



DISABILITY RESEARCH AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (DRD)

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PROJECT

**PROMOTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
AN INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER FOR
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM**

NARRATIVE REPORT

(1st November, 2010 – 31st January, 2011)

Activities/Issues Addressed

I. Continuation of core activities:

1. Skill trainings:

1.1 Training on "Skills for Assisting PWD". The training was for Personal Assistance (PA) and was held on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of November, 2010. This is the first basic training



course for 8 PAs of the project and 7 volunteers of DRD in HCMC. Via the articipatory training approach, participants have developed knowledge about the meaning and philosophy of independent living for people with disabilities as well as independent living movements in the world. They were guided to practice basic skills and techniques in pushing and lifting wheelchairs, lifting and moving people with disabilities from his/her wheelchair to chair,

bed, motorcycles, taxis, toilets and vice versa. They were also guided techniques of how to keep safe for his/her back and make a person with disability feel comfortable and safe when they are assisted. In generally, participants had an overview on the issues of people with disabilities and learned more skills and techniques to assist people with disabilities most effectively while maintaining the safety of both parties.

1.2 Organized a training on "Peer-Counseling for people with disabilities (PWDs)", who are living, studying and working at the HCMC on the 7th, 8th and 9th of January,



2011. The twelve participants were people with disabilities who had polio, spinal cord injury and cerebral palsy. Among them, 5 people are beneficiaries of independent living project. This training gave them an opportunity to reinforce their knowledge of disability issues, meaning and philosophy of independent living and peer-counseling for people with disabilities. Participants had good experiences by practicing

model peer-counseling sessions with their true emotions and feelings. Thereby, many new members found themselves that they had positive changes. "I really feel comfortable and more confident than ever before. Now I know I am not useless but I am good at speech. I also have IT qualification. And I think I will find a PA and I'll go to work and participate in more activities. Especially, I will introduce my peers to DRD's peer-counseling and IL services." One of the participants said. In general, IL service users and new participants

have been aware of the importance of peer-counseling in their independent living. They gradually gain confidence and can become a leader in the future.

1.3 One training on " Skills for Personal planing " was carried out for 5 beneficiaries of the IL project on the 21st of January, 2011. Members were aware of the importance of



identifying goals, setting objectives and proposing activities to achieve those expected objectives. Despite initial surprise, but after practicing, they were confident to apply what was conveyed to make a relatively complete plan for a trip out. They are aware of what should be prepared before carrying out the plan such as indentifying time, venue, number of participants, aid-tools, location survey, check-list and

how to call for the voluntary participation of friends and volunteers...This is one of necessary skills for their independent living.

1.4 Skills learning-combined with outdoor activities have been held monthly: a picnic for 12 people including members who are beneficiaries and the other disabilities on the



occasion of Christmas and welcome the new year at Tao Dan Park and a trip to Co.op Mart Supermarket Ly Thuong Kiet on the 25th of December, 2010 - and at Hoang Van Thu park on the 15th of January, 2011. This is not only an opportunity for people with disabilities, PAs and volunteers to interact, relax, understand each other through fun games combined with life skills but also help people with disabilities to

know how to work with PA effectively. Moreover, as a leader who is in charge of organizing an activity like this, the user has good experiences and skills for their independent living such as planning skills, financial management, leadership, problem resolving ... On one hand, they feel more confident on their ability. PWD complained to the park manager when the toilet for PWD was locked, not in use and present their idea to the supermarket manager when his staff has bad behavior and discrimination against people with disabilities. They even wrote comments to the Board for appropriate adjustments, reasonable accommodation and creating opportunities for people with disabilities to access to public services. On the other hand, the participation of PWDs in social activities like this will help community to change their awareness of the ability and

value of people with disabilities. For example, some young people playing in park asked to join in our activity and want to know more about IL project in Ho Chi Minh.

2. IL services: Personal Assistance and Peer-Counseling

2.1 There are now five users who are people with spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy and severe polio who are provided with personal assistance (PA). On average, each user has a need to be assisted for around 8 hours per day. This mainly focused on the needs of going to school, working, participating in clubs, meeting friends, and personal activities at home. They have had a marked progress after four months (since November 1, 2010). They are now gradually confident to integrate into community, even raising their voice for his/her legitimate benefits and rights. Thanks to trainings, peer-counseling sessions, sharing at meetings and taking part in outdoor activities, the users have known how to guide PAs regarding their needs. The users and PAs has also gradually become more positive and active.

2.2 Supporting the youth with developmental disabilities to improve their independent



living skills is also focused as a pilot model. A group of six youths are currently supported by 2 volunteer social work students on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday of every week. At DRD, volunteer social work students support the group on basic skills such as learning how to read and write, independent living skills, swimming and judo. Four of them began a two-month internship program in a small vocational training center. They

have been guided to learn the basic skills required for sewing as piercing needle, cutting thread. They have been trained on soft skills such as teamwork and time complying via simple exercises. On Friday morning, the group is instructed and practice life skills through cooking simple dishes and enjoy cooking lunch for the staff at DRD. All costs for meals were sponsored by the staff working at DRD. This is one of the ways they can improve their independent living skills but also can help their parents do simple work at home. Moreover, its impact will help their family members and social community change their awareness and attitude about the ability to live independently and the work of people with developmental disabilities.

