

Editorial

Challenges and Opportunities in Disability-Inclusive Development

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Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to read Volume 36, Issue 2 of the Disability, CBR and Inclusive Development Journal. As a platform dedicated to amplifying voices, lived experiences, and research that inform inclusive practices, we are proud to present a rich collection of seven insightful articles that engage deeply with the challenges and opportunities in disability-inclusive development across diverse contexts.

This issue begins with a powerful and eye-opening piece by Thulile Duma that brings us into the everyday experiences of students with dwarfism in higher education. Through the voices of two young women, we see how something as simple as a classroom chair or reaching a door can become a daily challenge, reminding us that many university spaces are still not built with everybody in mind. Grounded in social justice and universal design principles, the article doesn't just highlight the problems; it calls on all of us, educators, planners, and institutions, to do better. It's a timely and necessary reminder that true inclusion means creating environments where everyone, regardless of their body size, can learn with dignity and comfort.

Our second article takes us to rural South India, where a cross-sectional survey examines the functional independence, quality of life, and level of community participation of stroke survivors, as well as the burden experienced by their caregivers. The study reveals moderate levels of independence but extremely limited community reintegration, alongside moderate to severe caregiver strain. The message is clear: recovery extends far beyond the clinical setting. There is a pressing need for comprehensive, community-based rehabilitation that restores not just function, but also hope, connection, and dignity.

Our third contribution highlights a Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) initiative in Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala, aimed at improving access to primary healthcare for people with disabilities. Set against a backdrop of cultural complexity, systemic barriers to healthcare, and traditional worldviews, this study explores the perspectives of the various stakeholders on a pilot project developed to improve access to primary healthcare for people with disabilities. It illustrates how partnerships between organizations of people with disabilities, public health services, and community members can foster more inclusive and culturally relevant healthcare. This study demonstrates that when local voices lead and community traditions are respected, sustainable change becomes possible.

In the fourth article, we gain insights from a qualitative study in Thailand examining the role of communication and information access for persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the lens of intrapersonal group, and mass communication, this research explores the role of communication in supporting persons with disabilities and their caregivers during crisis, separated into different levels of communication.

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Despite significant barriers, especially in rural areas, informal networks, peer support, and digital tools became critical survival mechanisms. This study highlights the critical tensions between resilience and exclusion, and the necessity of inclusive, multi-level communication systems in emergency preparedness and response.

The fifth article in this issue, by Elizabeth N. and colleagues, shines a necessary light on the everyday realities of women with disabilities working in Malawi. Through honest and moving accounts from 45 women, the study reveals how discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, and deep-rooted gender inequality make it incredibly difficult for them to thrive. Yet, despite these barriers, the women show remarkable resilience, drawing strength from each other and finding ways to cope in environments not built for them. This piece is a powerful reminder that creating truly inclusive workplaces means listening to those most affected and acting on what they say.

Turning to education, a standout study from India explores strategies for fostering inclusive early childhood education for children with communication disorders. Based on the perspectives of over 170 rehabilitation professionals, the article highlights the critical importance of early intervention, teacher preparation, and cross-sectoral collaboration. With more than 85% of brain development occurring in the early childhood, ensuring that children with communication needs are supported from the outset is not only developmentally sound it is ethically essential.

The final article offers a narrative review from Indonesia, which focuses on the evolution of community-based cardiac rehabilitation (CBCR) in response to rising non-communicable diseases rates. The review outlines how community-based models such as Prolanis and Posbindu PTM promote cardiovascular health in resource-limited settings through education, prevention, and peer support. While challenges remain particularly in implementation and outreach, the paper presents an optimistic outlook for expanding affordable, culturally appropriate, and scalable community centred rehabilitation strategies.

Together, these seven articles offer rich, diverse, and action-oriented insights that contribute meaningfully to our collective understanding of inclusive development. Whether in health, education, community rehabilitation, or crisis response, each contribution reflects a shared call: to move beyond rhetoric and make inclusion a reality, through research, partnership, innovation, and persistent advocacy.

This issue would not be possible without the dedication of our authors, peer reviewers, and editorial team. We also extend special thanks to practitioners and researchers who continue to push boundaries and champion inclusive approaches in their communities while working in complex and resource-constrained settings.

To our readers, whether you are academics, students, policymakers, professionals, or advocates, we invite you to engage with this issue not just as readers but as partners in action. May these articles inspire reflection, spark dialogue, and inform your efforts to build systems and societies that leave no one behind.

With appreciation and solidarity,

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