

END THE CYCLE.

OF POVERTY & DISABILITY



Social Inclusion, Disability and Poverty



Gilbert, Ghana

MY STORY: GILBERT, GHANA

Gilbert is from Sandema Builsa North District in Ghana. He is a husband and father, and loves the relationship he is developing with his two young daughters.

“My disability is cerebral palsy and it has affected me in so many ways. First of all it has affected my movement, and it has also caused social exclusion.”

Gilbert experienced social exclusion, especially from his family growing up. Gilbert was denied an education, immunisations and was treated unfairly compared to his siblings without disability.

Gilbert is now a teacher and is the President of the Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) of the entire district of Builsa North. His role involves advocating to ensure that persons with a disability are included in everything.

DISABILITY AND POVERTY THE FACTS

- 22% of the world’s poorest people have a disability.²
- Excluding children with a disability from education and employment opportunities has high social and economic costs.³
- Everyone benefits from including persons with disabilities in community life.

SOURCES:

- 1 United Nations, General Assembly, Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Report of the Secretary General, A/66/230 (3 August 2011), p.12
- 2, 3 World Health Organisation and World Bank, World Report on Disability, WHO Press, Geneva, 2011, p.29
- 4 World Health Organisation, Community-Based Rehabilitation: CBR Guideline, WHO Press, Geneva, p.1

THE CYCLE

Initially, Gilbert found it difficult to find a meaningful role in his community, even when it came to marriage. Gilbert’s father said to him:

“As for you, Gilbert, you will have to forget about being married, because no one would like to give his or her daughter to you.” Gilbert, Ghana

Unfortunately Gilbert’s story of social exclusion and discrimination is all too common. Because of misconceptions and stigma surrounding disability, persons with disabilities are sometimes seen as having little to contribute.

Importantly, this also denies others the chance to benefit from the active and valuable contributions persons with disabilities can and do make.

A CONSTANT STRUGGLE INSIDE THE CIRCLE

“I really thought very badly about myself.. if our parents are doing discrimination, taking proper care of my siblings and not taking care of me due to my impairment, does that mean I am not regarded as a human being any longer? I thought: then what is the purpose of my living?” Gilbert, Ghana

So much of life depends on our social bonds - earning an income, going to school, forming relationships, and contributing to our community and culture. When persons with disabilities are excluded, it is much harder to escape the cycle of poverty and disability.

“The opportunity to participate in social activities has a strong impact on a person’s identity, self-esteem, quality of life and ultimately his/her social status. Because people with disabilities face many barriers in society they often have fewer opportunities to participate in social activities.” World Health Organisation (WHO), 2010

Going to school, making friends, finding a job and taking part in recreational activities are important parts of life, but for persons with disabilities, participating in social life can be very difficult.

TURNING LIVES AROUND WE KNOW WHAT IT TAKES

In 2015 the world committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. The 2030 Agenda and the corresponding 17 goals, including Goal 10 on Inequality, must be implemented according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

By addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in low and middle income countries, we not only achieve the human rights of persons with disabilities, but everyone benefits from their contribution.

This is why inclusion, across all development sectors, is important. Empowering persons with disabilities so they can receive a worthwhile education, access health and rehabilitation services, gain a livelihood, learn how to respond to and recover from all emergency situations, and participate fully in society is essential to ending the cycle of poverty and disability.

REAL CHANGE DOES HAPPEN

“I was the first person with a disability to have a wedding in the region. They had never seen that before. Many people confirmed: really there is a change. Because the things they used to see about people with a disability have been changed and my wedding has spelt it out clearly.” Gilbert, Ghana

Gilbert’s experience proves that change can happen. Given the opportunity to make friends, get married, find employment and participate as activists can give persons with disabilities confidence, an income, and strengthen their social connections. By including persons with disabilities it enriches communities and workplaces.

Ending the cycle of poverty and disability requires a commitment to social inclusion. The right attitudes and commitments from everyone – individuals, families, communities, businesses and governments can mean that together, we can end the cycle of poverty and disability.

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End the Cycle is an
initiative of CBM



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DISABILITY AND POVERTY THE FACTS

- Persons with disabilities may have poor self-esteem and feel they cannot take part in activities and events.
- Due to social discrimination, family members may feel ashamed at having a member with a disability, so they do not encourage or allow their social participation.
- Physical barriers to social participation include inaccessible transport & buildings like community centres, sporting venues and businesses.

END THE CYCLE promotes the human rights and lived experience of persons with disabilities in low and middle income countries.



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