

WORLD FEDERATION of OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS (WFOT)

Position Paper on Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR)

Perspective

WFOT recognizes that there is a wide range of opinions and philosophies about what community-based rehabilitation (CBR) actually is or what it should be. CBR can cover very diverse disability related practices. This paper is based on the understanding of CBR as a strategy within community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of community stakeholders with the active participation of disabled people themselves, their families and communities. It facilitates both their access to and participation, as both consumers and providers, in appropriate health, education, social, vocational and other services.

WFOT acknowledges the world wide existence of an estimated 600 million people with disabilities predominantly in (but not limited to) 'developing countries', who with their families and communities are restricted in or denied access to dignified and meaningful participation in daily life. Occupational therapists are developing a critical awareness and understanding about these realities, guided and informed by new notions, such as occupational apartheid, occupational deprivation and occupational justice. Occupational therapists are committed to advance certain core principles, one of which is the right of all people—including people with disabilities—to develop their capacity and power to construct their own destiny through occupation, which seems congruent with the basic tenets of CBR.

Occupational therapists have been and are working in CBR as trainers and educators, with the aim of facilitating and developing programs and transferring knowledge and skills to community members. Others work 'hands-on' in the community, are accessible on a referral basis or work in the position as program leaders. Currently there is no estimate of the number, or of the distribution of ex-patriates and local practitioners in CBR.

WFOT Position

WFOT recognizes that occupational therapists have contributed to making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities and their families through community based rehabilitation (CBR). WFOT supports and promotes the development and dissemination of CBR programs and the human rights of people with disabilities. WFOT supports the design and implementation of integrated occupational therapy practice-research-education projects in CBR.

This position implies that occupational therapists engage in coalitions with people who experience disabilities, their families and communities, advocating with them and for their issues, sharing individual experiences and enabling professional organizations to support people with disabilities' needs and rights of dignity and inclusion, in both developing and developed societies.