Mistreatment of People with Disabilities:

Living in a Nightmare

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Preface

Mistreatment of people with disabilities is the neglect and abuse, both physical and emotional, of mentally and physically disabled persons. It is looking down upon those with disabilities as inferior, unimportant, or a nuisance. It is neglecting their human rights and taking advantage of the situation they are in. The mistreatment of people with disabilities is far too common an issue that happens all around the world every single day. Being locked up, chained, forgotten and dehumanized is a common occurrence for many persons with disabilities across the world. The reality of this issue also includes people who are disabled being viewed as possessing evil inside them, or being subject to extreme and painful therapies without consent. Persons with disabilities are also mistreated by being held against their will from birth until death, rendering them unable to grow properly and resulting in further physical and mental disabilities. It is the utter abuse of those who have no control over how they were born.

Disability is a constant struggle both physically and emotionally. Currently, roughly 10% of the world’s population or 650 million people live with a disability (Rights of People with Disabilities). 80% of those live in developing countries (Disabled World). Many are subjected to atrocious living conditions. Disability rates are significantly higher in regions with lower educational systems. As a result of this, on average, 19% of less educated people have disabilities, compared to 11% among the better educated and according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNICEF) in 2006, 90% of children living with disabilities do not even attend school (Rights of People with Disabilities). Only 35% of people suffering from depressive illness receive care even in developed countries and the scenario is
even worse in the developing region (Amin A. Gadit). The neglect of people with disabilities affects their view of the world, the way they think, and act. They are being taken advantage of simply because they have never been shown proper care. People with disabilities in abusive situations starve for love, for human attachment, and many do not understand why. It is the most natural craving of neglected and forgotten persons, and it is felt every day by disabled children and adults around the world.
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Summary of Research Methods

This report will use information collected from a number of sources. Internet sources will be used most frequently, particularly websites for organizations specializing in human rights and problems faced by people with disabilities. The World Health Organization, the United Nations, and Human Rights Watch are examples of reliable organizations that are often used as sources. Much of the information used for background knowledge on the topic for further understanding is taken from websites dedicated to the broadening of knowledge about people with disabilities such as Disabled World. News websites are also used frequently. NBC News and CNN are reliable news sources that provide information used in case studies. Many of the figures used in this report are taken from websites aimed purely toward statistics, such as The World Fact Book and Index Mundi. Professionals on the topic are included in much of the research, including sourcing from informational and esteemed blogs such as Gentle Teaching Blog. Cam Dore is referred to particularly in the case study of Paraguay, as he has travelled to a mental institution in Paraguay on business with Gentle Teaching. Other experts are also researched and sourced in their area of expertise. Websites made by organizations within problem areas are also sourced, such as the National Federation of the Disabled in Nepal, which was created by people with disabilities in Nepal.

Background

The mistreatment of people with disabilities is a problem that has been prevalent for centuries. Institutions and asylums for those with mental and physical disabilities have existed since before the start of the 19th century. In recent history, it has proven to be a pressing and
extensive global issue, with inhumane institutions set up all over the world. As of 2005, 25 percent of countries—including China, Thailand, El Salvador, Turkey, and Vietnam—had no laws protecting psychiatric patients (Mother Jones). There was little media coverage of this issue until 2008 when NBC News investigated several mental institutions in Serbia and released a documentary. The investigation showed graphic images from inside the institutions, shining a light on the previously un-publicized issue. Prior to the documentary, there had been books and smaller investigations focusing on the issue particularly in Latin America; however there had been little mass media coverage that went into such detail. There have been many articles released on the issue since the documentary, all concerning the abuse found in other mental institutions all over the world. This includes many areas in South America, Africa, and Asia. The situation has improved little since then, and with very little news coverage elsewhere, it is difficult to detect whether or not advancements have been made in other areas of the world.

Steps have been taken towards supporting the rights of the disabled in parts of Africa with new policies and laws. Money, however, has been a major problem standing in the way of stopping mistreatment of the disabled. For many governments, the economy is not supported well enough to allow for the extra funding it would need to remove the problems presented in mental institutions (Dateline). The process of progress, if there has been any in the particular area, has been slow. More recently however, Disability Rights International has made important steps towards stopping the abuse of disabled children in psychiatric hospitals by creating the Worldwide Campaign to End the Institutionalization of Children in 2013. There have been interventions by government officials when shown the suffering that is happening in their own country, prompted by organizations from the United States or other Western areas (High Beam
Research). The exact number of institutions existing today is still unknown, as more and more horrors are discovered in both developed and developing countries. Mistreatment, however, occurs in many places other than institutions. So far, the most successful attempt at resolution has been publicity, and that has only achieved small victories. This is only the start of a long battle towards the end of mistreatment of people with disabilities.

