

## **HOPEFUL STEPS JULY 2002**

### **STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS**

Regional Co-ordinators of the Guyana Community based Rehabilitation Programme held a strategy session on Saturday March 16, 2002 at the Ocean View International Convention Centre, Liliendaal, Greater Georgetown. The session entitled, National Public Awareness Programme, was aimed at designing a programme to assist CBR to achieve certain objectives.

These objectives include:

- securing Government's adoption of legislation, policies and programmes as well as funding for organisations that address priority issues affecting PWDs.
- Obtaining positive national exposure through the media for the cause of the disabled persons and CBR
- Increasing the awareness of PWDs in general about their rights and available services, and encouraging them to access such services and become involved through DPOs, GCBR and other organisations, and
- Developing collaborative linkages with Non-Governmental Organisations, agencies and institutions around national advocacy, public awareness and other initiatives that address disability issues.

The session which was chaired by our National Advisor, Mrs. Geraldine Maison Halls with technical assistance from Mrs. Maude Bullen McKenzie, former Deputy Chief Education Officer and Mr. Samuel Small, Head of the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) of the University of Guyana.

It resulted from an earlier meeting held between representatives of the Carter Centre and senior members of CBR. At the planning session, Project Co-ordinator of the Carter Centre, Mr. Ronald Samy explained to participants some of the steps required in project planning. He said that all projects must be SMART; that is Sustainable, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

## From the Editor

### **Solving Work Problems through Job Accommodation**

Most people with disabilities will experience premature functional changes as they age. These changes, such as new health problems and decreased strength and endurance, can occur at an age when a person still wants or needs to work. Job tasks may become harder to perform and fatigue may make it hard to get through a workday. Such developments can cause persons with disabilities to lose their jobs.

Such persons need to be accommodated in their places of work. This process is called *job accommodation*.

Job accommodations fall into three broad categories:(1) job modification, (2) changes to the work environment and (3) assistive technology. Most of these accommodations are inexpensive. They include exchanging job tasks with co-workers, flexible work hours, omitting non-essential tasks, installing ramps at entrances and in the toilets, installing rails in restrooms and walkways and improved lighting for the visually impaired.

Most work problems can be solved through job accommodation. Job accommodation can keep the employee working, and it allows the employer to retain skilled workers. The amount of work problems go unsolved or are not satisfactorily accommodated can be surprising. The primary reasons for not solving the problems are:

- employees do not ask for job accommodations,
- employees do not know how to solve the problem or where to turn for help and
- there is a perception that accommodations are too costly.

When asked, employers can be receptive, and it has been documented that accommodations are quite frequently inexpensive. Employees with disabilities should make their needs known and get help if needed to solve their problems. Employees who do not ask, would not get.

### **Common Work Problems and Accommodations**

There are many types of problems that persons with a disability experience at work. Most of these problems can be accommodated in some way. Appropriate accommodations can significantly improve work performance, making them beneficial to both the employee and the employer.

Some of the problems are: climbing stairs, using public transportation, lifting and moving things around the office, suitable chairs, low toilet seats and smooth floors. Many adjustments can be made to meet the needs of Guyanese employers and their workers. However they may or may not be the best solution for a specific employee.

*Leon Walcott – Editor*

## EVENTS

## February Fantasy, a success



A large and appreciative audience enjoyed themselves at the *February Fantasy*, the fund-raising Dinner and Cultural Show presented by the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (CBR) on Friday February 15, 2002.

The event was held at the Ocean View International Hotel at Liliendaal on the East Coast of Demerara under the patronage of Mr.

Edward Glover, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Guyana. Welcome remarks were made by Mrs. Geraldine Maison Halls, the CBR National Advisor.

Patrons were entertained by the National Dance Company, Supriya Singh Ballroom Dance Group, Tawana Wayne, Rohini Kowlessar, Donnetta Jardine and Stacy Greaves, three young ladies with disabilities. Stacy Greaves who is visually impaired, Pamela Das, Terrence Richards, fire dancing by Sean Thomas. The event was graced by the presence of Miss Olive Gopaul, *Miss Guyana 2001*.

