved their incomes yet but it seems they are hopeful given time their businesses will improve.

The group have not yet carried out lobbying or disability awareness raising activities and still perceive disability in impairment terms. Given this is a relatively new DPO which is still very much dominated by Navajeevana it is not possible to see much in the way of empowerment. The approach Navajeevana uses with the DPOs we visited is not one based on organisational capacity building so there is an in-built dependency created which it will be hard to break.



## **Nawa Sahana DPO - Dickwella**

Nawa Sahana DPO was registered in 2001 and currently has a membership of 325 people, 150 of whom are active members. The main objective of the organisation is to establish the rights of disabled people in the area and to help improve their living conditions.

No one at the meeting was quite sure if the organisation had a Constitution but since they are officially registered there must be one (clearly not well used however). This DPO (like many) does not keep records so it is hard to assess its organisational capacity or the difference that the livelihoods opportunities have made to their members. According to the current Chair of the group many members were conducting their own livelihoods work well before the organisation was set up and became involved in the CBTD supported program so it is difficult to assess the impact this program has had on the livelihoods of this group.

They have an annual plan which is put together by the executive committee in consultation with Navajeevana CBR volunteers. During planning meetings they talk about 'issues' and these form the basis of their plans. The 'issues' are identified by the CBR volunteers from their consultation with village level groups and relate mainly to individual problems like lack of housing or schooling. The group then plans how they can resolve those problems.

They do some very basic fundraising – using tickets to raise money directly from the public if they have a specific activity in mind. They also approach local donors, businesses and people who are willing to make one-off donations in support of specific activities. They have Rs 200k/- in the bank which was given to them via the CBTD project two years ago but it seems no one is quite sure how to use it and to date Navajeevana have not helped or advised them.

Their activities are service delivery based incorporating both CBR and livelihoods elements. They have been successful in obtaining assistive devices such as wheelchairs, and crutches and in supporting a number of disabled children into school (20 now attend the Navajeevana special school for at least part of their school week). They link with Navajeevana closely to help identify new clients and more recently with Basic Needs for whom they help identify people with mental health issues.

In terms of livelihoods they have been able to help with identifying technical training in areas like pot making, home gardening, shoe making and mushroom cultivation. Some committee members have had expenditure training although they have not passed this information on to other members.

In terms of how this DPO contributes to establishing the rights of disabled people in the area, it seems their main focus is on 'lobbying' the social services department for grants and helping members to gain employment opportunities. Although they seem to have had some individual successes, such as getting the Divisional Secretaries office to install a ramp to the office and having a number of factories agree to employing disabled people there does not seem to have been any widespread, strategic attempt to challenge discrimination.

They mark December 3rd each year (International Day of Disabled People) by having this as their AGM. They like joining in activities organised by others but they did not mention actually organising anything themselves or using this day specifically as an awareness raising opportunity.

To date they have not received any rights training and this became very evident when we asked what they considered disability to mean. The kinds of words we got in response were quite disturbing given they were being expressed by disabled members of a DPO. They talked in terms of 'Hopelessness, helpless, barriers in everyday life because of mental or physical condition, someone who has to ask for help, has learning disability and is not able to learn, not able to perform like normal person'. When we asked if disability was a normal part of communities there were very mixed responses. Many claimed disability was 'abnormal' or 'not normal' so it is clear this group needs to have rights awareness / social model training before they can effectively start to lobby for themselves.

## SELF-HELP GROUPS

### GIDES supported groups

#### **Suriyawewa self-help group, Welikara**

This is a GIDES supported self-help group located in a rural area which is badly affected by a chronic lack of water. There are six members in total two of whom have a disability (one woman is visually impaired [whose daughter is also a member and works mostly on her behalf] and one woman who is hard of hearing).

The group was set up two years ago after a GIDES animator visited the area. There was an awareness raising session that also encouraged them to find disabled people to be included in the groups. This particular group had links to disabled people (as parents and neighbours) so they were happy to set up the group together.

Unfortunately the group has not been active for the past 6 months as many of the members children moved away. Now some of them are returning it is possible to start up again and they actually met for the first time last week. The reason this is important is because all the group members are illiterate and without their children they are unable to make any records. GIDES does not seem to have overcome this particular issue.

At the moment payment to the group is done in rice – people contribute rice which is then sold and the money generated creates the savings for the group. They try to be fair with the distribution – if you put in more rice you can expect to take out more credit. GIDES encourages them to save money where possible but if loans are taken out they are usually limited to two months and the interest paid back is at 5% per month. Their group currently has Rs 2,600/- in savings.

Members carry out a small number of different livelihoods activities including labour sharing in the garden, home gardening, and brick making (which generates between Rs 200-300/- per week).

The direct training they have received from GIDES includes expenditure management, agricultural instruction, and how to structure credit groups. There has been no rights based training or disability awareness raising. GIDES have also given them money to build latrines at home (not accessible ones though) and some plants.

When we asked the members how being in the group benefited them they replied mostly it gave them a sense of support. In fact they already had an informal labour sharing group running so what

GIDES has done is given them a more formal structure and better guidance on savings. They have also gained some specific skills – the home garden they now have is very productive as a result of training from an agricultural extension worker who helped them with planting and irrigation techniques.

