

motif

The Newsletter of the Motivation Charitable Trust Issue 29 Spring 2007



Jen Howitt
Volunteer Peer Group Trainer

Editorial Welcome to the spring edition of Motif. You may be aware that the UN has recently adopted a convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In this newsletter we look at how Motivation's work, in line with the UN convention, is helping disabled people to access their rights. Motivation promotes rights on three levels. At the individual level Motivation runs programmes to educate and empower disabled people to lead independent lives and also to demand their rights. This is the level at which I've worked, helping to train disabled people in Zimbabwe so that they can pass on their skills and knowledge to others in

the same situation. On a national level Motivation has supported local disabled people's organisations with their advocacy campaigns. One example of this is our Sri Lankan 'Access for All' campaign, where local organisations lobbied the government to make all new post-tsunami buildings accessible for disabled people. Finally, at an international level and in line with the recent UN convention, Motivation has helped to promote international standards which will ensure that disabled people receive appropriate wheelchairs. I hope you enjoy reading about our rights work in this Motif.

Empowering disabled people to access their rights

People with a spinal cord injury (SCI) are experts on how to live everyday life with a disability. This is because they have learnt first-hand how to take care of their body and properly use a wheelchair. Using this knowledge, experienced and active wheelchair users can become peer group trainers, teaching newly disabled people important skills such as how to transfer in and out of their wheelchair, how to do wheelies so that they can

negotiate steps and how to manage their bowels and bladder. Ultimately peer group trainers become important role models to other disabled people and help empower them to lead full and productive lives. As people become increasingly active and independent they are more likely to demand basic rights such as access to education, employment, health care and proper wheelchairs.

As Artmore Dembezeko,

a Zimbabwean peer group trainer explains: 'When someone becomes spinally injured they feel their life is over, but we can show them that it is not. For example, there was a 19 year old man who refused to see his physiotherapist or talk to anyone. We were asked to talk to him and now he is on his way to recovery by doing exercises. Often when people see someone with the same condition they are willing to open up; people

need to see that they can do it.'

With this principle in mind, the Disabled Women's Support Organisation worked with Motivation to hold the first ever Zimbabwean Training of Trainers camp in September 2006 at the Ruwa Rehabilitation Hospital near Harare. Two local peer group trainers, Benhilda Marume and Artmore Dembezeko, worked alongside two international



Newly qualified peer group trainers Diana and Senzeni, relax with their trainer Benhilda



The participants warming up before their wheelchair skills session

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A New Era

The right to independent mobility is internationally recognised

The global disability rights movement reached a milestone last December when the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted. The convention marks a shift in attitudes towards disability, from one which has traditionally been of charity to one of inclusion and empowerment.

Among other things, this convention recognises the fundamental right of disabled people to independent mobility and will provide much needed support for Motivation's ongoing work to promote disabled people's rights. For example, in November Motivation attended the world's first 'Consensus Conference for Wheelchairs in Developing Countries', hosted by the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics,



David Mukwasa, a delegate from Motivation's Zambian partner Disacare. It is essential that disabled people are included in all decision making processes, as epitomised by the Disability Rights slogan: 'Nothing about us without us'.

the World Health Organisation and one of Motivation's local partners, Mobility India.

The conference was attended by government bodies, charities, international non-governmental organisations and local disabled people's

organisations from across the globe. Most significantly, however, was the predominant participation of disabled people from developing countries, such as David Mukwasa, Director of Motivation's Zambian partner, Disacare. David was excited about the beneficial implications of the conference for sustainable wheelchair provision in Africa.

The conference aimed to give participants the opportunity to discuss the difficulties involved with wheelchair provision in developing countries, and the best way to tackle them.

By the end of the conference a consensus was reached on best practice in wheelchair provision. This will serve as the minimum standards to be used by wheelchair providers in developing countries to ensure that disabled people are properly fitted with high quality wheelchairs, in a way that will be sustainable. Christine Cornick, Motivation's Africa Programme Director, explains



David Constantine, Motivation's Co-Founder/Executive Officer, talking to the conference delegates

the impact that this will have on Motivation's work: 'A consensus definition of an appropriate wheelchair provides us with the most powerful tool we have ever possessed to advocate for responsible wheelchair provision. It is vital that wheelchairs are provided in an appropriate way to ensure that they last long into the future and do not cause secondary health problems, such as pressure sores.'

The promotion of disability rights and international wheelchair standards signifies a major turning point in international approaches to disability. In the words of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, we are witnessing the 'dawn of a new era'.

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trainers, Jennifer Howitt from the USA and Tomasz Tasiemski from Poland, to improve the skills of peer group trainers, not only from Zimbabwe but also from Zambia, Uganda and South Africa. Over the course of the week, the participants learnt advanced wheelchair skills and improved their knowledge about how to manage SCI. Because they were being trained as trainers, they were also taught how to organise and run their own peer group training sessions or camps,

including how to budget for a camp, schedule activities and write a lesson plan. Towards the end of the week the participants had the opportunity to practise their new skills, counselling the patients currently on the SCI ward in the rehabilitation hospital in everything from employment to sexuality.

The real power of peer group training is its ability to change the way disabled people see themselves, and ultimately the way different societies understand disability. This in turn means

that the basic rights of disabled people can be better understood and implemented.

At the end of the week Senzeni, one of the camp participants, explained how the camp had changed her attitude and inspired her to do more for others in her community: 'I am really motivated to go and hold an awareness campaign in my area and to identify people that I can help and give them important information about how to live with a spinal cord injury.'



Senzeni learning how to negotiate steps

Motivation's Rights Work in Sri Lanka



Mr Wijisiri and his wife on their wedding day

Mr Wijisiri knows only too well the importance of the inclusion and integration of disabled people. He has experienced first hand bullying from other children at school, as well as ostracism from neighbours, employers, bus drivers and even rejection from his family at times, who would hide him away on public occasions.

