

INCEPTION REPORT

1. Country Data

One of the most stable countries in Latin America is Costa Rica, which has a long democratic tradition, a literacy rate of over 90%, and no army. The population is largely of Spanish descent. Costa Rica has expanded its economy to include strong technology and tourism industries. The standard of living is relatively high. Land ownership is widespread.

1-1. General information

Costa Rica location: Central America, bordering both the Caribbean Sea and the North Pacific Ocean, between Nicaragua and Panama.

Geographic coordinates: 10 00 N, 84 00 W



Flag Description:



Five horizontal bands of blue (top), white, red (double width), white, and blue, with the coat of arms in a white elliptical disk on the hoist side of the red band; above the coat of arms a light blue ribbon that contains the words, AMERICA CENTRAL, and just below it near the top of the coat of arms is a white ribbon with the words, REPUBLICA COSTA RICA

(1) Total land area

Total area: 51,100 sq km, Land: 50,660 sq km, Water: 440 sq km (which includes Isla del Coco)
Administrative divisions: 7 provinces (Alajuela, Cartago, Guanacaste, Heredia, Limon, Puntarenas, San Jose), 81 counties and 449 districts.

(2) Capital City

San Jose, located in the center of the country at an elevation of 1,140m (3,800 ft). It's largest city of the country and is the economic, political, and social center of Costa Rica, dominating the Central Valley and the nearby towns, Alajuela, Cartago and Heredia.
According to INEC, the city had a population of 1498.914 people in San Jose Canton: the latter half of the 20th century was a period of rapid growth for the city, considering that in 1950 its population was a mere 86,900.

(3) Total population

Until July, 2006 the total is 4,248.508 habitants distributed as follows: Male: 2,160.670, Female: 2,087.838 Source: National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC)

Age structure: 0-14 years: 28.3% (male 590,261/female 563,196), 15-64 years: 66% (male 1,359,750/female 1,329,346) and 65 years and over: 5.7% (male 108,041/female 124,667)

Median age: total: 26.4 years, male: 26 years, female: 26.9 years (2006 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.45% (2006 est.)

Birth rate: 18.32 births/1,000 population (2006 est.)

Death rate: 4.36 deaths/1,000 population (2006 est.)

Life expectancy at birth: total population: 77.02 years, male: 74.43 years, female: 79.74 years

(4) Ethnic groups

Costa Rica is unquestionably the most homogeneous of Central American nations in race as well as social class. The vast majority of Costa Ricans look predominantly European. The ethnic groups in Costa Rica are: White (including mestizo) with 94%, Black 3%, Amerindian 1%, Chinese 1%, other 1%.

(5) Language

The official language is Spanish and also English is spoken.

(6) Religion

The most common religions are: Roman Catholic (official) 76.3%, Evangelical 13.7%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.3%, other Protestant 0.7%, other 4.8%, none 3.2%

1-2 Disability related information

1. Definition / classification of disabilities

Since 1992, many organisms defined the term disability. First, it was defined as a problem of the person or a relation between people and environment. If the environment is not adequate, it is so difficult independence and personal development.

I define disability as a result of interaction between a person with some function limitations or deficiencies and the environment. If the latter does not offer support and accessible, opportune and effective services, a person has limitations in her/his activities and restrictions to participate in essential life situations.

The word "disability" has implicit the discrimination because of the emphasis in what is missing. Many people in our country prefer to use terms like "alternative capacities" in order to emphasize the acts that people can do in their own life. An example of a person with alternative capacities is somebody who can not see or walk but develops others abilities to compensate this condition and be able to communicate or moving by the environment with independence, in an alternative way respect to the others.

Function limitations and disabilities are two different terms. The first refers to significant restriction of the functions or structures of the body and second one is a social condition because of these function limitations.

Usually people confuse these terms as synonyms. It is important to understand each one in order to improve the equating.

For effects of this inception report, function limitations are classified in four groups:

- A. Sensorial Limitations: it refers to sensorial difficulties, especially seeing or hearing:
 - a. Visual Limitation: It refers to loose vision totally or partially. A blind person frequently perceives environment by tact or hear, for that she/he needs adequate instruments, materials and environments in order to be independent and autonomous.
 - b. Hearing Limitation: It refers to loose permanently hearing, totally or partially. It will be difficult to communicate by oral and for that she/he develops another communication ways like sign language and total communication.
- B. Motor Limitation: it refers to function limitations. It involves bones, articulations, nerves and muscles that can affect movement, equilibrium and body function. As a result, many supports like weellchair, crutches, and other, accessible environments will be necessary such us assistive and adapt technology.
- C. Mental Limitations: It refers to the intellectual and behaviour difficulties:
 - a. Intellectual Limitation: they are impairments related to knowledge, abilities and behaviour according to age. People with this condition, can learn better when they have several times and more time than others.
 - b. Behaviour Limitation: in that it is difficult to take conscience and control the behaviour affecting social relationships and individual perform. This is considered a temporal limitation because it is possible that certain behaviour will be valued incorrectly in a context but in another will be considered by others like normal.

