

Background

- Persons with disabilities and their caregivers have the right to access both formal and natural support programs (Hunt et al., 2022; Huus et al., 2021).
- Access to appropriate formal and natural support has a positive impact on persons with disabilities and their caregivers overall well-being (Reynolds et al., 2018).
- Support for persons with disabilities and their caregivers should not be seen as a binary choice between formal and natural support but rather as a logical and efficient integration of all available support resources to fulfill their desired lives (Reynolds et al., 2018).
- In Ethiopia, there is limited evidence on the natural support experiences of persons with disabilities and their primary caregivers (Asher et al., 2018, Ayalew et al., 2020), and the role of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) program in enabling both supports for them.

Research Questions

1. What are the natural support experiences of persons with disabilities in Gondar City?
2. What are the natural support experiences of primary caregivers of persons with disabilities in Gondar City?
3. How does CBR programming enable formal and natural support for persons with disabilities and their caregivers in Gondar?

Funding

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Methods

Design

- Exploratory-descriptive qualitative design (Hunter et al., 2019).
- Instrumental case study (Stake, 1995).

Data Analysis

- Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Data Collection

- Semi-structured interview with 40 participants.
 - 12 Persons with disabilities, 12 Primary caregivers, 9 Neighbours and 7 CBR workers.
- Document reviews.

Results

Persons with Disabilities

- We learned from people with disabilities and their neighbours that natural support is vital. It helps with daily tasks, basic needs, educational materials, emotional well-being, information, and advocacy.
- Natural support is also reciprocal. People with disabilities support friends, neighbours, and family through household help, emotional and educational support, and financial or material assistance.

"Nowadays, if you always look for support from them, they will get tired of you and may even stop supporting you. Therefore, I will do what I can for them as well." a Person with disability.

- Improving awareness, expanding social networks for persons with disabilities, and providing livelihood support for caregivers can strengthen natural support.

Caregivers

- Received instrumental support in the form of financial assistance and educational materials for their children.

The neighbours support has been crucial in getting my daughter to school and bringing her back home. It is difficult for me to get permission from work and accompany her to school. They do that on my behalf. When I am late from work to return home, my neighbors take good care of my daughter; they feed her and take her to school. (a caregiver)

Results

- Help in service navigation and information access in disability-related support.
- Respite care was also provided by family members, friends, and neighbours.
- Emotional support fostered social connection and helped reduce perceived stigma and discrimination.

Community-based rehabilitation programming

- Enabled formal supports through mainstreaming and collaboration

"We provide training for representatives of plan commission offices across different zones in Gondar. Focusing on how to allocate budgets to support persons with disabilities. For instance, we delivered training this year to prepare them to allocate a disability budget for the upcoming year." (a CBR worker)

- Fostered natural supports through coffee ceremonies, self-help groups, and child-to-child programs.
- Funding problems, staff capacity development, and the need for further engagement of the CBR program in the community and mainstreaming work are areas need improvement.

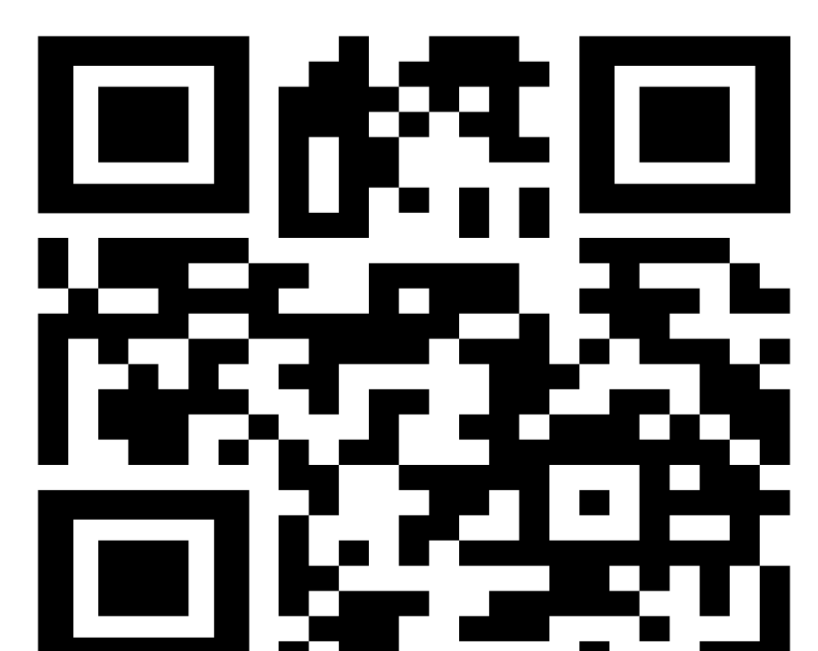
Conclusions

- In the Ethiopian context, where formal support is limited, the government and its partners must recognize the value of natural supports within communities for persons with disabilities and their primary caregivers, and design community-based programs that effectively enhance these supports.
- CBR is an appropriate approach for enabling both formal and natural supports in areas where formal supports are already limited and natural supports are compromised by stigma.
- Policymakers and CBR program partners need to advocate for reforming funding sources, primarily through government budgets, for more effective resource allocation and for more focused programs.

Podcast version of the findings.



References



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