**Expert**

Amin A. Muhammad Gadit is a professor at Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador. He has written many successful papers about mental illness, the stigma around it, and mental disabilities in the developing world. He originates from Pakistan, and graduated from Dow Medical College in 1984. He was then a lecturer in Physiology in Sindh Medical College in 1987. He continued to pursue more knowledge in psychiatry, travelling from Pakistan to London and Ireland and acquiring many qualifications, including MRCPsych from the Institute of Psychiatry at the University of London, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, a PhD in Psychiatry at Anglia University in England, Board Certification in Psychiatry, and Doctor of Podiatric Medicine from the conjoint board of Royal College of Surgeons and Physicians. Around 1997, Gadit made the choice to go into psychiatry. He chose this profession because he believed that it was highly neglected, and had a passion for the equality of those with disabilities. He has belonged to and created several groups and charities supporting mental illness (Amin A. Gadit). Gadit formed a health committee under the Kutiyana Memon Association, a social welfare organization working for humanitarian services in Pakistan (Kutiyana Memon Association). The committee arranged for regular medical care and training
in first aid of school children and training for the teachers in child psychology. It was extremely successful on both local and international levels. UNICEF was also involved in this group, boosting its success immensely. Amin is an active member of the World Psychiatrists Association (WPA), coordinating medical conferences and other types of events. Because he is a specialist in child abuse, he is often asked by UNICEF to share his expertise (Amin A. Gadit).

Amin has written several published books, including *State of Mental Health in Pakistan* in which he illuminates mistreatment of the mentally disabled, and suggests solutions for the problem. Amin suggests the World Health Report in 2001 written by WHO (World Health Organization) as a solution. The report outlines steps to achieve better education, research and services in psychiatry in Pakistan (World Health Organization). It states that the first step is primary health care - all general health personnel need to be trained in caring for mental health. This will allow for earlier diagnosis, follow up, and reduce unnecessary investigations and inadequate treatment. The second step in this process is to ensure the constant availability of necessary medication; antidepressants, anti-psychotics, anti-epileptics and anxiolytic. By ensuring this, relapse is decreased and certain disabilities and symptoms are reduced. The third step in this process is to provide community care as opposed to mental institutions. This would encompass a great extent of home care methods, as well as community care facilities. There are, however, challenges with this step. By moving all mentally ill patients from institutions, the need for health workers at a community level increases. The number of health workers in institutions is already unimaginably low. Also, appropriate housing and employment would have to be taken into account. The fourth is to educate the public - to create publicity and encourage awareness and serve as a reminder of the rights of the disabled. This will ultimately
make treatment easier with more knowledge. Involving communities, families and consumers is the fifth step in the WHO’s suggestion advocated by Gadit. By doing this there are several positive effects. Stigma is reduced, community involvement is encouraged, advocating is a communal effort, and more people are involved for the better. The sixth step is the creation of national policies, programs and legislation in all countries. This is to encourage countries to increase their budget for mental health and to be up to date on current human rights knowledge. Step seven is to develop human resources. This includes improving the training of mental health professionals and the integration of different types of psychiatric doctors who can work together for the betterment of the mental health community. By doing this the number of mental health professionals is increased, which is a desperate need for developing countries. The eighth step in this lengthy process is unity with other sectors. This encourages less discrimination, leading to emphasis on the justice system and shining a light on the unjust imprisonment of people with mental disabilities. The second last step to the WHO’s suggestion is the monitoring of community mental health. This is to ensure that adequate treatment is being provided and that the quality of care is at its best. The final step to Amin’s suggestion from WHO is to support more research. By having more research further solutions can be found, as well as advancements in treatment services (Amin A. Gadit).

Gadit has outlined the WHO’s entire report and also included his original thoughts about solutions. He believes all solutions start with governments and their priorities, the goal being to make mental illness one of them. Several of his solutions for mental health in Pakistan include making sure that appropriate cost effectiveness is assured, governmental encouragement for involvement of communities in health organizations, and the regulation and record keeping of
mental health in order to have better monitoring. Gadit also suggests research development, prioritizing diseases in mental health. He suggests better communication between researchers and policy makers, and believes that incentive plans should be made in professional educational research institutions (Amin A. Gadit).

Gadit has written several books about the same world issue. These include Society and Mental Illness published in 2003 and Culture and Mental Health published in 2004. He is a renowned and well known expert in his field and is dedicated to create awareness of mental health and eliminate the stigma that surrounds it (Amin A. Gadit).

**Role of Control**

The role of control for the purposes of this report is defined as the actions of those who have control over the issue. In the mistreatment of people with disabilities, the role of control lies largely with governments and in economics. Governments control laws pertaining to people with disabilities, however many times there are few laws concerning such people. In some cases laws are in place, yet are not being followed. The government does little to support and publicize these laws; some parents are unaware of their children’s right to attend school no matter the circumstance or level of accessibility (Futures Stolen). In many cases, there is much more the governments could do to improve the situation on this issue, which is where the economy interferes. The economies in developing countries allow the governments very little room to move forward with any issue involving people with disabilities. Money plays an essential role in controlling the mistreatment of people with disabilities. Without adequate funding that comes hand in hand with a developing economy that struggles on a daily basis
already, money does not reach people with disabilities. The government’s solution is to recommend that all those who have disabilities be placed in unsanitary, overcrowded institutions. Money restricts the ability for parents to properly care for their children, and since most are uneducated on the topic, they do not understand what disabilities do or how to cope with them. Many times parents have no knowledge of the interiors of mental institutions, and are only told it is the best option (Dateline). People naturally fear what they do not understand, which plays another large role in the mistreatment of the disabled. Those who fear what they do not understand are less inclined to have the desire to understand, and therefore may avoid the problem. This applies to many situations, including instances within the government, however it mainly deals with the stigma surrounding people with mental disabilities.

