

The RAD Project

Rapid Assessment of Disability

Issue 2 / August 2010

Overview

The Rapid Assessment of Disability (RAD) project aims to improve the lives of people with disabilities and their communities by enabling development organisations to seek reliable and comparable information about disability, and design and implement effective programs for all.

To design development projects which include or target people with disabilities, implementers of development activities need information about people with disabilities and the barriers they face. The RAD toolkit aims to provide organisations with an easy-to-use, comprehensive method of identifying this information. Importantly, the RAD toolkit will provide organisations with the means to evaluate the effectiveness of their disability-inclusive development activities.

The toolkit will contain:

- A questionnaire with 4 sections which measure:
 1. Demographic information
 2. The prevalence of disability according to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health developed by the World Health Organization
 3. Individual perception of well-being and quality of life, and
 4. Barriers to and facilitators of the participation of people with disabilities in their communities
- Guidelines on how to use the toolkit, including recommendations for different development sectors.

The RAD questionnaire will be validated in Bangladesh and adapted and tested for cultural relevance in Fiji.

Since the first issue of the RAD newsletter in May 2010, the research team has been preparing for the field-testing in Bangladesh which is scheduled for August to November 2010.

Activities have included:

- Establishment of the Bangladesh Advisory Committee
- Consultations with AusAID and development agencies in Bangladesh on possible uses of the toolkit
- Recruitment of the Bangladesh field research officers
- Planning for field testing in Bangladesh
- Continued development and refinement of the toolkit through a qualitative study including interviews and discussion groups with people with disabilities and their families in Bangladesh (see page 2).



Bangladesh November 2009

NEWS UPDATE!

Three field research officers have been newly appointed for the RAD project in Bangladesh.

Syed Galibul Saddam, Khandakar Masud Rana, and Md. Mohiuddin commenced on 1st August 2010.

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Development of the toolkit content

During June and July 2010, the research team conducted a qualitative study to ensure that the toolkit will meet its research objectives while remaining a rapid, easy to use and practical tool. Qualitative techniques including group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to gather the views and priorities of people with disabilities and their families. The information collected has been particularly important for developing questions which will identify barriers limiting the participation of people with disabilities in their communities.

Four experienced interviewers from the Bangladesh research partner ICDDR,B received training in the objectives of the study and participated in tailored training on disability inclusion with the Centre for Disability in Development, a Bangladesh-based disability inclusion training and service provider. In-depth interviews were then held with people with various disabilities, a mix of rural and urban, and male and female participants. In addition a group discussion was held with the parents of children with various disabilities. The respondents were asked in general terms about their awareness of rights of people with disabilities, their wellbeing and their access to services in the community.

By consulting directly with people with disabilities, the research team has identified issues that are important to people living with disabilities in Bangladesh. Some themes that emerged from the qualitative study included:

- The importance of family support for a person with a disability, and the impact on families, including financial concerns;
- Worry for the future of children with disabilities, including their prospects for marriage;
- Barriers to and facilitators of participation in family, extended family and community ceremonies and events;
- The importance for children with disabilities attending school and to be able to participate in sports and other social events;
- Desire for acceptance in the community and to live without needing the help of others;
- The need for support from the Government and Disabled Persons Organisations;
- Cost as a barrier, which limits access to health and legal services, especially in poor rural areas.

These results have helped the research team refine the items in the questionnaire prior to pilot testing, which will occur in August / September 2010.



Centre for Disability in Development training
Bangladesh May 2010

This study is managed by the Nossal Institute for Global Health in collaboration with the Centre for Eye Research Australia. The research is implemented in collaboration with co-investigators from ICDDR,B and in close linkage with local Disabled Persons Organisations in Bangladesh and Fiji.

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The Rights-based approach

The RAD project is committed to implementation according to the **Rights-based Approach**. In practice, this means:

- Seeking active **participation** of people with disabilities at all stages of the project, including the facilitation of training for the qualitative pre-testing process, and employment in key field research positions;
- Being **accountable** to people with disabilities. People with disabilities and representatives of Disabled Persons Organisations have key decision-making roles for this project through membership of the Melbourne and Bangladesh Advisory Committees;
- As far as possible, ensuring the RAD project process and toolkit is **non-discriminatory**. The process of the qualitative pre-test was adapted to facilitate active and meaningful involvement of people with disabilities who often experience greater marginalisation than others due to the nature of their impairments – people with hearing impairment, intellectual disability and mental illness were interviewed separately, using sign language interpreters, and adapted questions in plain language;
- Utilising the RAD project as an opportunity for **empowerment**. The RAD project is committed to the capacity development of people with disabilities in Bangladesh and Fiji, to enable them to take on key roles in the collection and analysis of data. This approach builds the research capacity of people with disabilities, opening opportunities for further future employment and research;
- Actively pursuing **linkage** to international human rights treaties. The RAD project uses the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to guide its approach and content. The RAD project assumes **the right** of people with disabilities to be engaged in activities which concern them, and has made the efforts described above to meet this right. The structure of parts of the RAD toolkit content has been guided by the CRPD. In addition, efforts have been made to ensure RAD project protects the rights of children and women.

Next steps: Preparation for field testing in Bangladesh

Following the qualitative pre-test in August and September 2010, the revised RAD questionnaire will be tested with a sample of people with and without disability to ascertain its relevance and clarity to people in Bangladesh.

The sample will be composed of 70 people of all ages, both genders and with the main types of impairment: visual, hearing, physical, intellectual and psycho-social. Finally, people will be asked to explain what they understand by the items.

Interviews will be administered by field research officers (FROs) under the supervision of ICDDR,B and University of Melbourne researchers. Two of the three FROs employed are people with disabilities. FROs will be trained to conduct interviews with people with disabilities and to use the RAD questionnaire.

This testing stage will assess if all items in the questionnaire are understood, check question sequencing and flow, evaluate the overall design and layout of the questionnaire, estimate how long it will take to use, refine categories of answers, and evaluate interviewer training.

From the pilot testing, the RAD toolkit will be revised if necessary prior to going to the main field testing later in the year.

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Introducing the team

Professor Jill Keeffe

Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA)

Professor Jill Keeffe is Head of CERA's Population Health Unit, specialising in prevention of vision loss and blindness in Australia and our region, Low Vision and Health Services Research. She is Director of the WHO Collaborating centre for the prevention of Blindness. Professor Keeffe received an Order of Australia Medal in 2007 for services to eye care education and practice.

She has published over 140 articles in international journals and written numerous book chapters. Professor

Keeffe describes her work as translating research to provide evidence for best practice in eye care and low vision services. A special research interest is in the understanding of the consequences of vision impairment to develop tools to describe and quantify the consequences and effects on quality of life. These quality of life tools are used to assess needs for programs and to evaluate outcomes of programs in eye care and vision rehabilitation.

She has extensive experience in program development and evaluation throughout Asia and countries in Africa.



Professor Jill Keeffe - Bangladesh November 2009

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