D. Other Limitations: it refers to loss and alterations not included before, like difficulties in respiratory and circulatory system (asm, emphysema, pneumonia, vascular brain shedding, high pressure, arteriosclerosis, hearth deficiency, embolia and thrombosis) and others like congenital impairment. Most of these limitations are not easy to see at first sight.

2. Population of persons with disabilities (type of disabilities, age, cause, gender)

According to National Census of Population in 2000 made by Statistic And Census National Institute, 50% of the population in Costa Rica are men and the other 50% are women. Population with disabilities are 5,35%, distributed 52% men and 48% women.

Geographically, population with disabilities is distributed in similar percents between rural (6%) and urban (5%) places.

Juridical, 7600 Act for Equality of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities defines normative for human rights for this population in several lands like: education, health, employment, architect access, transportation, communication and information, sports and recreation.

Distribution of people with disabilities according to different limitation (National Census of Population in 2000) is:

Kind	%
Blind	31
Paralysis	14
Hearing	13
Intellectual	9
Behaviour	6
Other	27

Distribution of people with disabilities according gender and limitation is:

KIND	MEN	WOMEN
HEARING	57.9	42.1
INTELLECTUAL	57.7	42.3
BEHAVIOUR	57.3	42.7
PARALYSIS	56.1	43.9
BLIND	52.4	47.6
OTHER	42.3	57.7
TOTAL	51.70	48.3

3. Major laws and regulations concerned with persons with disabilities, if any (Name/title, registered year, description)

Title of Law: Law No 7600 Equal Opportunities for Persons With Disabilities

Scope/nature of Law: Seeks generally to redress discrimination against, and encourage full inclusion of, persons with disabilities, and also seeks equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in many specific areas of life.

Date of Law: 29 May, 1996.

Structure: 84 Articles organized into 5 "Titles" [each "Title" is not named, but is further divided into specifically titled chapters].

Persons Protected: Persons with disabilities.

Statement of Purpose:

- a) to enable disabled persons to reach their maximum development and full social participation, as well as the full exercise of the rights and duties established in our legal system;
- b) guarantee equality of opportunity for the population of Costa Rica in the areas of health, education, work, family life, recreation, sports, culture, and other areas of life;
- c) eliminate all types of discrimination against persons with disabilities;
- d) establish a legal and material basis for allowing Costa Rican society to adopt measures necessary to equalize opportunities and toward non-discrimination of persons with disabilities.

4. Financial assistance for persons with disabilities:

In our Country we have very little financial assistance for people with disabilities. People with Cerebral Palsy may have a little rent in order to attend their special needs. CCSS has a non-contributory regimen for people without social security. Some of them are adults with several disabilities. IMAS gives one subsidy for people with disabilities in poor condition. MIVAH gives some home bonus for people with disabilities.

CNREE and National Bank have a loan program for micro employer with disabilities.

5. Disability-related organizations and their activities

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF REHABILITATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION (CNREE)

Programme on the Attention to Disability

This programme focuses on five areas:

Capacity building, Information and guidance, Comprehensive local systems of rehabilitation (SILOR), Credit fund, and Education assistance.

Capacity building

In this area the National Council of Rehabilitation and Special Education offers services to institutions and non-governmental organisations. They receive assistance in all fields addressed by the Equal Opportunities Law for Persons with Disabilities in order to fulfill their obligations.

Besides consulting the institutions and organisations, the CNREE organises conferences, seminars, panels, courses and workshops for selected target groups of the institutions and organisations in the disability field.

Information and guidance

The CNREE conducts statistical surveys on persons with disabilities and runs a documentation service, Documentation Center Specialised in Disability (CEDDI), that offers the most comprehensive bibliographical collection on disability issues in Costa Rica.

The Guidance Service of the CNREE connects the persons with disabilities and their families with the competent instances in order to find solutions to their problems and needs.

Comprehensive local systems of rehabilitation (SILOR)

The CNREE operates 6 regional units of the Comprehensive local systems of rehabilitation (SILOR): Limón, Naranjo, Pérez Zeledón, San Carlos, Santa Cruz and Turrialba.

Credit fund

The Credit Fund of the CNREE grants credits for the creation of productive projects targeted for the creation of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Education assistance

Everyone has capacities and abilities in different areas. The CNREE offers capacity building for persons with disabilities that allow them to realize their potential to participate in the community activities and to develop social and productive activities that improve their quality of life.

Also there are several Non Governmental Organizations that works defending human rights of people with disabilities, such as:

- Foro por los Derechos Humanos de las personas con Discapacidad
- Federación Costarricense de Organizaciones de Personas con Discapacidad
- Participación Ciudadana

2. Description of the organization

2.1. General information

(1) Name of the organization

(2) Type of organization

(3) Background, mission, vision, activities, organization chart

(4) Staff and volunteers (number, paid or non-paid, with or without disabilities, type of disabilities)

(5) Registered members (individuals/organizations, number, membership fee)

(6) Financial resources of your organization

(7) Weakness and strength of your organization

(8) Attach herewith a brochure or annual report of your organization if any.

