October 1999

Teaching Them to Fish

Ernest Burgess
Prosthetics Outreach Foundation

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol3/iss3/10

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
come within the POWER management, and this proved a considerable drawback. A requirement of the contract with USAID was that POWER would establish a local NGO and place the management of the four centers within this organization. In the event this did not prove possible.

Last year, POWER completely renegotiated its agreement with MISAU, withdrawing from direct involvement in the four centers. Mindful of the reasons for services failing, POWER has agreed with MISAU to continue providing materials for the manufacture of limbs, both to the four centers for which it had responsibility, as well as to those that HI established.

POWER is also undertaking considerable training activity to strengthen management and professional capacity in the centers. Two Category II prosthetists/orthotists will attend a four year course in Strathclyde University, Glasgow, Scotland, to upgrade to Category I. Meanwhile, HI has arranged for three staff members to attend a course in Lyon, France, in upgrade to Category I. Thus, of the 24 Category II prosthetists/orthotists, five will be overseas training from September onward. In addition, one has been promoted to an administrative position, one has been fired, and one has moved occupation. Only 16 will be available in the upcoming year to service the requirements of the 10 centers.

Absolutely central and critical to POWER’s new program is an agreement with the Assocation dos Deficientes Moçambicanos (ADEMO), to strengthen its management and financial capacity, and to jointly initiate the Council for Action on Disability (CAD) which, it is hoped, will eventually take over POWER’s program in Mozambique. CAD is open to any organization working for the benefit of the disabled in Mozambique to join, and five or six organizations currently attend board meetings as observers. Also central and critical is the development of a new ortho-prosthetic center in Chimoio in Manica province. This will be within the private, nonprofit sector and will be managed by CAD. It is intended that this center will lead the way in demonstrating that high levels of productivity and quality can be achieved when staff are properly and fully incentivized.

In 1999, the Mozambique Red Cross Society (MRCs) is opening a center at Manjacaze in Gaza Province, with support from the Juaper Linh Campaign and the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. The center is in the private, nonprofit sector and will fit Juaper Linh, using staff trained in the technique in India.

It is now MISAU’s policy to maintain one ortho-prosthetic center in each of the 10 provinces. The center at Vilanculos in Inhambane province is to be closed down. With the opening of the POWER center in Chimoio, Manica province, and the MRCs center in Manjacaze, Gaza province, this policy will be fulfilled.

It is the responsibility of the Ministry for Coordinating Social Action (MICAS) to make patients aware of the availability of prosthetic and orthotic services and to assist their journey to the centers. MICAS has a number of transit centers, where patients can stay free of charge while they are receiving treatment at the centers. Currently, this system is not working well, largely as a result of an inability of MICAS to resource its responsibilities. MICAS also undertakes a means test of all patients and makes charges appropriate to their circumstances for the services that they receive.

I believe that the service in Mozambique is now moving slowly towards the optimum. The establishment of CAD and the collaboration of organizations working for the service of disabled people are huge steps in the right direction. The development of centers in the private, nonprofit sector will give excellent opportunity to make comparisons between services delivered through the public sector and those available within the private sector.

Conclusions
• There is a huge number of motor-disabled throughout the low-income world.
• Landmine survivors represent a small proportion of this number, and their treatment must be subsumed within the broader need.
• Disabled people in general are marginalized and their needs are rarely met, either in whole or in part, by state provision.
• If the needs of the motor-disabled in the low-income world are to be met, it will tend to be as a result of financial support from the international community.
• Such financial support is likely to be required for the very long term.
• In order to minimize the demand on international financial resources, it is necessary to set up effective and competent services within the low-income world.
• Such services are not likely to be within government.

The best model will be in the private, nonprofit sector wherever possible in partnership with government.

Mozambique can provide a model for the rest of the world.

Teaching Them to Fish

By Dr. Ernst Burgess
Founder, Prosthetics Outreach Foundation


While political controversy may reign over involvement in foreign conflicts, it should have no bearing on whether to address the human suffering that accompanies it. The world must act to stem the misery of its refugees and injured, no matter the origin of hostilities. It is not enough for foreign governments and charitable organizations to simply give money to impoverished countries. If they are to make a meaningful, substantive contribution, they must offer aid that empowers those who receive it and leads them toward self-reliance. Once the immediate threat of death is past, the daunting task of rebuilding lives presents itself. This may be a less dramatic need, but one that is just as acute.

Current events in Kosovo bring to mind another American peace-keeping effort that deeply affected the people of a foreign country. Twenty-five years after the end of the Vietnam War, approximately 20 percent of the Vietnamese population is disabled as a result of the war and its aftermath. Residual landmines continue to maim and kill the native population, many of whom are children. Political tension between the United States and Vietnam delayed foreign humanitarian efforts for 15 years, leaving a nation of amputees to cope as best they could, with little ability to make a living and survive in their ruined land.

In 1991, in partnership with the Vietnamese government, the Prosthetics Outreach Foundation (POF) of Seattle opened a medical clinic for amputees in Hanoi. Two years ago, a factory for artificial feet and legs was also created in Ba Vi, making use of POF’s advanced prosthetics technology for treating injuries specific to landmines. The Vietnamese staff was trained to fabricate and fit artificial limbs, using local materials and distribution systems, thereby enabling the people to help themselves and contribute to their own economy. Nearly 10,000 lower limbs have been furnished by the POF Hanoi clinic to amputees in the region, allowing them to resume normal lives that include work, marriage, family, and most importantly, survival. It took many years to wind things up in motion, but it was the technology and training imparted that made it a successful model of independence and recovery.

The ongoing genocide in the Balkans and Africa requires an urgent response to its survivors. As Americans’ enjoy an unprecedented era of prosperity, we must stretch the parameters of our own comfort to include those who have lost everything but their lives. The principle of self-reliance, the principle of restoring stability to war-torn nations and confidence to the people. Let us look forward to peace and stand ready to share our skills and knowledge, recognizing that there is no greater humanitarian act than helping people save their own lives.

Community outreach must exist alongside the check patterns.

Published by JMU Scholarly Commons, 1999