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Human development, chronically poor and disabled people and the occupational lens.

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Introduction

Chronically poor people experience occupational deprivation, alienation and imbalance, conditions that may be further compounded by disability. These all undermine the course of human development, and while people often have the capacity, they lack resources and opportunities to meet their basic needs and achieve a reasonable livelihood. Currently marginalised peoples' social participation and inclusion is structurally restricted by discrimination and the absence or ineffective implementation of policy, rights based approaches and intersectoral services. These factors combine to undermine the course of human development, and while people often have the capacity, they lack resources and opportunities to meet their basic needs and achieve a reasonable livelihood.

Objectives

If an occupational lens is used to examine ways in which an individual's capacity is converted into an increase of the potential needed to promote change, growth and achievement, we could begin to uncover ways to support life long occupational development.

Description

Occupational Science recognises the intimate connection between what people do and human development. It also claims that meaningful and purposeful occupational participation are affiliated to human rights. This raises a challenge for practitioners to acknowledge a gap which could be filled by helping chronically poor and disabled people to do the things that would make a significant and sustainable difference to the sort of future they envisage for themselves, those close to them and their community.

Discussion

A deeper understanding of the relationship between human development and occupation is needed, something that goes beyond the documented 'ages and stages' approach to an in-depth understanding of the developmental building blocks that seriously disadvantaged people can miss.

Conclusion

Marginalized people are capable of finding practical and attitudinal solutions to the everyday challenges that confront them; we need to discern how they act, look for the big and little things that motivate them, uncover their advocacy and help them to build their agency on this foundation.