

mend@xtra.co.nz

# MEND Newsletter

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## MOBILITY EQUIPMENT for NEEDS of DISABLED

*"providing self-help, not sympathy"*



**JANUARY 2004**

**PO Box 94 Keri Keri**

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## OUR AIMS

Setup in 1991 as a NZ-charitable trust MEND has been involved in developing countries, including India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Bangladesh and the Pacific Islands, assisting disabled people to become mobile, independent, healthy and employable...and achieve dignity.

After an initial appraisal visit by MEND to the partner's location a joint project is designed that uses local resources and employs disabled members e.g. a skills training workshop to make affordable physio aids, such as wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, standing frames & trolleys. Training includes construction, design, maintenance and marketing of mobility equipment. Revolving loans from a micro-credit fund are given for disabled members who cannot afford help.

## GHANA PROJECT-

In Feb.2002 MEND visited the Volta Region and helped a group of disabled people form the "Volta Physically-Challenged Independence Club". We began production of low-cost tricycles, set up a revolving loan small business fund for members, developed a disabled-friendly toilet i.e non-squat type. We built the first access ramp there to enable members to attend computer training.

## SOUTH INDIA

In 2003 MEND carried out a NZ AID funded project in Kerala, South India with ANWH (the Association for Welfare of Handicapped) involving home assessments, production of low-cost tricycles and wheelchairs...and employing deaf trainees. Though there are 27 million people in Kerala State there are no local makers of wheelchairs which meant high import prices. The Indian Govt. gives little financial aid to disabled people. Their families and non-govt. orgs (NGOs) make up for the lack of social welfare. Tricycles previously made in India are heavy, bulky and not suitable for the low arm power of disabled young people. There has been a "one-size-fits-all" mindset to the issuing of mobility equipment in India rather fitting to suit the special needs of each disabled person.

A motorised tricycle is a much sought-after for mobility there as buses are crowded and not easy for them to access with crutches or callipers. We now want to adapt 50 cc or 70 cc scooters with side cars or an extra back wheel for stability. These cost about \$300 NZ for the parts and local labour...but still a large sum for members to afford when wages are only \$1-\$5 day. Further NZAid funding for a 2nd Capacity Building grant (matching our contribution

at rate of 4:1) was approved in Aug.. 2003 so VOLPHIG can solidify itself as an effective service provider. With this new grant VOLPHIG will carry out a disability survey in the Volta where some 5000 disabled people await help. The grant provides for office set-up, a computer and small salaries for 8 VOLPHIG staff for a year... for some, their first job! Advocacy for disabled people is also on VOLPHIG's agenda...as is extending the micro-credit scheme to more people. Already some 25 VOLPHIG members have started their own small businesses including fabric printing, bag-making, chicken farming etc.



Above: A German-made tricycle with 2 HP motor allows Dehole, from Ghana, who has had polio, the ability to travel far and fast

Below: Testing the new hand-propelled tricycle made in Ho at a technical school by VOLPHIG. Cost \$50 US



After 16 years Ganga is finally being fitted with \$150 legs in...NEPAL



Mobilising kids of South India