The role of control does not always lie with the government. In several cases, when Prime Ministers or leaders of the country in which the mistreatment is taking place are approached on the issue, they agree that it is horrific as a whole (Dateline). The only thing that is stopping their intervention is their economy. The money is just not there for the release and treatment that is so desperately needed. Without the money to control the issue, there is little government intervention, and when there is it is slow and cautious. There is only so much that can be done without the support of the economy.

Many people care extensively about this issue. This includes witnesses who are unable to do more than donate to the nearest charity or company aimed at supporting the ones in need. In some cases those who care about the issue and what is happening to these people are parents unsure about their disabled child, what to do, and what exactly it is that they need. No
matter the circumstance, however, the ones who care to take action are those who are not in control. They are those who have few choices and no meaningful and lasting effect on the grand scheme of the situation.

Unfortunately, those who should care to address and take action on this issue yet do not are those who have a role of control. These are the facilitators, the men and women in charge of psychiatric hospitals, the principals of schools that refuse to educate anyone with disabilities. If these men and women took action about the abuse and neglect shown towards people with disabilities, it would be able to come to an end over time. These are the people who are in a role of control, who - putting aside the need for money - would slowly be able to end the torment. This, however, is where the topic becomes more sensitive and complicated. The doctors of these mental hospitals, the facilitators, all have battles of their own in the ever-struggling economies of developing countries. These people too need adequate housing and have families to feed. Most need a job, and without institutionalization do not have one. This also applies to schools that will not accept people who have disabilities. People who do not understand disabilities and simply see those who have disabilities as dirty, inferior or strange will not accept having their children attend the same school as them. The school could lose its revenue and leave facilitators jobless and unable to fulfill their own needs. From this different perspective, it is difficult to make claims about who really has control in the mistreatment of people with disabilities. Generally, the answer to this question and the overall controlling factor in this issue is money and in some cases, governments. Both are key to nearly every operation involving the abuse and neglect of people with disabilities.
Religious and Spiritual Influences

There are many strong religious and spiritual influences behind this issue. One of the most common ideologies concerning those with mental and/or physical disabilities, is that to have a disability is to have the devil inside their body. In other religions, particularly in Asia, it is believed that people have disabilities because of a sin from a past life (Religion of Nepal). In parts of Africa, the devil within the person with disabilities must be removed. Since there are very few treatment options in developing countries, often families with disabled adults or children turn to prayer camps (Human Rights Watch: Ghana). They rely on preachers to heal them, believing that their disability can only be overcome by religious and spiritual healing. Christian based religions, including Pentecostal churches, are the driving forces behind these beliefs (Treatment of Mentally Ill in Ghana). With this noted, many people fostering these religions are also part of a separate driving force against these beliefs. Not all of the religious and spiritual influences of the issue are negative. In some cases, the belief in God provides hope, something men and women chained and immobile so desperately need. It shows the true strength of a person to be able to look past their situation and remain hopeful, and in this case a belief in God allows for that (Treatment of Mentally Ill in Ghana).

L’Arche communities are an extremely positive effort in combating stigma and providing a safe atmosphere for people with mental disabilities. Presented as a Catholic group, L’Arche communities are placed in many places around the world including developing countries. They are open to any person with mental disabilities regardless of spirituality or religion. L’Arche communities promote respect and give care to people with mental disabilities, providing a
stable living situation with mutual relationships (L’Arche). People with mental disabilities live together in a healthy atmosphere with social workers, doctors, psychologists, and other professionals available for assistance. It is a huge step towards destroying stigma and very beneficial to people with mental disabilities in developing nations who do not have another place to go.

It has only been recently in history that mental and physical health has been separated from religion and spirituality, and this divide is, for the most part, only prevalent in developed countries. Most developing countries still have little or no separation between healing (physically or mentally) and religion (Hindawi). Committing abusive and neglectful acts upon people with disabilities in the name of a religion is proof of the lack of education and understanding that many people, in developing nations particularly, have. Preachers believe that they are healing people with disabilities by forcing them to fast for months at a time and be subjected against their will to painful therapies. They believe that they are doing a good service, curing and saving the lives of damned souls ridden with evil spirits. These camps are completely outside of government control, and have been known to turn down proven medical treatment and instead continue to force members to fast (Human Rights Watch: Ghana).

In the grand scheme, religion and spirituality play a large role in the reasoning behind most mistreatment of the disabled. There are, however, many good things that come out of religion and spirituality in this issue as well. Depending on the region, religion and spirituality can be used as an outlet. People fear the things they do not understand, and therefore try to wrestle those things into something they do understand. In the case of parts of Africa, trying to
wrestle these disabilities into understanding is trying to remove the evil spirits from inside the person. In other places, religion and spirituality is not used as an outlet, however the same message is being received—there is something wrong with people with disabilities. People with disabilities are not the same and therefore must be fixed or hidden. It is a disturbing thought, but one not unimaginable when examining examples of this attitude, in religion or spirituality, and out. Religion and spirituality go both ways with this issue, and so although much of the stigma stems from religious beliefs, many solutions do as well.