This pilot program also attracts media attention and helps change public perception on people with developmental disabilities.

Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5ulnrkCmDE>

2.3 Peer-counseling activities: group and individual sessions are part of an on going program for participants in the independent living program. Until now, one official peer-counseling training was held and 5 individual and group sessions were conducted.



2.4 Consulting and providing information related to independent living for three parents having children with disabilities of cerebral palsy and progressive muscular dystrophy.

II. Outcomes

A. Expected outcomes

- 1. Life quality of selected participants via skill trainings and outdoor activities will be increased day by day.*
- 2. IL service users' family members and community understand mean of independent living and change PWD's independent living ability*

B. Actual Results to Date

- 1. Life quality of selected participants via PA's support, skill trainings and outdoor activities will be increased day by day:* Up to now, IL activities are still going well. Users are provided with personal assistances (PAs) and have opportunity to go to school and participate in trainings, outdoor activities and other social activities like anyone else.

Le Thi Bui, a person with weak limbs that was only staying at home before, can continue to go to a special school with PA's support. She was ever a pessimistic person because she thought she couldn't do anything and totally depended on her relatives. However, she can now go anywhere she likes. She can even cook dishes she likes. She feels more confident in communication and explaining about rights of PWDs to others. She even went back her hometown herself. "A wonderful experience that could be called 'new and good' I did in my life. IL has brought me a new world."

Duong Dinh Thao Phuong, a person with spinal cord injury could go and find a suitable job. Since having PA, she has studied English at a foreign language center and now she can ride a three-wheel moto-bike that she ever thought she couldn't do before.

Le Minh Duy has developed his advocacy skills by helping other students in his university understand PWDs values and capacity as well as know how to help PWDs in need. He has become more confident to be a leader of peer-counseling sessions.

Tran Thi Hong Ngoc who although is not the selected user is supported through DRD employment project and now can earn some income working at home. She also spends time joining DRD activities, especially IL activities, with PA support. Ngoc is planning for her IL and asking for PA's support.

These are typical models of five pilot users who have positive changes thanks to IL project.

Besides basic independent living skills such as how to guide and work with PA effectively, making a personal plan...two of users participated in trainings on pre-employment skills, covering introductory basic skills, CV writing and job search, steps to employment, and understanding the psychology of interview and interview practice; and employment skills. Moreover, IL skill trainings have made them more confident. They dare to raise their voice because of their rights that they dared not to do before.

2. IL service users' family members and community understand mean of independent living and change PWD's independent living ability: Users' family members changed their thinking of independent living needs of PWD. They appreciated the meaning, philosophy and services of independent living. Also, they introduce other parents who have son/daughter with disability come to DRD and IL. Young people, especially students, are interested in IL and want to understand more about it by joining our activities voluntarily.

C. Reflections and challenges

Thanks to DPI-AP, Nippon Foundation and Human Care Association, DRD's IL services has met selected PWD needs and has changed people's way of thinking about PWD value and capacity. Our achieved outcomes have proved our tasks and activities are progressing in the right direction:

- After peer-counseling sessions, more PWDs feel more confident than they are before.
- Users have gradually understood more about the meaning of independent living and wanted to go out and participate in a range of activities. They have more opportunities to continue their studying and working. Their relatives have gradually changed their attitude about PWD's independent living right and ability.
- IL services, especially peer-counseling, have attracted the participation of more and more PWD.
- The Independent Living project's activities have been paid attention by media: There has been several coverages on HTV, one of famous TV channel in Vietnam.

Beside the successes, DRD is facing some challenges: After participating in IL activities and seminars, people with disabilities really need to use PA service. Up to now, there has been 10 persons with severe disabilities requested to be provided PA. Regarding DRD's mission "to promote the full participation of, and equal opportunities for, people with disabilities (PWD's) in all spheres of society", we expect that we can met all PWD needs. Because of unexpected

limits, however, we can only provide them peer-counseling service and involve them in IL activities.

Moreover, the resource of available PAs is our other challenge. In HochiminhCity, the expenditure and cost are raising very high. It is affecting PA's living conditions. The job of PA can have some high risks, or adversely affecting the health and safety of the PA during the time to support for people with disabilities. The current salary does not include subsidies for insurance, welfare etc. The inclusion of this in the salary may be a bonus and attract more people to the job. We are facing an ongoing risk of PAs quitting their job (A PA stoped her job in March, 2011), which leads to increased risk issues for selected users and increased training needs for new PA.

Our plan: We are fully aware of the need for developing the sustainability to ensure future success. Therefore, we have discussed with users' families about their partly contribution of the fees and with their classmates about the possibility of working as PA for their friend with low salary. Also, we are making a plan to connect with volunteer clubs and students who are studying at Universities and Colleges and attract their attention and create a resource of potential PAs via trainings and simenars on IL. When we have a resource of potential PAs, we can provide PA for persons who can pay for their independent living (for example the old, patients...). We hope that this plan will be an effective strategy for the project's sustainability.

Certification

Name and Title of person who prepared the report:



Nguyen Thanh Tung, IL Coordinator

Name and Title of person who is legally responsible for the grant:



Vo Thi Hoang Yen, DRD Director

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