

International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR)



2006 marked the 3rd year of operation for the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR). The following are some of the key highlights:

PROJECTS

ICDR now has working groups in 7 different countries. All are active. All involve rehabilitation students, faculty and community members.

Cambodia

After many months the Cambodia working group initiated several fundraising events and were successful in having two therapists travel to Cambodia in October to undertake needs assessment and to recommend appropriate interventions and services. This was done with a large amount of support both logistic and other from CIHs program in Kep province. Plans are now underway for next steps.

Cameroon

This group continues to work in the Northwest Province of Cameroon which is an English speaking province. It is one of the poorest regions of Cameroon and has the highest rate of HIV in the country. In 2006, the group once again arranged for a number of rehabilitation students to have international placements in the region. In addition a number of clinicians traveled to Cameroon to work on projects. In summer 2006 the group hosted the first ever conference in the region focused on disability issues. This was done with support from a number of local NGOs and with support of the government.

ICDR's Cameroon Working Group worked together with the Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (CWGHR) and the Cameroon Baptist Convention to submit a proposal to the Small Grants Fund of CSHI. Of over 180 submissions we were successful in receiving funding for 2 years (2006 – 2008) to work on a project entitled: Closing the Gaps: HIV, Disability and Rehabilitation in International Contexts. The partners each have expertise with one or more of disability, development, HIV/AIDS and/or rehabilitation. Through collaboration, the collective expertise will be utilized to develop resources and knowledge through reciprocal education sessions to bridge traditionally separate worlds and build capacity in issues related to gender, disability, rehabilitation and HIV.

Kenya

The Kenya working group continues to encourage and support students, clinicians and others to work with our partner in Kenya - Disability Service Programme (DSP). Projects have included providing direct service provision as well as arranging for surgical interventions, building equipment and assisting with vocational training for people living with disabilities. While to date student placements have been physiotherapy students, in 2006 the first occupation therapy students from U of T were also able to take advantage of having placements with the DSP. The group has been very creative and successful in fundraising initiatives. Recently they were able to raise funds to provide a very necessary vehicle to the program.



Nepal

The Nepal working group was newly initiated this year. The group consists of a number of rehabilitation clinicians, physicians and others. Most are based at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute. The group was committed to sending a team to Nepal in 2006 as the start of an ongoing sustainable partnership. Despite the unrest in Nepal 5 members of the group traveled to Nepal in November and were able to work with two different facilities there. They were able to provide direct service as a means of demonstrating practices to local therapists. They also provided direct teaching and instruction. Plans are underway for a next group in 2007.

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Pakistan

The Pakistan group was also new this past year. It formed as a group of therapists wanted to provide assistance to those who were left severely disabled as a result of the massive earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005. The earthquake left between 600 – 1500 people with spinal cord injuries. The working group is working with a health NGO in Pakistan known as Subh-E-Nau. During 2006, 3 teams of therapists, expert in spinal cord management, traveled to Pakistan to provide services. Plans are now underway to work toward a more community based model of care to get those injured back to their homes and communities. The group has been supported by the local Pakistan community and have received funds to advance the project in partnership with Subh – E – Nau.

Trinidad

The Trinidad working group has assisted over 25 rehabilitation students to have placements in Trinidad. In addition 3 OT clinicians have traveled to Trinidad to act as supervisors. In summer 2006, students and clinicians participated in summer camp program held by our partner in Trinidad. In addition the group has assisted one child from Trinidad to come to Toronto on 2 occasions for treatment. In addition the group is working on a research project with the Trinidad Ministry of Education.

Tanzania

The Tanzania Working group has been working for several years. In May 2006 a multi – disciplinary team went to Tanzania (Physiotherapist, Speech – Language Pathologist and Occupational Therapist) with a focus on training and developing networks to enhance the integration of HIV and Disability issues (funded by Health Canada). This has resulted in a draft memorandum of understanding being reviewed by faculty at Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College and Tuomani University. Two occupational therapy students undertook placements there in late 2006 and plans are underway for both a physiotherapy student and a speech – language pathology student to undertake placements.

OTHER KEY EVENTS

AIDS 2006

In August 2006, ICDR teamed up with the Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation to create a presence at the International Aids Conference held in Toronto. We received funding to hold two sessions: One was a satellite session entitled “Bridging HIV, Disability and Rehabilitation”, the second was a skill building forum session held at the global village entitled: “HIV, Disability and Rehabilitation: New Perspectives”. With support from the Public Agency of Canada we were able to invite representatives of our partners in Cameroon, Kenya and Tanzania to join us for these sessions. We were also proud to make sure that our sessions were fully accessible to persons with disability. Access which was sorely lacking from the rest of the conference. We were also pleased to welcome Mr Steven Fletcher, MP from Winnipeg, the Parliamentary Assistant to Health Minister Tony Clement to our session. This initiative allowed us to begin to build a community of international like minded individuals attempting to create awareness and programs around people with disabilities and HIV/AIDS and people with HIV/AIDS who can benefit from rehabilitation.

Symposium 2006

In October 2006, ICDR was pleased to host its 3rd annual symposium. Entitled “Working in A Developing Context” it was a very exciting event and featured 3 major speakers: Rachel Thibeault, OT, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Ottawa; Sally Hartley, Ph. D Professor of Communication and Health, University of East Anglia, UK and Michael Iwama, Ph. D., Associate Professor, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, University of Toronto. In addition many others contributed their experiences, observations and research to the program.

Cluster Grant Proposal

ICDR responded to the call from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for proposals for research clusters. Our proposal involved many many partners from all corners of the globe. Many agencies (local, national and international) were enthusiastic in providing letters of support. Developing this proposal has already resulted in a stronger level of cooperation among many of the partners.

Research For CBMI

ICDR was approached by Christian Blind Mission International (CBMI) to conduct a research project related to their strategic plan. The project which focuses on funding capacity within their organization will result in a report in early 2007. CBMI is one of the largest NGOs internationally focused on people with disabilities.

Disability In Development

ICDR has played a key role in assembling a group of Canadian organization who are interesting in disability in a developing context. We have developed a discussion paper, met with representatives from CIDA and participated in an education session at CIDA. This group is committed to seeing Canada take a more proactive role in addressing issues of disability in development.