**Logic of Evil**

The Logic of Evil is the understanding that “why” is a cornerstone to everything. There are reasons for every action or non-action. It is found through analyzing the root causes for events and issues, and why these things are happening or why someone chooses to take an action. Using this definition, the logic of evil can be applied to mistreatment of people with disabilities all over the world. In almost all cases, people are mistreated because others simply do not understand. They do not understand disabilities, how they are caused, how people live with them, or how to treat them. As a human instinct, people judge those around them who they do not understand and therefore a stigma is created and held as an archetype.

Asylums were originally created as a place to hold the “insane”. People did not understand mental conditions at the time, and had little scientific reasoning or knowledge as to why these people were different. Because of lack of scientific reasoning, most reasoning was attributed to religious beliefs. These asylums remained unnoticed in the world and were accepted in almost all cultures. In developing countries that are struggling today, these asylums remain virtually unchanged and simply have a new name and in some cases slight scientific
reasoning. The economy has a large role to play in regards to why these mental hospitals remain from long ago. In some cases, the government wants to change the state of psychiatric facilities, but are unable to immediately due to the lack of money and resources (Serbian Mental Institutions).

There are other governments that neglect the rights of people with disabilities in practice for different reasons. With such little money, the government cannot afford to spend amounts on accessibility for people with disabilities or paychecks for more staff in psychiatric hospitals. Because of this, governments create laws supporting the rights of people with disabilities, including specific laws pertaining to accessibility and education but do not monitor them (Futures Stolen). Without the follow through that is necessary, rights are not met and the things that need to be done in order to create better living conditions for people with disabilities are not being accomplished. Without the money to achieve these things, there is very little that the government can do about the issue.

Parents who give their children away to psychiatric hospitals could be perceived negatively. There are however, many reasons as to why parents have no choice in giving their child with disabilities away. Many parents are told that it is the best option by doctors. Often they have very little knowledge of the conditions of most psychiatric hospitals and are uneducated about the mistreatment and abuse that occurs in these facilities (Serbian Mental Institutions). Other parents simply do not have the time or resources to dedicate to a high needs child. Often parents have multiple children, with a mother who works with responsibilities at home and a father who works elsewhere. With many responsibilities a
mother can only do so much for the well-being of a child who needs large amounts of attention daily (Jorge and Julio).

People who live without a disability have created this stigma for people with disabilities out of misunderstanding and fear. Many mental illnesses are feared because of the lack of education for people who do not understand – these people do not understand why people with disabilities, particularly mental disabilities, can become violent, aggressive and loud. People with disabilities are seen as extremely different from those without and in many societies different is frightening, and so society attempts to “fix” these people. It is extremely difficult for society to understand that people with disabilities do not need to be “fixed” but instead need care and support.

Much stigma towards people with disabilities is rooted from various religions. Religions have varying beliefs surrounding people with disabilities ranging from believing they need to be rid of evil spirits to believing they are being punished to believing that they are in fact normal people. Religion is so important to many people that they often live by it to every extent. Children are raised to believe in a certain religion, and each religion comes with specific beliefs in pertinence to different aspects in life, including how disabilities are viewed. In Hinduism and Buddhism, it is believed that people with disabilities are being punished for a crime they committed in a past life. In some forms of Christianity it is believed that people with disabilities are a sign of evil spirits, and must be released of the evil spirit to be cured. Many rituals are devoted to “curing” people with disabilities. There are numerous religious beliefs that attach a stigma explanation for why people have disabilities.
Media such as television and news can sometimes create a negative or unrealistic view of people with disabilities. It can sometimes contribute to the stigma or negativity associated with many people with disabilities. Other times media concerning people with disabilities is run by NGOs or non-profit organizations that are advocators for human rights and more specifically the rights of people with disabilities. These are seen on billboards in awareness campaigns or in articles on news websites.

The negative stigma surrounding people with disabilities occurs in many places. Even where teachers are in charge of classes of children who have disabilities, stigma is associated (Futures Stolen). In certain cultures, there are very few people that have been raised without this attachment of stigma, and once it is inside the thoughts of the society it is extremely difficult to change this perspective. It is something that many have known their whole lives as a fact, and are committed to either out of habit, religion, or other reasons. No matter the reason, the stigma associated with people who have disabilities is extremely difficult to break from for much of the world.

**Case Study: Paraguay**

Paraguay is located in South America, under Brazil and Bolivia. The population is an estimated 6.5 million. The amount of the population who have a disability is unknown; however the majority of those who have disabilities in Paraguay are children and youth (Disability News Information). Paraguay is sometimes referred to as the “heart of America” (Nations Online), which poorly reflects the state of the country’s mental health system. Paraguay itself is
developing and has a weak economy. This is one of the main reasons for the unjust living in mental hospitals around the country, including Paraguay’s Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital in Asuncion. It is the mental hospital with the worst known living conditions in Paraguay and has been the focus of many projects and reports.

