UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL

LIMITED

E/CEPAL/Conf.72/L.7
29 October 1980

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

C E P A L

Economic Commission for Latin America

Preparatory Activities for the International
Year of Disabled Persons (1981)
Regional Technical Meeting and Regional Seminar

Santiago, Chile, 5-11 November 1980

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS PLAN OF ACTION TO THE BENEFIT OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION AND PARTICULARLY THOSE IN RURAL AREAS

Some notes for discussion of the item

80-10-2349

1. As its title shows, this document will endeavour to deal with the specific problem created by the crucial difference, especially in developing countries, caused by the faulty distribution of social services and the consequent imbalance between rural and urban areas.

2. Chapter B, "Activities at the national level", of the Plan of Action for the International Year of Disabled Persons, adopted by resolution 34/154 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, dated 17 December 1979, invites Member States to consider "... the adoption of the following measures to ensure the implementation of and follow-up to the objectives of the Year ...", and lists 28 such measures. Each of them constitutes a whole in itself applicable to the entire national territory, without isolating by areas their capacity for effective action.

Since this approach is correct, and in accordance with paragraph 12 of the Plan of Action, Member States should, "... in conformity with their right and responsibility to determine freely their own developmental objectives and priorities and in the light of their circumstances ...", consider ways in which their national plans and measures for the Year may be carried out in urban and rural areas as a foundation for the actions which they decide to take.

2.1. In conformity with the assumption that the measures at the national level included in the Plan of Action in themselves constitute separate units of action applicable to the entire country, that applicability should perhaps be evaluated in the light of varying national experiences in the urban and rural areas and in order to acquire an image of the region allowing common problems to be identified more precisely. This image would assist in the search for integrated regional solutions, either through regional means or with the participation of world inter-governmental and/or non-governmental organizations.

2.2. The objectives of the Plan of Action for the International Year of Disabled Persons will only be appropriate if their impact touches all the sectors of the population, especially those in rural areas.

2.3. It should be kept in mind that the objectives of the international symposium of experts from developing and some developed countries on technical co-operation among developing countries and technical assistance for disabled

/persons, to

persons, to be held in 1981, include - "... (iii) to work out specific approaches and strategies for the education and rehabilitation of disabled people in rural settings".

3. Normally, the greatest provision of social services is to urban areas, whereas rural areas are seriously deprived of them. Statistics indicate that in the developing countries, more than two-thirds of the population lives in rural areas where the quality of life does not compare favourably with that of urban areas. Paradoxically, social services are distributed in such a way as merely to accentuate rather than eliminate the existing imbalance.

3.1. The situation described in paragraph 3 requires an immediate solution with respect to the provision of the social services for the prevention of disabilities and rehabilitation of disabled persons. Otherwise, communities already suffering from scarcity of and limited access to national resources will be burdened with a growing number of disabled persons whose contribution to development will be limited.

4. The series of measures provided for in the Plan of Action are aimed at the achievement of three specific objectives, inter alia:

(a) Prevention of disability, especially that resulting from causes for which society itself is responsible;

(b) Integration into the mainstream of society of persons whose disabilities have prevented them from participating fully in the development process through practices which discriminate against them;

(c) A change of attitude towards disabled persons as an essential prerequisite for any significant progress.

4.1. In order to achieve specific objectives, including the foregoing, Member States should adopt specific measures and ensure that the entire population benefits from them. If the measures used to achieve those objectives are aimed primarily at the urban sectors of the population, however, their value will be relative.

4.2. It would seem that the expansion of measures for rural areas must fundamentally centre on preventive and educational aspects without neglecting rehabilitation, even though the latter poses greater difficulties.

/(a) Prevention

(a) Prevention would be indicated by the expansion of health services, adequate nourishment, the most suitable habitat possible, an environment answering the group's needs in the area and a healthy family unit.

(b) Adequate information for family groups to be provided through local entities such as associations for labour, recreation and area development, including police units, schools and other public services committed to the area.

(c) Increasing the ability of rural instructors to detect deficiencies early on and where possible to apply, in agreement with the health services, suitable methods so that the child suffers the least disturbance of his development.

(d) Improving medical rehabilitation aid, including the gradual incorporation into the regular services of regional, departmental or area hospitals of the experts and components required in order to build up multiprofessional teams to deal with the primary rehabilitation of disabled persons in rural areas.

Although the high cost of these services does not seem to support the idea of integrated rehabilitation, provision could be made for expanding transport and housing facilities in centres with adequate services.

(e) The fact that most of the countries have accident insurance for rural workers leads to the idea that integrated rehabilitation centres, located in strategic areas, could be created for this type of worker. The basic goal would be to reintegrate them usefully in the tasks of their surroundings without displacing them to new areas of work with the consequent dangers of frustration or of abandonment of their area of origin in order to incorporate themselves almost certainly, and largely due to their low income in their new situation, into the belts of poor and displaced people surrounding urban areas.

4.3. In accordance with the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons and in a positive light, the above paragraph has pointed out some possible opportunities for expanding measures to the rural area, so that the problems which this expansion could lead to may be foreseen and so that, if they exist, concurrences within the region in this field may be sought, in order to facilitate the consideration and, if appropriate envision solutions to the problem on the whole and according to the means which are obtained.

/5. In

5. In order to achieve the objectives mentioned in paragraph 4 and the partial indications noted in paragraph 4.2., national development plans must include policies for the prevention of disabilities and the rehabilitation of disabled persons. This implies prior planning so that the priorities established within a programme may be carefully co-ordinated for the purpose of maximizing the use of resources. The measures must form a whole, and satisfactory results from them within the scope of the Plan of Action may only be expected if they are implemented as a whole. In this way, each measure may serve to reinforce other activities envisioned within the framework of the Plan for the Year.

5.1. In the above context, Member States must be capable of formulating studies, inter alia, on personnel planning, planning for special equipment and technology for the disabled and human settlements planning viewed as sectors of development planning in the area of the disabled.

6. In considering this subject, a situation which has frequently been mentioned must not be forgotten: i.e., the lack of statistics. It will be difficult to plan sustained action and the adoption of significant measures if the countries lack adequately designed and uniformly comparable statistics.

6.1. Chapter D, "United Nations programme", paragraph (r), of the Plan of Action for the International Year of Disabled Persons states that "the United Nations and the World Health Organization, in connexion with the work on revising the Handbook of Household Surveys being carried out by the United Nations and the specialized agencies, should provide guidance on planning and conducting household sample surveys that will supply needed statistics on disabilities and disabled persons".

7. In concluding these notes on the subject and to summarize the foregoing fragments, attention must be drawn to the importance which, in regional terms, the consideration of the following matters will have for the meeting:

(a) The difficulties - budgetary and other - which have contributed to the uneven distribution of social services;

(b) The approach and means of action appropriate for reaching the rural population with the activities planned for the national level within the framework of the Plan of Action for the International Year of Disabled Persons;

(c) Supplementary action needed for this expansion.