

## Community Based Rehabilitation and Economic Development Project in Guatemala (CBRED)

In partnership with Queen's University and The Development Study Centre (DSC), Israel.

<b>Dates:</b>	August 1999 to July 2001
<b>Primary sites:</b>	Guatemala
<b>Budget:</b>	\$400,000 CAD
<b>Donor:</b>	Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

### Overview

After the election of a left-wing government in Guatemala during the 1950s, a United States-backed coup began a civil war that lasted over three decades. The Guatemalan Civil War was fought from 1960 to 1996. Many civilians were killed or injured during the war, including a genocide of Maya civilians by the Guatemalan government. Estimates at the time of the Community Based Rehabilitation and Economic Development Project in Guatemala (CBRED)'s onset indicated that 200,000 people had disappeared or been killed. Healthcare infrastructure in Guatemala was also damaged significantly during the war.

The extensive use of landmines during the Guatemalan Civil War caused significant injury and disability to civilians. Estimates from 1999 indicated that people with disabilities made up 17% of the Guatemalan population. CBRED sought to improve rehabilitation for landmine survivors, people disabled by the war, and other people with disabilities in Guatemala.

CBRED's actions in Guatemala include the following:

- The project worked to incorporate the community based rehabilitation (CBR) model into existing healthcare and social services. Local, regional, and national health authorities supported CBR as a means of rehabilitation services delivery in rural areas.
- The project organized nine education sessions for over 200 healthcare workers to enhance their skills in the identification, treatment, and referral of people with disabilities.
- The project worked directly with people with disabilities, including landmine and war victims, to teach them to effectively support and provide advice to others with disabilities via peer counselling.
- CBRED organized three public awareness events in Nabaj and Chajul for over 550 participants. These events raised awareness of disability and promoted the idea that people with disabilities are equal and valuable members of their communities.
- CBRED collaborated with the Policy and Education branches of the Ministry of Health to develop rehabilitation practice guidelines. Efforts included meetings and workshops organized by the Ministry of Health.



## Background

In 1944 the Guatemalan people overthrew dictator Jorge Ubico, beginning a period of time known as the Guatemalan Revolution. The Guatemalan Revolution spanned the next 10 years, during which various left-wing governments were elected. These socialist governments were viewed as a threat by the United States, and the Guatemalan Revolution culminated in a United States-backed coup d'état. After the coup, fighting between the government of Guatemala and various left wing rebel groups (including Maya forces) began. The ensuing civil war lasted over 36 years, from 1960 to 1996. During the conflict, the government committed genocide of over 200,000 Maya people. Many others also disappeared or were killed. In addition to the loss of life, the long-lasting conflict and extensive use of landmines caused injury and disability in a large proportion of civilians. At the time of this project's onset the World Health Organization estimated that up to 17% of the population in post-conflict Central America had a disability.

## Rationale

After the civil war, Guatemala struggled to meet the needs of people with disabilities in rural areas. 65% of the Guatemalan population lived in rural regions and the vast majority of these people did not have access to rehabilitation services. CBR represented viable solution to increase the accessibility of rehabilitation services in rural Guatemala. CBR could be implemented with little existing healthcare infrastructure in rural areas. This project was designed to help rehabilitation services meet the needs of landmine survivors, people disabled by the war, and other people with disabilities. The most effective strategy to work towards this goal was the education of healthcare professionals, rehabilitation professionals, and community members about the application of CBR principles and strategies in their communities.

## Actions and Outcomes

All of the CBRED activities were intended to directly facilitate the social and economic integration of people with disabilities into their communities. The project worked to achieve this goal with the following activities:

- **CBRED worked to incorporate the CBR model of rehabilitation services into existing healthcare and social services in Nebaj.** National, regional, and local health authorities supported CBR as a way to provide rehabilitation services in rural areas.
- **The project created a series of education sessions for faculty and students at the National School of Physical and Occupational Therapy and the Medical School at the University of San Carlos.** These sessions helped participants improve their understanding of disability, CBR, community practise, and new clinical techniques. By improving understanding of the unique issues experienced by people with disabilities, these rehabilitation professionals were able to treat them more effectively.
- The project supported local healthcare networks to include rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in their action plans going forward.
- **The project aided the Ministry of Public Health to develop a National Rehabilitation Plan that identified CBR as the first level of rehabilitation services provided by primary healthcare workers at the community level.** This laid the foundation for the expansion and continued use of CBR in primary care going forward in Guatemala.

- **CBRED organized nine education sessions for over 200 healthcare workers.** These workshops helped teach attendees how to effectively identify, assist, treat and refer people with disabilities. The sessions focused on teaching healthcare workers how to help people with disabilities solve health issues that were common in their daily lives. Other education sessions for healthcare workers included topics such as health promotion, disability prevention, and advocacy for people with disabilities to the public.
- **CBRED ran a series of workshops for members of three organizations of people with disabilities. These workshops taught participants how to effectively support others with disabilities and how to institute peer counselling programs in their communities.**
- The project worked to educate healthcare professionals with hands-on techniques such as roleplay, small group discussions, and story telling by people with disabilities. These sessions demonstrated the practical uses of CBR. Healthcare professionals were aided to adjust their clinical techniques to fit the needs and situations of the specific population of people with disabilities they served, including their families.
- **The CBRED team organized three public awareness events in Nebaj and Chajul that had over 550 attendees.** These events raised awareness of disability and promoted the idea that people with disabilities are equal and valuable members of their communities.
- **The project worked to promote collaboration between different sectors of healthcare, social support, education, and labour organizations.** Through training sessions and discussions, the project encouraged improved communication that would facilitate more cohesive care and support for people with disabilities. These sessions presented an opportunity to discuss the organizational issues and challenges of collaborative work in small communities, aiding the CBRED team to identify areas for future project activities.
- The project developed learning material for use in education workshops at different levels within the community. All learning resources were translated to Spanish.
- **CBRED collaborated with the Policy and Education branches of the Ministry of Health to develop rehabilitation practice guidelines.** The team took part in meetings and workshops with Ministry of Health officials to discuss policy and guideline development.

## Conclusion

The Community Based Rehabilitation and Economic Development Project in Guatemala project was able to increase the awareness of the needs and rights of people with disabilities in Guatemala. The project improved community rehabilitation services through educational efforts. CBRED was also able to impact how people with disabilities were perceived by their communities in terms of their abilities and need to participate in community life.

## Partners

Implementing partners: Queen's University and The Development Study Centre (DSC), Israel.

Community collaborators: Guatemala Ministry of Health, University of San Carlos, National School for Physical and Occupational Therapy, Health Area Quiche, Health Area Ixil, Municipal Authorities, 3 associations of persons with disabilities, community members in Nebaj and Chajul and Transiciones.

International collaborators: Caritas, Movimondo, Spanish Red Cross, and UNICEF mental health program in Guatemala.

### Sources and Project Resources

1. Guatemala Final Narrative Report 1999-2001\*
2. Community Based Rehabilitation and Economic Development Project in Guatemala (CBRED) full project details\*
3. Community Based Rehabilitation and Economic Development Project in Guatemala (CBRED) website archive
4. Project images/photos

\*used to generate this report