The GIDES representative told us that the hearing impaired woman has really changed since being involved in the group. She has become much more confident. Before she would not think to share anything or get involved in group activities at all so she has benefitted a lot from this initiative.

### **Tissamaharama self-help group**

This GIDES supported group is also located in a remote rural area and currently has just four members. There were ten originally when it was set up two years ago but due to difficulties with transport membership has dropped significantly. This group is slightly different to Suriyawera in that all the members are disabled – in fact it was set up specifically for disabled people and this is one reason why the group has not been able to meet effectively. Since members are not located near each other it has not been possible to meet on a regular enough basis to properly form a group. Members are now considering joining established groups closer to their homes.

Overall support from GIDES has been minimal since the remoteness of the location has meant field officers rarely visit.

The link with CBTD and the livelihoods project has enabled seven of the members to gain training in ornamental fish farming which took place about two years ago. Four members are now trying to run their own fish farms having also been supported to build the tanks and purchase initial stock. After running the business for almost a year they have just started to generate some income although not enough as yet to make any profit.

One disabled member Mr P.A.Asanka also runs a sweet buying and selling business through which he is able to generate about Rs 3,000/- per week (Rs 900/- of which he saves). Unfortunately he does not keep any records for his businesses so he is not able to say if it would be possible to improve on this level of saving or increase his business further. Group members do not generally keep records although the father of one member seems to have some records. They have not been trained in record keeping or expenditure analysis either. None of the members have a business plan and there has been no market analysis done.

The group try to meet every month during which time they tend to discuss technical issues to do with their fish breeding. Although the group does not appear to be functioning particularly effectively some of the individuals have gained considerably from their experiences. Asanka says he has become a lot more confident as a person and is no longer so reluctant to move around his community. The father of one of the other members also claimed his daughter is so much more engaged and interested in life now than she was in the past. The focus on fish farming has encouraged her to think more about the future and the importance of learning to read and write. In the past she simply refused to learn but now she actually feels herself that her lack of ability to read is holding her back and has asked her family to teach her.

Given ornamental fish farming is a complex business, especially when considering the remoteness of the location and the obvious marketing constraints this poses it is difficult to understand if any of the group will actually be able to generate income from this in the near future.

#### CBTD supported group

##### **Hakmana self-help group**

This small but remarkable self help group was set up in 2008 after visits from the CBTD field officer prompted disabled people in the area to come together for mutual support. It began initially with nine members although they are currently down to six (one left to attend school, another has become a nun and a third went for training at the VTC – all positive developments). The members are all women and have a range of impairments. What was particularly good about meeting this group was the way in which disabled people themselves spoke about their group and their individual achievements. This group are not dominated by carers, family members or field workers.

The way the group was established serves as a very good model for how rights based self help groups can be formed. The process involved a relatively long period of intense individual activity by the CBTD field officer. She began by trying to physically locate and contact all known disabled people in the target area. Having established their whereabouts she then tried to meet with them on a one-to-one basis to talk to them about their life, their feelings and needs. Often this would involve repeated visits to homes where families were initially reluctant to let the field officer talk to their disabled relative. It would also take some time before the disabled person themselves was able to express their ideas and feel confident enough to talk about themselves. Most disabled people had never been asked their opinions before.

Having established contact the field officer then organised a community awareness raising event to which all the disabled people she had met were also invited. Many of them didn't come at that time though, still being unsure of what to expect. However there were enough people present at the event for agreement to set up a self-help group and eventually the other disabled people in the area came to know about it and were encouraged to go along.

All the members we talked to expressed their relief and happiness at finally being able to join a group.

*I was really happy when the CBTD field officer visited because it helped to reduce my sense of isolation – I really looked forward to her visits which is why I felt the idea for setting up a self help group was such a good one.*

*Ms.U.G.Gnanawathie – self help group member*

---

Ms.H.S.Wijitha Renuka's life has literally been transformed since joining. When her husband left her she decided to move in with her brother because as a visually impaired woman she was too afraid to stay alone. It took the CBTD field officer a long time to locate her and even then she refused to meet on the first few occasions. Eventually though the field officer's persistence paid off and even from that first meeting Ms Renuka knew she was with people she could finally trust to listen to her. When she went to a group meeting she left the house on her own for the first time in her life. This gave her

increasing confidence to move around the community and eventually they responded by getting together to repair her old house. Now she is back living there independently and has her own small business making rope from coconut husk (helped by a start up grant from the social services department).

This group make extensive use of the 'Purpose for life' manual which has given their group discussions a good basic structure. All the members of this group are now pursuing livelihoods activities ranging from local cigarette making to rope making, brick making and home gardening. One current member gained a place at a local VTC to study toy making but since then has ambitions to join the local yoghurt factory. Another gained a place at a local garment factory although this unfortunately had to close. Two members went on a 14 day residential course on agricultural improvement and are now developing their home gardens. Not only are they sharing their new knowledge with the others in the group they have also been out into the community demonstrating how to create effective compost.

Since the CBTD program support has ended the ex-field officer has continued to work in the community and as a result has now set up a new organisation recently registered under the name of the 'Shakthi Foundation'. This self-help group is one of 13 which are now operating within this foundation. Overall the field officer believes there are about 700 families with disabled people in the area but only 160 are part of groups so there is still a lot of work to do. Of the 160 members 75 now have a livelihoods activities of some sort running.

---