Capacidades Alternativas en Sororidad - CAS; (Alternative Capabilities in Sorority)

Is a private organization that works with women with disabilities. Nowadays, it's formed by 15 women and can be integrated for women without any disability if they are closely related to the community and have some kind of sensibility regarding our reality. It does not have a pyramidal organization.

Everybody has different roles, depending on the needs of the group. This organization was created as a result of the problematic that women with disabilities face everyday in the Costa Rican society.

Through the years, people with disabilities have been considered inferior beings inside of our country.

People usually believe that we are unable to make decisions regarding our own lives, or to integrate ourselves in the society and participate actively in it because we are perceived as eternal infants.

Society expects us to live with our parents the whole life and deny us the opportunity of being physical

and financially independent since we are born. Of course, these social conceptions affect females even more. We (women) as members of a patriarchal society, tend to be placed in a second category. We all know that females have been abused and ignored in many aspects and we have been assigned the role of mothers but not the role of women. This fact is increased when we talk about women with disabilities. Some of the problems we face in our country are:

- a) Women with disabilities are denied to have and raise their children and make decisions about them;
- b) The governmental clinics do not have medical equipments according to our different needs; the health service do not take into account women with disabilities when they create the systems;
- c) We are denied to have a pleasant, healthy and active sexual life.
- d) We suffer from domestic violence by partners and family members.
- e) We suffer from discrimination when we apply for a job.

As a result of this social environment, CAS tries to give solutions and improve the quality of life for women with disabilities. Our mission and vision can be summarized in this way:

Mission: CAS is a group who deals with the defence and promotion of the human, political, economical, cultural, and sexual rights of women with a disabled condition and their families, as well as women without a disability that have sensibility and interest regarding this reality. Our goals can be achieved by creating and promoting some strategies that permit us to get independence, complete development and equal opportunities and conditions.

Vision: CAS will be socially recognized is an organization able to understand and satisfy the needs of women with alternative capabilities and the ones who have sensibility about this topic through the promotion and respect of the human rights and the implementation of strategies that permit the participation of women with disabilities in all the aspects of our society.

CAS does not have a financial aid; every member provides what she can, depending on the economical possibilities. It has been difficult to find an appropriate place to meet; so, we make reunions in our own houses. Another problem is the transportation, because it can be really expensive and some members do not have economical support to cover it. We are looking for some projects to do as well as a financial aid. We are currently working in the following issues:

- a) Accessible public transportation;
- b) Active participation in activities related to gender;
- c) "Design for all" (Accessible internet sites);
- d) Advice and support mothers of people with disabilities;
- e) Teaching of the English language to visual impaired people;
- f) Learning of LESCO (Costa Rican Sign Language);
- g) Creation of business to be managed by people with disabilities

2-2. My activities in my organization:

(1) Your job title

Member of Non-Governmental Organization called Alternative Capabilities among Women Sisterhood (Capacidades Alternativas en Sororidad)

(2) Describe the details of activities that you are responsible for.

Call the members to the meetings, arrange facilities.

Invite members to join

Coordinate logistic aspects

(3) Explain why and when you started working in this organization.

In 2001 I became a member of "People With disabilities Human Rights Forum". In 2002 had to opportunity to go to a seminar in San Francisco, CA. This seminar was intended to prepare four Costa Rican women with disabilities to help other women of the community. In December, I was part of the team who organized a one week workshop here in Costa Rica. It was a 25 women workshop. I had to look for the translator (it had some English spoken participants from the United States), and look for the sign language interpreter. It was a very difficult task, because we didn't have a lot of money to pay these services. After that activity, we formed CAS, and I became part of this as a try to continue with the empowerment of women with disabilities.

(4) Explain problems or difficulties that you face in your activities and how you solve them.

Some of problems that I face were the following:

The organization did not have a lot of money.

Transportation was expensive.

I perceived a lot of individualism in the group.

I think we have to realize that we have to work together as a team. The reality in our country affects everyone without restriction. If we can stop fighting for individual interests, we can go beyond.

(5) State your opinion on how to improve your activities or your organization and why.

As organization we would need a good financial aid in order to give economical support to the members and to the projects. It's important to know our goals well also. A better organization can improve our group a lot.

(6) Describe what kind of role you would like to take in this process and how.

The role that I would like to assume is the one of mediator to impel the most effective operation of Alternative Capabilities among Women Sisterhood.

3. Describe any other working experience with persons with disabilities that you have other than in above mentioned organization.

4. If you don't mind, please share your personal experiences related to your disabilities. And please describe how you feel about the position of persons with disability in your country. (This question is not compulsory and also it will not be used in the selection procedure.)