In his remarks, the British High Commissioner commended the work done by the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme on behalf of the differently able. "You are trailblazers and a shining example of

what can be achieved by all sectors of the national community working together for the benefit of all", he said.

"But the real heroes and heroines of everyday life are the differently able. They overcome daily obstacles and setbacks; the restrictions on movement, impaired vision and hearing. They become often the recipients of sugar-sweet sympathy from those who are really inclined to walk on the other side. There is often a reluctance to come face to face with those who may have an impairment but who are no different from the rest of us. They do not want sympathy; they want to be treated like everyone else, not out of sight and out of mind. Because, like everyone else, they help to make the world go round. These days the world needs all the talents and skills it can find"

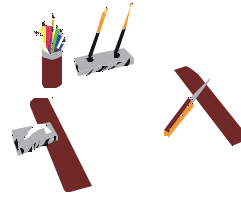
He added, "Money is important because it helps to pay for the resources necessary to make this approach work. I urge everyone here and those who may hear this appeal to give generously. Money and actions, like love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage"..

## CBR meets CDB President

Our National Advisor, Mrs. Geraldine Maison Halls met with Dr. Compton Bourne O.E. President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) during the month of March. Dr. Bourne who was on a three-day official visit to this country was brought up to date with CBR activities throughout Guyana.

## From the desk of the National Advisor

*-Mrs. Geraldine Maison Halls*



On the occasion of the sixteenth anniversary of '*HOPEFUL STEPS*', the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme, I would like to extend sincerest greetings to the kind friends, supporters, volunteers, staff and most importantly, the many persons with disabilities and their families who have been involved with the programme over the years. Without their support, we would not have been able to make those significant 'hopeful steps', which have facilitated the fulfillment of the goal of improving the lives of persons with disabilities.

These steps have contributed to changes in societal attitudes and social policies. We now see children with disabilities integrated in mainstream schools, adults with disabilities assuming leadership positions in the disability movement as well as in community organisations. Other significant achievements include the involvement of persons with disabilities in micro-enterprises and the economic improvement in their lives.

This year also marks another important milestone, as we host the Tenth Annual Conference, under the theme: *Less Barriers: More Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*. We are pleased to have the President of the Barbados Council for Disabled, Mr. Clevedon Meyers and three other members of the Council participate in this Conference. The growing relationship between these two organisations, is to my mind, another important step in the development of the GCBR Programme. There is much that we can learn from each other.

We welcome the continued interest shown in the work of the organisation, both internationally and nationally. At the local level, communities indicate their interest in being included in the CBR Programme and persons seek to be trained as volunteers. This augurs well for the future of the organization and makes us hopeful about the sustainability of the programme.

## Income Generation Activities

### Fundraisers

CBR successfully held two fundraising ventures –a *Cake Sale and a Take-away Lunch*. The *Cake Sale* was held on 31 May 2002, at two venues – Regent Street and Hincks Street in Georgetown. *The Take-away Lunch* was on Friday 28 June 2002 at CBR head office at Carmichael Street also in Georgetown. CBR wishes to express its sincerest gratitude to all those friends and supporters who assisted in the success of these activities.

### Loan Approvals

The Guyana CBR Income Generation Loan Scheme continues to provide help for its members. The Loan Committee has just approved five loans. We continue to receive repayment at a satisfactory rate Several persons have paid off their loan and were able to obtain a second one

### **This month's success story features Jennifer Sumner. This is her story.**

This business is a *Fish and Meat Business*, that is *Fresh and Salted Fish, Salted and Fresh beef and Salted and Fresh Tripe*. my business has expanded from Nabaclis on the East Coast of Demerara to Plaisance, 12 miles away. It has grown rapidly and I am in the process of paying off my loan.

