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Community development in post tsunami Sri Lanka

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INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this project was to establish model resource centres for a network of Social Care Centres (SCC) that would support the government's national policy for restructuring social care services for vulnerable people in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and implemented in partnership with the National Government (Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare - MSSSW) in Sri Lanka, the International Centre for the Advancement of Community Based Rehabilitation (ICACBR) at Queen's University implemented a two-tier train-the-trainer approach to prepare social care officers for this community development initiative.

OBJECTIVES

This paper describes the structure of the training program and formative evaluation methods employed by the project team to support the SCC officers in transferring their learning from the training program to their work with vulnerable clients and people with disabilities.

DESCRIPTION/REPORT

Developmental evaluation was chosen for its congruence with the nature of this international development program, which demanded continuous decision-making, ongoing adaptation, and responsiveness to the needs of program participants in a cross-cultural, politically-charged context.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

A unique aspect of this project was that the training was provided in three languages and delivered to a mix of participants who represented Sinhala and Tamil speakers in the midst of an on-going war in the country. Gender equity was encouraged by enabling equal participation and opportunities for men and women in all aspects of the project. Evaluation activities were embedded into ongoing project initiatives to support the feasibility of data collection and analysis.

The development of 8 SCC demonstration sites served as a key strategy for supporting knowledge transfer and was important for sustainability of the MSSSW's national strategy for the delivery of social care services.

CONCLUSION

This innovative train-the-trainer program combined intense, field-based support during early implementation with multiple-stakeholder participation to ensure sustainable governance of this community development initiative.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRACTICE/EVIDENCE BASE OF OT

This project provides a viable framework for other international programs that want to use an education model to support successful transfer of learning to community development initiatives.