

Opening the door

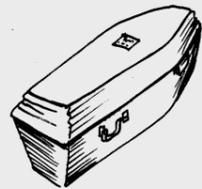
1 Problems and prejudices

People with disabilities are often made to feel excluded from society. We use the image of a closed door to show that negative attitudes towards these people mean that they are not given the skills or the opportunities that can improve their quality of life. Sometimes children are hidden away behind a closed door.

Fatalistic attitudes

'Many of the children are abandoned. People believe in 'karma' and have a fatalistic viewpoint. They think children with disabilities should be left to die so they can come back as a better person. They don't understand they can be stimulated to achieve their full potential.'

(Christian Care Foundation, Thailand)



Lack of support

'People with disabilities are tolerated by their family and neighbours, but they are seen as having little value and little to contribute to the family or community.'

(World Concern, Lao PDR)

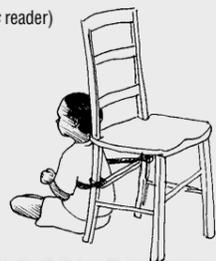


Shame

Social prejudice makes people with disabilities feel left out. They usually lack opportunities to play a part in the community.

'Family members feel abandoned. They isolate the child, even locking them away when guests visit the house.'

(Hezron Sande Likunda, Kenya – *Footsteps* reader)



Discrimination

Few opportunities are provided to integrate people with disabilities into the community. One example is discrimination during selection of employees.

The Christian Care Foundation in Thailand has trained a man with polio to use computers. 'He could live independently in the community, but there are no opportunities for him to do so.'



2 Solutions

However, as these negative attitudes begin to change, the door begins to open. We can all have a role in making attitudes towards disability more positive.

Physical and mental development

Mediation in Egypt developed a video called *Ten Small Steps* which gives practical advice to parents about how to stimulate the development of their disabled children.



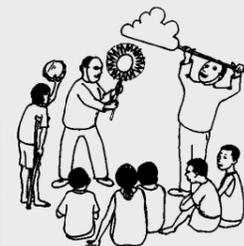
Skills development

In Cambodia, 'Servants to Asia's Urban Poor' lobbies to get disabled children into mainstream schools. In Malaysia, Malaysian CARE runs a training centre to help disabled youths to build up their social skills.



Overcome social prejudice

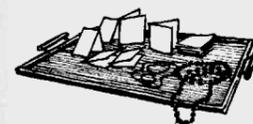
The Community Based Rehabilitation Service in Nepal has set up awareness programmes in schools, using drama and discussion.



Create opportunities

The Community Based Rehabilitation Service in Nepal always employs some disabled staff members.

Craft Aid Mauritius employ 120 people of whom a third have disabilities. They produce furniture, handicrafts, jewellery, bookmarks, gifts, sugar, flowers and honey.



3 God's viewpoint

Our goal should be the open door. An open door enables people with disabilities to live as God wants them to: without prejudice, and with opportunities to play a role in the community that uses their full potential.



Accepted

Created in God's image

Loved unconditionally

Part of the community

Valued

Discussion questions

- 1 What types of prejudice against people with disabilities exist in your community or country?
- 2 What should be the Christian attitude towards people with disabilities?
- 3 The first door shows some of the problems faced. The second door gives some solutions to these problems. Can you think of any other solutions? Can you think of some possible solutions to the prejudices you discussed in question 1?
- 4 What can you do to challenge prejudice against disability in the society in which you live: personally, as a church, as an organisation?
- 5 What can you do to help to include disabled people in your community: personally, as a church or as an organisation?