In the year 1992, I was introduced to an organisation named the Community Based Rehabilitation. I was trained in the Second Batch and subsequently was supervised by co-ordinator Mrs. Gwendolyn Glasgow.

Tragedy struck on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1999, when the floor boards on the lower flat of the Golden Grove Primary School on the East Coast of Demerara, collapsed under my feet causing injuries to my hip, pelvis area and sacrum.

I am now a challenged, incapacitated Volunteer. Life is indeed a challenge for me and my family. My husband left his job at Omai Gold Mines Limited to attend to me. The children lost focus and I got weak. CBR did it again. My co-ordinator Mrs. Glasgow provided moral support to me and my family through telephone calls and visits. This support helped to so much that the effects of my disability began to decrease mentally, emotionally and gradually, physically.

With this improvement, I was able to attend short sessions and seminars which I would sometimes be forced to discontinue because of my inability to sit up for long periods. This type of exposure made me feel wanted by society.

It was at one of those meetings I grasped at the opportunity to become an income generator. My accident had caused our funds to be depleted. It has been seven months since my first loan has been approved and again my husband is the main factor in the success of this small business.

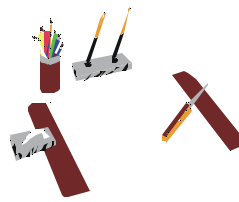
Thank you Thank you CBR Special thanks to Terrence Dhainy who supported me tremendously with ideas for my business Thanks to Miss Lepps who shared explorative ideas too and thanks to my husband for doing the delivery for me and thanks to CBR.

## Review of the constitution underway

The Building Community Capacity Project (BCCP) has agreed to provide technical support to review the current constitution of the Guyana CBR Programme and enhance the overall knowledge of Board and Ordinary Members on the relevance of documents such as Constitutions and bye-laws as it relates to improving the operations of the Organisation and promote good governance.

## From the desk of the National Chairman

*-Mr. Gregory Glasgow*



It is rather an astonishing situation to realise, that most fathers of children with disabilities, seem not to be concerned with the welfare of their children with disabilities.

Most of those fathers that I have spoken with always highlight a number of reasons why they find it difficult to have a positive attitude towards their children. I have heard such things like:- *the mother is responsible for having given birth to the child with disability, the mother may have had some ancestor who may have been like that, some spirit may have affected the mother during her pregnancy, the mother has the tolerance to cope and they, the fathers, are ashamed of the children*, among others.

We understand the pain and the hurt the father may have experienced when he realised that his child was born with a disability or has acquired one. Regardless of this and the reasons given for the negative attitude, these do not excuse the father from living up to his full responsibilities to the child and its mother. Fathers have to realise that they are an important factor in the whole development process of their children with disabilities. Most mothers give the children love and the children respond positively. In the case of the father who may respond to the child indifferently, the child's response is negative because the child can feel the rejection.

The father reacts to this response by saying that the child seems not to appreciate him, but the mother instead. What the father fails to realise however, is that even though the child may have a disability, whatever type it is, the child feels love and knows how to respond in his or her own way

The child does not belong to the mother alone but also to the father. He, therefore, has the responsibility to give full support and co-operation to the mother in the development and care of the child and not to leave her to cope, alone. Fathers must understand that not only they alone feel the pain, trauma and stigma that go along with having a child with a disability but mothers also.

Fathers must take time off to sit and discuss with mothers the strategies they will use firstly, within their home to deal with the issue of their child's disability; and secondly, the attitude of the community in which they live.

It is heartening to note, however, that there are some fathers who have a positive attitude towards their children with disabilities, and also give full support to the mothers. I have been educating and encouraging other fathers on how to deal and cope with the issue of disability within the family

The Guyana CBR Programme has recognised that fathers must play an important role in the development of their children with disabilities.

To this end, CBR has been organising parent training, in the various regions where CBR operates, through the regional committees.