Attention was first brought to the Neuro-Psychiatric hospital in 2003 when the media discovered Jorge and Julio. The teenage boys had been in the hospital for 4 years, locked naked in six feet by six feet cells with no bathrooms. Small holes in the walls and floor served as toilets. The walls were smeared with excrement causing the room to reek. The boys received four hours every other day each to walk around a small outdoor pen that was full of broken glass, garbage, and human feces (DRI: Paraguay). Disability Rights International reported

- unhygienic conditions, including the presence of open sewage, rotting garbage, broken glass, and excrement and urine on sidewalks, patios, and in wards throughout the institution;
- sub-custodial and dangerous levels of staffing;
- an absence of almost any treatment interactions of any kind;
- frequent shortages of food and medicines;
- lack of medical, dental, and psychiatric support on a timely basis (DRI: Paraguay).

These reports were found not only for Jorge and Julio, but for the other 460 patients as well. After documenting these conditions, Disability Rights International filed an urgent petition with
the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) requesting the immediate intervention to protect the lives of the inhabitants of this psychiatric hospital. In December 2003, the IACHR approved the urgent measures and requested that Paraguay’s government adopt all the necessary measures to protect those living in psychiatric hospitals. In 2005, an agreement was signed between Disability Rights International and the government of Paraguay and became the first agreement signed in Latin America to guarantee the rights of human beings using mental health services (DRI: Paraguay). The government of Paraguay have taken steps to improve on the situation in psychiatric hospitals and have separated the adult population from the minors, who prior were intermixed. However, the state of psychiatric hospitals and more specifically the Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital have remained largely unchanged (DRI: Paraguay). There continues to be extreme understaffing, and therefore a complete lack of care for patients. Human rights violations are recorded everywhere and exploitations of these have seemed to make little difference to the Paraguayan government. Patients live with social, political, and physical segregation and seem to abandon any hope of human dignity or meeting their mental health needs (Gentle Teaching International). There is no on-going or emergency support for medical or psychiatric needs. Since there is a great lack of psychiatric medications upon discharge from the Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, patients must constantly come back to receive medication which leads to further institutionalization. Pictures illustrate rotting beds and walls that are falling down and peeling away. Dirt and garbage are virtually everywhere, and fences are twisted and broken. Jail-like bars surround the compound and inside patients are locked in cell-like rooms (Gentle Teaching International). Because of the isolation of the people within these psychiatric hospitals, community integration in the future becomes a
problem and a challenge for released patients. With a country that has forgotten and neglected these people for so long, it seems there is no escape from stigma even outside of the walls of psychiatric hospitals.

In July 2008, Disability Rights International uncovered further allegations towards the Paraguayan government and filed another urgent petition. The petition exposed a series of unexplained deaths within the Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, along with numerous accusations of sexual abuse and intense physical abuse including castration within a span of six months. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) is currently calling on the government to rectify the abusive conditions within its mental hospitals, and is still awaiting action from the government (DRI: Paraguay).

Many have tried to come up with solutions for these inhumane conditions. Theories as to what would work for the situation are present however compliance from the government is crucial to remedying this issue. According to Cam Dore, a recent traveler to the Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, the actions that need to be accomplished to meet the needs of patients are comprised below.

- The assignment of an outside monitor to oversee their rights;
- The development of a thorough medical and mental examination with a diagnostic work-up and specific treatment recommendations;
- The assignment and training of 1:1 staffing to implement active treatment goals, the assurance of freedom from further harm and neglect, and the initiation of a
process that will guarantee them active treatment, human dignity, and community integration;

- The formulation of treatment goals based on their right to live in dignity and to receive adequate and appropriate psychiatric care and treatment (Gentle Teaching International).

The list also includes the development of daily activities with supportive caregivers, an on-going care for body hygiene including dressing and grooming daily, and the availability of clean sheets and blankets at night. The list continues to suggest the cleaning and painting of living spaces and a caregiver who understands each patient’s unique needs (Gentle Teaching International). Each of these possible solutions would lead to the betterment of people within psychiatric hospitals in Paraguay, but without the government’s support, they are unachievable goals. There have been, however, a few successful solutions in the current state of the government. Jorge and Julio, as previously stated, were teenage boys locked in the terrible conditions of Paraguay’s Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital. They would be taken out of their cells once a day to be hosed off like animals and were “reduced to a state of lonely despair” (Jorge and Julio). Jorge’s mother was left with the terrible burden of having to institutionalize her son, as he had become increasingly difficult to handle in his teenage years with five other children. When Jorge’s mother called the authorities to ask for advice, the only thing that they could tell her was to send him to the Neuro-Psychiatric hospital, saying that “your son is never going to be useful in society” (Jorge and Julio). This illustrates just how strong the stigma surrounding people with disabilities in Paraguay is and how it affects them. Jorge spent years in the facility until finally his mother was able to take him back into the household. Jorge flourished and gained back
social skills that had been lost in isolation. He now functions and lives at home under radically better conditions and has a chance to move on with his life (Jorge and Julio). Julio continues to live in Paraguay’s Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital under slightly better conditions than prior to the exploitation of the hospital’s violation of human rights. Unfortunately, the situation for Julio is largely unchanged.

