

Role of Support Groups in Families of Children with Disabilities - The Mildmay Uganda Experience

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Background: In Uganda, disabilities in children have adverse effects on the livelihood of families in terms psychosocial issues, handling techniques and interfering with parental productivity. It is hard for parents to work away from home as finding suitable helpers is difficult. When they try working away from homes, the children suffer malnutrition and the helpers discriminate against these children. The female children are also taken advantage of by community members by impregnating them and denying responsibility, causing parents and guardians a dilemma and further causes social economic constraints.

Methods: Group therapy is facilitated by a multidisciplinary team including a social worker, physiotherapist and an occupational therapist. Participants engage in group counseling, handling techniques for the children and parents and guardians are empowered to start home based income generating activities.

A retrospective review of group activities documented their progress and lessons learned. Group members reviewed psychosocial issues, income generation and handling techniques.

Results: A total of twenty [25] parents and guardians were enrolled in the support group. Participants made a constitution and met monthly to support each other. Home modifications were made to better suit the needs of children with disabilities, finances were mobilised for members to start up home based income generating activities (IGA). Out of the 25 support group members, 15 members are active in group activities. Reasons for the 10 who are not active will be presented as well as lessons learned.

Conclusion: Support groups are very effective in implementing rehabilitation programs for families affected by disabilities.