I take this opportunity to remind all fathers who have a child with a disability that your child is a human being like any other person, he or she is no different and must be accorded all rights as any other person.

As the father of a young adult with disability, I encourage you to love, cherish and care for your child and to advocate for the rights of your child.

## **What is AIFO?**

AIFO is *ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA AMICI DI RAOUL FOLLEREAU* translated, it means **ITALIAN ASSOCIATION RAOUL FOLLEREAU'S FRIENDS**

AIFO is an Italian Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) based in Italy and with the head-office in Bologna. AIFO is recognised by European Union and by the Italian Foreign Ministry for Projects of Development Co-operation and collaborates actively with U.N. agencies, especially with the World Health Organisation (WHO).

AIFO provides support to projects in developing countries, without any discrimination on the basis of colour, religion and gender. AIFO has no political or religious aims of any kind.

### **Board of Directors**

Dr. Enzo Zecchini, President

Dr. Enzo Venza, Vice-President

Mrs. Susanna Bernoldi

Mr. Roberto Giorgetti

Mr. Luigi Gravina

Mr. Piergiorgio Trevisan

Mr. Sergio Zovini

### **History of AIFO:**

AIFO started in 1961, inspired by the words of a French journalist and poet, Raoul Follereau, with the aim of providing support to the persons affected with leprosy. In late seventies and early eighties, AIFO started to integrate its leprosy support work in Primary Health Care services. Now, the majority of projects supported by AIFO deal with leprosy control at national levels or integrated in to primary health care settings.

At the same time, the AIFO supported rehabilitation projects which were directed mainly at leprosy affected persons, were also gradually integrated in to general rehabilitation projects.

In 1988, AIFO started collaborating with the Rehabilitation Unit of WHO for promoting the CBR approach and in the last ten years, this has become one of the major areas of activities for AIFO.

The organisation has traditionally been associated with support for children who were living inside leprosaria. Since, 1992, activities directed at nurturing, care, education and development of children have been enlarged to include all children in vulnerable conditions like war, refugee camps, slums, orphans, etc. AIFO favours projects having a community approach for the projects aimed at children. A very special attention is given to projects dealing with disabled children.

At present AIFO is involved in 50 countries of the world, for supporting three kinds of Projects : leprosy and Primary Health Care; rehabilitation of disabled persons; and support for vulnerable children.

### **Regional and country offices of AIFO:**

AIFO has two Regional Offices, in India and in Brazil. There are also Country Offices of AIFO in many countries like: Vietnam, Mongolia, Indonesia, Macau, Comores, Mozambique, Angola, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Eritrea and Guyana. All new Project requests coming from these countries must come to AIFO through the Regional or Country offices.

### **Organisational set-up of AIFO:**

AIFO can be considered as a federation of different small and big AIFO groups scattered all over Italy.

The representatives of AIFO groups form the General Assembly of AIFO, which meets at least twice every year. This General Assembly decides the general strategies and approves the annual financial balance of AIFO.

# In The Regions

## **East Bank Community Based Rehabilitation, Grove**

Congratulations to all those persons who have been elected to serve with the East Bank Disabled Persons Organisation (DPO) at Grove on April 22, 2002.

The first phase of the programme entitled *Introduction to Reading and Writing Braille* was completed on April 29 2002 with participants doing written and oral tests. The second phase will begin during the third quarter of this year.

The Craft project designed for Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) and volunteers began on June 3, 2002 and is expected to last six weeks. During the programme, participants and their facilitator would work once weekly on weaving woollen table mats. These mats would be for exhibition and sale at the National Conference.

Five medical students were attached to our unit to obtain information for their research paper on rehabilitation. As part of their research, they visited homes of PWDs and had discussions with relatives, members of the community and the PWDs, themselves. They also held a group discussion with members of the DPO.

The Unit is planning a Family Fun-day at the Diamond Community Centre Ground in September, 2002.

### *A Poem from East Bank*

#### The Morning Sky

I looked out at the morning sky,  
The day was bright and clear,  
I felt a gladness in my heart,  
And I sensed the Master near.

