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# Livelihoods

*Facilitating Early Recovery for  
Injured and Disabled People*

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**HANDICAP  
INTERNATIONAL**



# a INTRODUCTION

## **LIVELIHOODS** – FACILITATING EARLY RECOVERY FOR INJURED AND DISABLED PEOPLE

People with disabilities and those recovering from injuries have the same need to livelihood as everyone else. Previous experience from other humanitarian disasters shows that restoration of livelihoods is an essential step to early recovery for all victims of the earthquake. This is especially important for people with disabilities and injuries so that they can reduce their economic reliance on their family, and so reduce the perception that a disabled person is a burden on their families. Supporting re-establishing the livelihoods of people with disabilities will also help the whole family recover from the negative economic effects of the disaster as soon as possible.

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# 1 HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Handicap International has been working on livelihood initiatives with people with disabilities in Indonesia since 2005. Below is an illustration of one of these experiences.

## **IKA: MOBILE AND ABLE!**

Ika<sup>1</sup> never had the same experiences and opportunities as most children; at the age of 10 she contracted Polio, leaving her without the use of her legs and reducing the strength in her arms. Because Ika's ability to move around independently was affected at such an early age she was forced to stop attending school due to multiple barriers including lack of accessibility from her house to school, lack of a mobility device and a protective family.

Ika grew up to become a quiet and withdrawn woman who rarely spoke and answered most questions with one-word answers. On most days Ika would sit on the floor of her house watching family members going about their daily chores, but never participating, herself, in any of these activities.



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1 Handicap International is authorized by the subject to publish photographs, but name has been changed for protection of identity.

When the Handicap International team met Ika in June 2005 they immediately recognized the need for a mobility aid - a wheelchair and intensive physiotherapy. The team demonstrated exercises for Ika to practise regularly so that she could build up the strength in her arms enabling Ika to push herself around.

By the teams fourth visit Ika's progress was amazing; not only could she put herself into the wheelchair and propel herself around, for the first time since she was 10 years old, Ika could feed, bathe and toilet herself in dignity.

Most surprising of all were the changes in Ika's demeanour. In matter of weeks Ika was talking more, asking questions, making her opinion known and expressing a desire to share in family income generating activities.



In order to help Ika access more spaces in her home, especially the kitchen and the bathroom Handicap International’s accessibility team worked with Ika, her family and a local builder to make adjustments to the home. Ika wheeled herself around the house showing the spaces that she could not access. Amongst other improvements the floor was levelled in the bathroom, the door was widened in the kitchen and a cement path was created from the house entrance to the main street enabling Ika’s access to the outside world. Once the changes were made, Ika tested out her new barrier – free environment, where she found the ramps too steep for her comfort, she insisted that the slopes be made more gradual so that she could use the ramps without fear. Ika’s input into the adaptation of her home environment show that it is not just people with technical skills or architecture degrees that can help make an environment accessible.



Ika's family's attitude was also undergoing an evolution. before where they saw Ika as a burden, and as a person with no capabilities because of her physical disability they now saw a bright young woman who was capable of looking after herself and contributing to family responsibilities. Ika's family moved around kitchen furniture so that she could participate in cooking and they invited her to share household chores. For the first time in her life Ika became responsible for cleaning and clothes washing activities and performing other household duties just like any other woman.

Handicap International Social workers collaborated with a livelihood NGO working in the area to help Ika devise a strategy for generating income. Ika's family suggested that she help her mother to sell food and they decided to build a small shop in the front of the house where Ika could market the home-made products to the local community. Ika expressed a desire, not to just to sell food, but also to sell household goods in order to generate a larger income. The livelihood NGO agreed to provide Ika with a small grant to start up her business. Because she had never had the opportunity to access an education Ika also expressed a strong desire to participate in vocational training to develop her business management skills.



Today Ika is fully independent in all activities of daily living; she can move around her home, leave the house and access the shop which has been built especially for her. Unlike the quiet and withdrawn girl she was, Ika regularly socializes with friends, neighbours and the extended family that come to buy food and groceries from her small shop. Just like any other women her age, Ika contributes to cooking, cleaning and care-giving of children. Over the past year she has gained an incredible amount – most significantly the ability to do what she wants, with the support of a loving family who now believes that she can.