The culture of Paraguay has little to do with the segregation of people who are disabled. It is simply something that they have always known and formulates a stigma about. To the society, youth and adults with disabilities are neglected. Stigma warps the perception of the society, and opposed to the society being affected by the issue, it is one of the causes of it. While Paraguayan law prohibits any kind of discrimination against people with disabilities, it is a constant. The government has also made it mandatory for public places to have proper accessibility for people with physical disabilities, however the government does not regulate this and therefore the majority of public places do not have accessibility (Travel State). Without the government following through on their laws, improvements cannot be made and stigma will continue to be present.

**Case Study: Ghana**

Ghana is a country in Africa between Togo and Cote d’Ivoire. It has a population of 25,199,609 as of 2013 (CIA World Factbook). Ghana has over 2 million people with mental disabilities, with over 600,000 who require critical mental health care (Ghana: People with Mental Disabilities). In Ghana, people with mental disabilities are taken to one of two places. These are one of three public psychiatric hospitals or one of many prayer camps. Both have
inadequate and abusive treatment in comparison to people without disabilities, and in both places people with disabilities have no say in what happens to them regarding treatment or otherwise (Ghana 1012).

In 2012, a global poll showed Ghana to be the most religious country in the world (CS Monitor). As a direct effect of this, Ghana Prayer Camps are in many regions throughout the country. The goal of these prayer camps is to “fix” or “cure” people who have mental disabilities. Run by self-acclaimed prophets, prayer camps take in children and adults alike with mental disabilities, most of whom are sent by their families. Many in Ghana believe that mental illnesses are a sign of evil spirits and possession by the devil, and so people with these illnesses are subjected to many treatments over their stay in prayer camps. Prayer camps are understaffed and unhygienic. In many prayer camps, residents are chained to trees outside in unsanitary conditions and forced to fast for weeks, months, or even years as a form of treatment. A preacher from Nyakumasi Prayer Camp, Leo Baidoo informs the public that “the Lord will heal the people through me. Through fasting, I use to heal the people” (Ghana: Abuse 2012). This displays the views of the leaders of these camps and the families that send their relatives to these places. The families and the leaders believe that what they are doing is good for residents in this abuse. People who are forced to live in these camps however, do not believe that this is right. Ali, a prayer camp resident, tells that “the families, they just threw me here, and they’re gone. Since over 5 years, no one comes (to) me. There is no one (to) care for me” (Ghana: Abuse). Ali has been chained to the same tree for months, being forced to bathe, eat, and defecate in the same five feet of space. His neighbours around him are facing the same conditions, along with many others across different prayer camps in Ghana.
There are three public psychiatric hospitals in Ghana. They fall in Greater Accra, Eastern and Central regions. These are all understaffed and unhygienic. Patients are held against their will and forced to undergo sometimes painful treatment with no knowledge of what is happening. Doris Appiah, who has spent several years in and out of psychiatric hospitals says

You don’t have control over anything that is done to you. When I had to have electroconvulsive therapy, I was just told ‘you are going in for a test’. I didn’t know, I didn’t have any idea what was going to happen to me. You come back to the ward confused (Ghana: Abuse).

Electroconvulsive therapy, or ECT, is very common in these hospitals. ECT is a very controversial medical technique in which electric currents are passed through the brain of a patient, triggering a seizure (Mayo Clinic). It has been proven to have a side effect of sometimes permanent memory loss of recent or long ago events (University Hospital). This can be incredibly confusing, particularly for a patient who is unaware of what is happening.

There is high overcrowding in these hospitals as well. In the Accra Psychiatric Hospital, there are 17 beds but 130 patients in Ward 1, in Ward E there are 14 beds and 106 patients, and in Ward C, there are 25 beds and 100 patients (The Chronicle). This leaves the remaining patients without beds to sleep on the floor, creating a higher risk of pneumonia particularly during the rainy season. Patients also must sleep with broken windows that allow for constant mosquitos. Some inmates are brought by court order and are sentenced to stay for two weeks to six months at most, but because of the inefficiency of the country’s legal system, the inmates stay in the psychiatric hospitals for 7 to 20 years. This is a big contributor to the overcrowding
as new inmates are brought by police almost daily (The Chronicle). In the hospitals there are no facilities that separate people who have more violent or aggressive behaviors from those who are non-aggressive, and so they are mixed. Hospitals have constant problems with insufficient water supply and the lack of proper amounts of food needed for all patients. Furthermore, due to the stigma surrounding mental illness, when patients are discharged most families will not accept the responsibility of their relative. Families move away or give fake addresses to the hospitals to avoid being located, and so patients are referred to the Department of Social Welfare to find their families (The Chronicle).

Psychiatric hospitals and prayer camps have a large impact on society in Ghana. They are the results of the stigma behind mental illness in Ghana. Mental illness is perceived as a weakness, and many are feared due to the lack of education regarding people with disabilities in Ghana. It is the main reason for the inadequate care for people in psychiatric hospitals and prayer camps (IRIN Africa). The stigma includes choosing not to work in the psychiatric field due to fearing their own children will be affected by mental illness. Even among the very few professionals in Ghana, people with mental disabilities are viewed in supernatural terms (IRIN Africa). This view is extremely common throughout the country and could explain why the mental health care in Ghana is so low on the list of priorities of the government.