I looked out at the noonday sky,  
Some clouds were drifting by,  
While happiness o'erflowed my soul  
That almost made me cry...

I looked out at the evening sky,  
The sun had gone to rest,  
And I thanked the Saviour for his love,  
So, I felt completely blessed.

*By Hope C. Oberhelman*

## On the Essequibo Coast

Fifteen persons took part in a leather craft training session on Saturday May 11, 2002 at Maria's Lodge Nursery School. The facilitator of the session was Mr. Vaughn Davis of Zorg Village on the Essequibo Coast. Mr. Davis, a retired teacher is the former head of the Vocational Skills Training Department at Johanna Cecilia Community High School.

A two-day workshop on picture framing will be conducted during the third quarter of this year by Mr. Davis. It is expected that those persons who benefited from the leather craft training session will participate in this activity.

The classes in Braille, conducted by Pollette Dainty, are continuing at Maria's Lodge Nursery School

Meanwhile, Kay Innis and Pollette Dainty are continuing their programme of visits to persons with disabilities who find it difficult to get out of their homes.

Such visits are especially important because they serve to instil a sense of belonging those who, for various reasons, find it difficult to leave their homes. These visits also provide some form of encouragement to the relatives of persons with disabilities.

## In The Regions

### **East Coast CBR**

The ECD CBR had their Annual General Members Meeting held on Sunday June 16<sup>th</sup> 2002 at 1 p.m. Presentations of the Chairman's report Secretary Report, and an Audit Report were made. Elections were held and these are the results.

<b><u>Chairman</u></b>	Gregory Glasgow
<b><u>Vice Chairman</u></b>	Wendy Mitchell
<b><u>Secretary</u></b>	Patricia Mallay
<b><u>Treasurer</u></b>	Sean Thomas
<b><u>Assist Sect./Treasurer</u></b>	Ms. Viola Charles

### **Other Com. Members**

Judith Lepps, Rita Bruce, Terrence Dhainy, Pamela Chance

Collaboration and Networking between the Society and other organisations and individuals at the local and overseas levels were strengthened. Pastor Kenneth Finlayson and members of the Church of Christ, Enmore, continue to make a very important contribution towards the spiritual and physical upliftment of the persons with disabilities (PWDs) and other CBR members. The church donated wheel chairs, walkers and crutches for the use of PWDs.

### ***Donations and Visits***

The society received a donation of \$25,000 in 2001 and \$20,000 in 2002 from Mrs. B. Tapp towards its development programme. We wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Mrs. Tapp for the donation.

We also received donation of certain items from Mr and Mrs. Chabrol and these were distributed among the PWDs. We wish to register our appreciation and thanks to Mr and Mrs. Chabrol for the donation

In April, 2002 four fourth year medical students from the University of Guyana School of Medicine visited the Unit and interviewed and worked with persons with disabilities and their family members. They also visited persons from the community, as part of their course work in the Rehabilitation aspect of their medical programme.

On Easter Monday the DPOs went kite flying at the Joe Veira Park on the West Bank Demerara. They also spent the afternoon hours relaxing at the CBR centre, Bagotville, West Bank Demerara.

We also wish to thank Dr. Karen Tai-Oy- Yong and Ms. Debra Duff of the Cheddi Jagan Dental Centre and Medex Frazier of Buxton Health centre and Nurse Joycelyn Harvey of the Beterverwagting Health Centre for dental and medical services rendered.

Twenty-five persons attended a joint Parent Training session at the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute at Cove and John on the East Coast of Demerara on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2002.

### ***Income Generation***

Eleven persons were granted loans during the period under review. They were as follows:- six persons with disabilities, two family members and three volunteers.

The projects for which the loans were taken included poultry rearing, vending, snackette, joiner shop, barber shop, fish and meat vending.