General Guidelines for including people with disabilities and injuries in livelihood initiatives:

- Ensure that all your messages on livelihoods (where you are distributing livelihood tools, where you are holding trainings and how to register for them etc) are communicated using multiple formats. For example if you only put up posters and hand out leaflets people with visual impairments, low literacy or learning difficulties will not have access to this information. Use several means of communication including posters, leaflets, radio / loudspeaker announcements, simple language and drawing / symbols.
- Due to their previous experiences living with disabilities, people with disabilities make have low self esteem or self confidence. Even though they are as skilled and capable as everyone else they may need extra moral support to include themselves in mainstream livelihood initiatives. Ensure that you reach out to, and consciously involve people with disabilities and injuries in all of your livelihood initiatives.
- If you are advocating for government / institutional support for the restoration of the livelihoods of earthquake victims ensure you include people with disabilities (including women with disabilities) in your advocacy initiatives.

## 3

## RESTORING LOST LIVELIHOODS

- Most people with disabilities or injuries had a livelihood before the disaster. This could have been formal employment, informal work such as home catering, requiring technical skills, or “street-smarts”. Whatever the occupation of the person with disabilities, help them to replace the tools, means or workspace that they require to re-establish their lost livelihood. This could be as simple as providing a standard farming kit, or may need some adaptation to the tools or workspace. For example a tailor who does not have use of their legs will require an adapted sewing machine that can be controlled entirely with hands. Since you are replacing what was already there the person will be able to show you how to adapt / procure the tools / equipments / means that suit them best.
- People whose injuries resulted in permanent disability due to the earthquake may be quite able to continue with their previous occupation / livelihood with a little adaptation to their livelihood tools. For example if a carpenter is now in a wheelchair small adaptations need to be made to his workspace, such as ramps in an out of the space, lowered work-benches, etc. The professions stays the same, the tools are adapted.

**Adapting the equipment to suit the person and not the person to suit the equipment;** Adapting the way an activity is done or the equipment and tools used to carry out the activity can make the difference between a disabled persons working and their exclusion. Trouble shooting for NGOs may include support to replace foot controls with hand controls on sewing machines for a women that does not have use of her legs, a communication board for a deaf shop

keeper to talk to hearing people, a Braille ruler for a blind tailor or proper lighting, well positioned over a work bench or strong colour contrasts which can make a carpenter with low vision perform his tasks better. Other modifications may be as simple as lowering the height of a work surface or lengthening everyday gardening tools so that wheelchair users can use them. Many standard tools are unsuitable for people with disabilities but can be made suitable through simple “universal” designs; i.e., small modifications that make the tools comfortable, safer and more user-friendly.

## **PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WHO DIDN'T HAVE A LIVELIHOOD, OR PEOPLE INJURED IN THE DISASTER WHO CAN'T CONTINUE WITH THEIR PREVIOUS LIVELIHOOD**

- Assess the strengths, previous experiences, and interests of the person and investigate the viability of new / proposed occupation in the local areas.
- Ensure that the training opportunities you provide are accessible. This includes accessibility to the built environment (i.e. ramps, wide entrances, lowered workspaces). This also means the methods you use for the training (Braille materials for blind participants, written instructions for deaf participants, and slow, simple instructions for people with learning or language difficulties. The practise tools you use for training (e.g. sewing machines, carpentry kits) may need to be adapted to suit the needs of the different participants.



- When equipping the individual with the tools or their trade after the training, ensure that the tools you provide are usable and best suited the needs of the individual. Most often the individual will be able to try out the tools and tell you what needs to be adapted in order for them to make best use of it.
- Continue to support the individual through monitoring activities, and regular visits. Provide encouragement, moral support and practical advice when the person is facing obstacles.
- Link them with other people who have gone through the same training, thus developing strong peer support systems.

## AN ALTERNATIVE TO FORMAL TRAINING

**Disabled entrepreneurs:** The success replication method (SCR), is a form of informal apprenticeship that links a person with disabilities to a successful entrepreneur (i.e. micro-business, farmers, artisans). This method focus on the informal economy and on those people with disabilities that are unable to access mainstream opportunities and training. It has proven to be an effective tool to empower people with disabilities. The successful entrepreneur provides training in the business and in the technical aspects of a job (as well as sharing secrets of the trade). The project assists the person with disability with the tools and materials to start-up and also provides ongoing support and encouragement until the business is running well. The SCR methodology is a culturally appropriate way of delivering training, particularly to women as often the activities are taught informally. Furthermore it has been found to have strong multiplier effects with person with disability entrepreneurs becoming trainers of other potential person with disability entrepreneurs.

# REFERENCES

Available technical guide booklets from Handicap International:

- **Disability Checklist for Emergency Response** – General protection and inclusion principles of people with disabilities and injuries
- **Shelter, Public Infrastructure, Water and Sanitation** – A guide for including people with disabilities and injuries
- **Protection** – Issues for people with disabilities and injuries



