

Disability Action Network

Disability Action Network (DAN), founded in 2002, is a nonprofit organization created to support the needs of people with disabilities in Somaliland. This support is in terms of Physical Rehabilitation, Disability prevention and Human Rights Education for social and economic inclusion. DAN's main partner is Handicap International, France.

Background

Although Somaliland is considered as a post conflict country, the many years of war caused considerable number of permanently disabled persons. Moreover, the legacy of war is the collapse of the health care system making preventable and curable diseases such as polio and meningitis to spread. The poor assistance provided to pregnant women, and the lack of well functioning maternity hospitals, have resulted in many cases of children affected by cerebral palsy and congenital deformities.

Accurate figures of disabled population is not available in Somaliland, but there are roughly 350, 000 with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities (10% of the population, WHO, 1981). The Somaliland government does not yet have the financial and technical means to meet their rehabilitation needs. In collaboration with Ministry of Health of Somaliland, DAN trains professionals such as physiotherapists, orthopedic technicians to carry out accessible and good quality physical rehabilitation service.

What We Do

DAN's Current Activities include:

- 5 Orthopedic Workshops, in the capital and in the regions, that produce devices of all types to improve mobility for the physically impaired individuals.
- 4 Physiotherapy Departments to prevent, correct or reduce the severity of the impairments by means of therapeutic exercises, massage, heat and cold therapy as well as electrotherapy
- Parent Get-together Workshops for experience sharing and capacity building through counseling, medical information and managing Activities of Daily Living.
- Training of Medical Staff on Disability prevention and early detection for Referral and intervention
- Human Rights Education and Public Awareness Raising on disability.

Disability Action Network

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Opposite Hargeisa Group Hospital.**

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DAN's Head Office in Hargeisa

**DAN's Programs are thankfully sponsored
by the following donors at the present time:**



What Does Physiotherapy Do?

Physiotherapists at DAN treat patients with physical difficulties resulting from illness, injury, disability or ageing. They treat people of all ages including children and the elderly.

Our physiotherapists can treat patients because they have extensive knowledge of the body and its movement. They work with patients to identify and improve their movement and function. They restore integrity of body systems essential to movement including neuromuscular system, musculoskeletal, cardiovascular and respiratory systems. They aim to maximize function and recuperation, minimize incapacity, and enhance the quality of life.

Inter alia, the work of DAN's physiotherapists includes examination/assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, rehabilitation plan of care/intervention and periodic re-assessment to measure progress.

DAN's physiotherapists treat a wide variety of problems including:

- Paediatrics: helping children and infants in a special care unit including children with clubfeet, cerebral palsy, developmental delays, lower and upper limb deformities, fractures, burns, amputation etc.
- Back pain and neck pains

- Respiratory care: helping people overcome breathing difficulties and preventing infection
- Neurology, helping people suffering from conditions such as multiple sclerosis, stroke and head injury to overcome problems due to muscle weakness, pain and poor balance.
- Post surgery Rehabilitation for people who had operations on bones and joints such as amputations and fractures due to gunshots and mines.
- Cardiac care, including rehabilitation and fitness following heart surgery.
- Care of the elderly to ensure that they maintain or improve their mobility, strength and balance so that they can lead full and active lives.



A physiotherapist at DAN providing a session to a patient with knee-joint stiffness.

DAN



A psychomotor re-education session for a child with developmental delay at DAN.

DAN—Winner of Stars Impact Award !

Disability Action Network has been selected as the recipient of the 2008 STARS Impact Award in the category of Health.

The Awards are given by the STARS Foundation (www.starsfoundation.org.uk), a London-based charitable foundation which works to improve the lives of disadvantaged children around the world. The STARS Impact Awards recognize organizations committed to achieving excellence in the provision of Health, Education and Protection services to disadvantaged children, and encourage the replication of effective approaches and practices. Each Award recipient receives US\$100,000 in unrestricted funding as well as consultancy support.

Disability Action Network

Orthopaedic devices and walking Aid make a huge difference but are means to better life rather than an end in itself!

The physical rehabilitation of a disabled person is only a step, but a crucial one, towards his/her social reintegration. DAN fully understands that a disabled person needs more than an orthopedic appliance and the ability to walk again. In addition to its physical rehabilitation program, DAN has been, since the beginning, promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

A physically impaired person mostly needs a lifetime access to physical rehabilitation services. For example, a child with cerebral palsy and his family need lifelong support to cope with the situation.

DAN's physical rehabilitation program provides with different types of orthopedic appliances including orthoses, orthopedic shoes, and walking aids such as crutches, walkers and wheelchairs.



Once the physically impaired child stands and moves around, his/her self-esteem as well as acceptance by others considerably increases!

Workshop to Develop Promotional materials for physical Rehabilitation Service users.

A seven days workshop of two parts entitled "Developing Promotional Material for Rehabilitation Service Users" was held on 12th-15th and 25th-27th December 2009 at DAN's training hall for 45 participants from:

- Disabled People's Organizations that are members of SNDF
- Rehabilitation Service users that do not belong to organizations
- Parents of Children with Disabilities.
- Rehabilitation service providers including DAN and Somaliland Red Crescent Society.

How can I climb the stairs with my wheelchair?
Impossible!!!!



- Government Ministries: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Family Affairs and Social Development

The workshop methodology used included Story telling about rehabilitation services, PowerPoint presentations with pictures such as types and range of support in place, the rights stipulated by the UN Convention on the Rehabilitation, Group works and plenary discussion to develop some messages for the rehabilitation service promotion toward policy makers, donors and community at large.

See a sample of the promotional material messages developed on next page.



Group photo: workshop participants on "Promotional material development for rehabilitation service users, organized at DAN—Dec. 2009"

Physical Rehabilitation

Mobility and Restoring functional ability are the first steps towards social and economic integration of physically impaired persons and enjoying and accessing basic human rights including having the same opportunities available to other member of society: Food, shelter, education, recreation and employment.

Without appropriate physical rehabilitation, the people with disabilities become increasingly isolated and trapped in the vicious disability-poverty cycle.

First-things-first: Physical rehabilitation is needed to ensure the full participation and inclusion in society of persons with disabilities. It is the 1st and most crucial step for inclusion!

Physical rehabilitation services must be accessible and equitable. They should be available at urban and village levels and for all types of impairments whatever the cause might be!

Physical rehabilitation leads to independence and personal autonomy as well as the ability to take control of one's own life!

Once the physically impaired person stands and moves around, his/her self-esteem as well as acceptance by others around increases!



Mohamed Wabax and Barre Ali (right to left)

Barre Ali uses a pair of crutches as his legs are weakened by poliomyelitis at childhood. Mohamed Wabax is visually impaired. They are good friends. Today, they have participated a workshop to develop promotional material for rehabilitation service users organized by DAN. Barre tells his story "This morning, I came from my home located in Qudha-Dheer, in Hargeisa, about 7 km away from the workshop venue. With my pair of crutches I walked to the nearest bus station as everybody does. I had to change the bus to reach the workshop venue. Now, I am here. But without my pair of crutches I would have been probably unable to come here. I feel I can also do lot of other things".

Mohamed Wabah, on the other hand, is visually impaired. He does not yet have access to support for autonomy; roads are dangerous in Hargeisa for a blind person, no special sticks for blind or guide-dog available. Someone has to help him every time he wants to go out! He keeps however hope and says that improvements will come gradually!