The topics discussed were:- attitudes, acceptance, coping skills, mothers and fathers perspective in having a child with a disability and advocacy. It was interesting to note that both mothers and fathers were frank in expressing their views with each other as it relates to their roles in the development of their child with disability.

At the end of the programme, a ***Parent Support Group*** was formed. (*Turn to Page Ten*)

# In The Regions

## *Extension Arm*

An extension arm of the East Coast CBR has been started at Kuru Kururu on the Soesdyke Linden Highway. Co-ordinator Gwendoline Glasgow and other members of the ECD CBR, visited as part of our Awareness Programme and at the invitation of Cleopatra Critchlow a trained and enthusiastic Volunteer, formerly from ECD CBR who went to live permanently at Kuru Kururu.

Ms. Critchlow saw the need for a Volunteer Training Programme, as she had discovered several persons with disabilities whose parents or guardians did not know of ways to improve their lives. Three visits, including some by the National Advisor and the AIFO representative to Guyana, were made and this resulted in a new Volunteer Training Programme being started in May 2002. This training takes place every other Tuesday from 3-6 pm at Kuru Kururu.

At present, there are twenty five (25) volunteers regularly attending. We need to express sincere thanks to Mrs. Cleopatra Critchlow for her commitment and dedication to this project.

## Region # 3

The CBR pilot project to “Increase Acceptance of Children with Disabilities in twelve (12) primary schools in Region Three (West Demerara/Essequibo Islands) ended on July 3, 2002.

During the project life which began in March, 2001 37 children with different types of disabilities were admitted to 12 schools in the region. Simple modifications were carried out at the schools. These included the installation of hand rails, repair of floorings, repairs to the water systems and the construction of walkways.

To facilitate the project, teachers were trained in the concepts and methods required to teach children with disabilities.

The project resulted in: the collection of baseline data and needs assessment; the equipping of teachers to better respond to the needs of children with disabilities; parents being able to help their children with disabilities to attend schools and encouraging children to accept and respect their classmates with disabilities.

The names of the schools are: Blake Primary, Greenwich Park Primary, Meten-Meer-Zorg Primary, Stewartville Primary, Cornelia Ida Primary, Den Amstel Primary, Vreed-en-Hoop Primary, Goed Fortuin Primary, Mc Gillvary Primary, Bagotville Primary, Kawall Primary and Patentia Primary.

In addition, a successful meeting was held with Parent/Teachers Associations of the 12 pilot schools. At that meeting, both parents and teachers expressed their support for the “mainstreaming” of children with disabilities into the formal school system. They have also agreed to set up a parent support group.

## *Booklet*

The Region has also produced a booklet which highlights the experiences of at least 12 children who were involved in the project.

## Volunteer Training

July 2nd saw the conclusion of the theoretical aspect of the second batch of volunteer training. The programme continues with the volunteers visiting homes and working with their charges in the areas of basic physiotherapy.

## Around the World

### **Disability rights get a boost City to settle with group in discrimination suit**

The Tallahassee City Commission in Florida, USA is close to reaching a settlement with a disability rights group that sued it last year for not complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

*Access Now*, based in Miami Beach, filed a discrimination lawsuit against the city of Tallahassee, Leon County and the Florida Department of Transportation over roads, sidewalks and parking spaces that are inaccessible to people with wheelchairs, visual impairments and other disabilities.

"The suit does achieve a significant amount of what we can expect to achieve under the law," said Carl McCoy, a Tallahassee resident who is blind and a co-plaintiff in the suit.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires governments to provide access to their programmes and services. Public facilities built or renovated after 1992, the year the law took effect, must comply with ADA building standards. Last year, 1,027 ADA-related cases were filed in federal courts in Florida.

### **Man breaks disabled daughter's leg with bare hands**

TOYODA, Japan -- A man who used his bare hands to break his disabled infant daughter's thighbone has been arrested, police said. Takanori Nishii, 22, a company employee from Toyoda in Japan was arrested for inflicting bodily injury. Nishii initially denied the allegations.