Working as a District Focal Point Field Officer for Motivation has enabled Mr

Wijisiri to put his experiences to good use by challenging public officials in his district to be inclusive of disabled people and to give them equal rights. Mr Wijisiri has successfully campaigned to make new schools, courts, hospitals and other public places accessible. He also works with other disabled people to ensure that they know, and can actively demand, their rights. 'If disabled people come together like a

chain', Mr Wijisiri explains, 'then we have a voice and then other people can recognise that disabled people can do things too.'

Mr Wijisiri, who has recently got married, expands: 'This project has changed my life, not only do I now respect myself, but my family does, and influential people in the district keep telling me how beneficial their new accessible premises are to everyone.'



Dilurk visiting the Equality Based Community Support and Training Centre

Dilurk is 13 years old. He uses a wheelchair to visit the Equality Based Community Support and Training Centre, a Sri Lankan non-governmental organisation that works with vulnerable people in tsunami affected communities. Among other things, the centre runs parent group meetings, workshops for mothers and learning skills classes.

Recently the centre has been made accessible as a result of one of Motivation's campaigns. Accessibility features in the centre include ramps, toilets and playgrounds specifically designed for use by disabled children.

The centre's new design has made a big difference to Dilurk's life. It used to be difficult for him to go there because he had to depend on his mother's assistance.

Now that the centre is accessible Dilurk can attend classes by himself whenever he wants.

Previously Dilurk was not able to read or write, but by attending these classes he is steadily improving. He enjoys meeting his friends in the centre regularly and says that the centre's accessibility has definitely made a positive impact on his life.



Achini visiting the temple

Achini has cerebral palsy. When she was born she was abandoned by her parents and for the past 14 years she has been brought up by her elderly grandparents in a remote village without road access.

As Achini grew it became almost impossible for her grandparents to help her to move around. Achini would spend hours lying on the floor or slumped in

a chair, becoming increasingly marginalised from community and family life.

In November Achini received a Motivation supportive seating wheelchair. From that moment her life dramatically changed. By being able to sit up Achini has discovered that she can communicate better with her family, play with her siblings, eat by herself and learn to write.

Achini is now able to leave her house and enjoys visiting the temple and attending the local school. For Achini, a Motivation supportive seating wheelchair has transformed her life and enabled her to access many of her basic human rights.

Home

In 2006 Motivation's dedicated supporters purchased more than 175 wheelchairs for individuals in Africa and Asia - a fantastic result. Thanks to these funds we plan to initiate a new wheelchair distribution project in East Timor this summer.

Many congratulations to Motivation's Programmes Fundraiser Grace Wasike and her husband Paul, on the arrival of Krysten, who was born on 5th January weighing six and a half pounds.

Motivation has been fortunate to receive support amounting to nearly £40,000 from Rotary clubs since 1996. In recognition of this, Motivation is always pleased to provide a speaker for Rotary events. We are also happy to have a stand at District Conferences. For more information, please contact Rosie at the Motivation office.

Rosie Sapak will be taking over from Francesca Garton as Donor Support Officer for Motivation. Francesca will continue to work for Motivation as Asia Programme Officer. All fundraising enquiries should be directed to Rosie on 01275 464012 or at sapak@motivation.org.uk

Up Close & Personal

Boyd Mushimbei sustained a spinal cord injury when he was shot whilst working for the Zambian Army. After a period of rehabilitation Boyd returned home and found himself having to start a new life. Without sufficient support, a house or friends, Boyd set about making changes in his life and has since used his skills to become actively involved in peer group training, disabled sports and advocating for the rights of disabled people.



Boyd Mushimbei, Paralympic basketball player for Zambia

After his injury Boyd moved from his home town to live in Zambia's capital, Lusaka. It was here that he came across Disacare, a wheelchair workshop supported by Motivation. Boyd told Disacare about his love of basketball and table tennis and from that point onwards his life took a new and exciting route.

'I was invited to attend a sports meeting. Within 30 days we had formed a basketball team. A few days later we went to play against teams from Zimbabwe.'

Boyd is proud that his involvement in sport has given him opportunities to travel and in 2000 he competed in the Paralympics for Zambia. He is currently the Vice Chairperson of the Disacare Sports Club, the first of its kind in Zambia.

Boyd thinks that disability rights in Africa are far from being met. However, campaigning is underway and Boyd has taken part in a 30 minute documentary which has been televised in South Africa, Ghana and Zambia.

In the documentary Boyd appealed to the general public to change the negative attitudes they have towards disabled people: 'I explained that disabled people are not beggars and demonstrated how we can use public transport and participate in sports, the work place and social settings. The difficulties we face as disabled people in employment and education, and in the provision of good wheelchairs, calls for the lobbying of policy makers to develop and enforce laws.'

Boyd now dedicates two days per week to training other disabled people on how to live with their disability. He also continues with his sports and works with a local physiotherapy department in the city: 'In 2005 I worked with four boys from Kawambwa High School who had been in a road accident. Three of the boys are now back at school.'

Boyd also tries to visit patients who live in rural areas up to 150km outside Lusaka but financial constraints and bad road networks mean he is unable to visit frequently. While Boyd regrets this lack of resources, he is aware of the value of the work he does because as a disabled person he understands better than anyone the challenges facing people with disabilities.

Shorts ★ We are delighted to announce that the **Ian Gardener Training Centre** has been officially opened in Sri Lanka. The centre, which has been dedicated to the memory of Motivation supporter Ian Gardener, will provide an accessible location for training to support all of our programmes. It will also serve as an information resource centre on disability.