Cultural influences play a large role in this issue. Since a large collection of the population of Ghana is Christian, it is believed that people with mental disabilities have evil spirits within them, and the goal of Christian prayer camps is to rid the evil from these people (Ghana: Abuse). Their culture allows Ghanaians to turn religion into a violation of human rights.
The amount of people in Ghana who see only the stigma which in many cases is backed by their own beliefs makes progress difficult; as many are convinced they are doing good by these people.

There are, however, solutions to improve the lives of people with mental disabilities in Ghana. Doris Appiah is a former prayer camp resident for bipolar disease and has used her experiences to try and make life better for the people living with disabilities in Ghana. After leaving the psychiatric hospital she belonged to, Doris found a group of people to live with that live with bipolar disease and other mental illnesses as well. Her group travels Ghana, going to schools to try and educate people about mental illness. They show people that it is possible to have a mental disability and still live a normal life. They are trying to convince the government to get away from institutionalization and lead forward into community care. In community care, people with mental disabilities simply live in their own community, and everyone in the community is aware of their illness and accepts them. The people in the communities would help those with mental disabilities with their medication and their relationships. This would give people with mental disabilities the opportunity to live a normal life and to help them heal. (Ghana: Abuse). Doris Appiah is not the only person in Ghana with mental disabilities that has overcome and gone on to be successful and to try for change. She lives an independent life and encourages others that they can do so too. Doris is taking steps to reduce the stigma in Ghana, but it is a long and slow process.

There are few other solutions to this issue than awareness. For people to understand what disabilities are they must be educated in such a way that there is no association with how
to cure or fix, but instead how to live healthily with a condition. Campaigns that support Doris Appiah and tell her story would be a step in the right direction by increasing the knowledge of people who know so little about mental disabilities. Because people know so little, they turn to what may seem like the only possible solutions – prayer camps or unfit psychiatric hospitals. Awareness would show that there are more options, and could sway the government into paying more attention to the unjust conditions enveloping Ghana.

**Case Study: Nepal**

Nepal is located in South Asia between China and India. It has a population of approximately 27 million, with at least 207,000 being disabled children (Futures Stolen). In Nepal, children legally have the right to attend school; however in practice this is simply not achieved. Children are at times denied admission to both public and private schools because of physical disabilities, and many times the parents are unaware that their children have the right to attend school (Futures Stolen). When children do attend school, they are segregated and associated with cruel stigma. There are no accommodations to support people with disabilities who do attend school, and in some cases children must crawl up steps to get to their classrooms because there is no ramp. When children are unable to go to the washroom by themselves due to a disability, either a classmate must run home to get the child’s parent or they simply do not go. Teachers receive little to no extra training in special needs, and have been reported to have a negative attitude in schools (Futures Stolen). There are meager attempts at education that seem to add more to the problem than the solution. In attempts to solve issues associated with people with disabilities, the government has separated children
who are deaf and blind and also those who have physical and mental disabilities into different schools than people without disabilities. The government does not do enough to ensure, however, that people with disabilities are going to these schools. Furthermore the government has not met the needs of children attending these schools. There is limited accessibility and the content is not appropriate particularly for children with intellectual disabilities (Futures Stolen). Human Rights Watch, a Non-profit Organization visited Nepal to report on the mistreatment of people with disabilities.

Several children and young people with disabilities and their families told Human Rights Watch about the lack of access to school—in terms of physical access (no ramps or disability-friendly toilets), communication barriers (no sign language instruction or Braille teaching materials), negative attitude of teachers, and a curriculum that does not adequately address children with different learning needs (Futures Stolen, Human Rights Watch).

These children are viewed as a burden, even by parents. Because of this, instead of sending them to school some parents use their children as beggars on the street to earn money (Global Giving). Children with disabilities in Nepal are neglected by their community and by the government, even though in theory the government is in full support of an inclusive atmosphere for all citizens with disabilities (Asia-Pacific Development Center). Because so many children are denied admission to schools, parents often tie up their children with disabilities or lock them in a room in order to carry on with their daily life. Parents do this because of the need to care for other children and carry out their other responsibilities. Research showed that
this most often occurred in households where the child had multiple disabilities including mental illnesses (Futures Stolen). Furthermore, even if a child is accepted into a school, transportation is minimal and expensive. Most children must walk miles to get their education, crossing rivers and climbing large hills- in many cases a near impossible task for children who have physical disabilities (Global Giving). If the child with a disability wishes to attend school and it is too far away, they have no choice but to stay at home. The government has done nothing to accommodate children in this situation and appear to be uninvolved and uncaring towards these issues, addressing them only in theory and never in practice (Futures Stolen).