"(My daughter) is paralysed along the left-hand side of her body and when I massaged her leg it broke," he told the police. However, after further questioning, he admitted to persecuting the one-year old girl. His wife also told the police it was likely that her husband was guilty of abuse.

"She is very sick and often stays with my parents. She couldn't bond with him," the wife told the police. Police said the girl was hospitalised on March 2, 2002 after suffering a brain haemorrhage. Physicians suspected the haemorrhage was brought on by abuse and reported the parents to the Toyoda Child Consultation Centre. The husband denied the allegations, saying the girl had accidentally been hit in the head during a fight between himself and his wife.

### **Wheelchair Users Achieve Milestone in Two Ordinances**

NAPERVILLE, Illinois, USA The next time Bill Malleris goes to a party at a new home here, he will drink as much as he wants without worry. "We're going to be able to go to the bathroom," exulted Mr Malleris, 46, whose neuromuscular disability causes him to use a motorized wheelchair and who for years has had to leave friends' homes or make undignified arrangements because their bathroom doors are too narrow.

Mr Malleris, himself a developer, is celebrating because recently this suburb of 135,000 west of Chicago became one of the first two municipalities in the nation to require that all new private homes be built with 32-inch wide ground-floor doorways and other elements of wheelchair-accessible design.

### **Persons with disabilities must provide their own leadership**

“Persons with disabilities have to look inward – to ourselves in order to find effective leadership for empowerment.” This was the central theme of the lead presentation by Leon Walcott, public relations volunteer with the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Programme (CBR) at a two-day seminar organised by the *National Federation of and for Disabled People* on May 16 and 17, 2002.

Minister of Labour and Social Security, Dr. Dale Bisnauth delivered the feature address at the seminar which was held under the theme, *Building an inclusive environment for the disabled* at Kirkpatrick’s Garden Room in Meadow Brook, Greater Georgetown. Chairman of the Federation, Mr. Laurie Greenidge welcomed the guests who included United States Ambassador to Guyana, Mr. Ron Goddard and British High Commissioner to Guyana, Mr. Edward Glover, to the opening session.

Two other members of CBR, Charles Adams and Jeanette Jordan participated in the seminar which was chaired by retired educator, Mr. Archibald Moore. Walcott’s presentation was later discussed at a workshop session.

Three other presentations were made. They were: **The Rights of Disabled Children, Aids and the Disabled and Building supportive working environments for older disabled persons.**

During afternoon session of the first day, Shoshena Beepat and Petal Ridley of the Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre explained to participants some of the physical and mental problems they have had to overcome on a daily basis. Shoshena, who is married with one child, praised her husband for his love and kindness in assisting her in caring for their daughter.

On the second day, Head of the Keith Andre Sobryan Drop-in Centre, Mrs. Desiree Edghill – Adams gave a presentation on *Aids and the Disabled*. This was followed by one on *Building supportive working environments for older disabled persons*. by Mr. C. Fogenay.

Walcott told the participants which included persons with disabilities and members of the National Commission on Disability, “we know what we want and the articulate among us must be in the vanguard of the movement towards empowerment.”

He pointed out that most public places are guilty of inconsiderate behaviour when it comes to persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Human Services, the Georgetown Hospital, the National Insurance Scheme and many international hotels are just a few.

Walcott who is a practising journalist said that sessions like these will provide the enabling environment out of which leaders will emerge. “However, we cannot do it alone. Fortunately, or unfortunately, we need the politicians even if only to enact legislation, he noted.

PWDs have to start or continue sending letters to political parties, concerned government departments and the press to mobilize awareness about the proposed legislation and to pressurize its swift passage. Enactment and enforcement of this legislation will go a long way in levelling the playing field for us. He said he hoped that the proposed legislation included making it mandatory that all buildings for public use have ramps, toilets and washroom doors must be wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and placing hand rails at schools, hospitals, parks and pavements.