To the society in Nepal, people with disabilities are seen as damaged goods. According to Nirmala Gyawali, a blind woman living in Nepal, people with disabilities where she lives are “not treated as someone who can contribute to the society” (Challenging the Cultural Stigma). The segregation of those who are disabled in Nepal has a very negative impact on societal life as it demonstrates that it is okay to neglect and dehumanize other people. It is very normal in Nepal to see a child or adult with a disability and immediately associate them with stigma. It is not without reason, however. The religious beliefs of many in Nepal are Hinduism or Buddhism (Nepal Embassy). Buddhism and Hinduism are both religions that believe in rebirth or “samsara” as well as karma which determines destiny in this life and the next (Religion Facts). Stemming from these religions is the belief that people with disabilities are suffering because of a sin or curse in the past life. Within this belief, all people affected by mental and physical disabilities are thought to be being punished for something they have done in a past life (Challenging the Cultural Stigma). For many people in Nepal this is the root of the stigma
surrounding people with mental and physical disabilities. Because of the deep religious faith of many Nepali, it is difficult to break the stigma that comes from these beliefs.

There are, however, people who believe in the future of children and adults who have disabilities in Nepal. Rob Rose is the founder of the Rose International Fund for Children that focuses on children with disabilities in Nepal. He sees potential for a normal life and hope for these children and has completed many successful projects throughout Nepal (Rose International). His goal is to change the perception of children with disabilities in Nepal without changing the religion of many Nepali. He attempts to sensitize the nation to the cruelty and discrimination faced by children with disabilities, and to show the children that they have talents and abilities just like everyone else. Rose has worked through his non-profit organization to provide equipment for children in need, including hearing aids, equipment for an orthopedic hospital, and support at a special home in Kathmandu (Challenging the Cultural Stigma). In 2010 he started a large scale social awareness campaign in Nepal in an attempt to change the perception of people with disabilities and break stigma. This campaign also targeted people who have disabilities to show them that they are “differently abled, not disabled” (Challenging the Cultural Stigma). Rotary International funded this three year project that included billboards, radio and television time, street dramatics, and a 24 hour hotline. The campaign even used Nepal’s most famous actor, Rajesh Hamal as a spokesperson. Rob Rose, originally from Seattle, attracted many volunteers from his hometown once the campaign was public. Many travelled to Nepal in order to help with the project, and volunteer work for his cause has only gotten more widespread. The effect of the three year campaign on children with disabilities was very positive. Children were given hope and the knowledge that they have
potential (Challenging the Cultural Stigma). The campaign has not made a visible impact on the actions of the government.

This was a big step toward a solution for people with disabilities in Nepal. Though little was received by the people who associate stigma with people with disabilities, it is one of best ways to create awareness. Other solutions would involve direct dealing with the government. This is because the government of Nepal has neglected the current situation of schooling for children with disabilities in practice, while all children do in fact have the right to go to school and to be treated equally while there. When the government starts to take further action on this situation, the children of Nepal will have better conditions and more opportunities to be educated. The problem that remains after that is finding a way to separate the beliefs of many Nepali and the stigma surrounding people with disabilities. Solutions to this are further campaigns raising awareness, as well as overall education and information on disabilities. The more the people in Nepal know about children and adults with disabilities, the better opportunity for the end of stigma.

**International Organizations**

International organizations play a leading role in the fight to end mistreatment of people with disabilities worldwide. The range of support spans from organizations within the country where the problems occur to organizations from countries halfway across the globe. Many organizations travel to areas of the world where abuse and neglect occurs and report the results of their findings. Once returning home many organizations start to raise money for projects that would benefit people with disabilities in needed areas, and petition to bring more
light to these issues. Hundreds of news articles and films have been made from the information found by organizations, and are used to create more awareness and to get people involved in the cause. Without international organizations such as Disability Rights International (DRI), the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and many more, there would be very little knowledge that this issue even exists to the extent that has been exploited. The biggest success by far from all organizations has been the publicity and light shed on this issue. Organizations that travel to the source of the problem and find out as much as possible from first-hand experience are very valuable to the understanding of mistreatment of people with disabilities and how they live in the developing world. These people also make a difference to those with disabilities who do not believe that they are useful to society, who follow their stigma only because they know nothing else. These people are provided with a new perspective from interviews with organizations and the help that they bring to the community.

International organizations have made an impact on the lives of people with disabilities everywhere. People with physical disabilities have been given orthopedic equipment, hearing aids, and psychological support by the Rose International Fund for Children (Challenging the Cultural Stigma). Disability Persons International (DPI) started a “Building Advocacy in Africa” project on January 1st 2013 that involves missions to assess and understand the current situation for people with disabilities and training workshops on understanding advocacy and human rights (DPI: Building Advocacy). Within the DPI lives the Human Rights Defenders Project, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, whose goal is to positively influence the lives of people with disabilities in five countries of focus: Bangladesh, Jamaica,
Peru, Tanzania and Ukraine. The Human Rights Defenders Project is composed of four main components, being

1. Institutional strengthening of five national member organizations to monitor the Convention

2. Development and use of educational material to assist with the monitoring of the Convention

3. Publications, promotion and networking related to the rights of disabled people and


There are endless other non-profit, non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations with clauses much like this one. Almost all international organizations exist for the advocacy of people with disabilities in developing countries. Many are geared towards stigma and the eradication of it, such as the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal. The NFDN is a non-profit, non-government organization composed entirely of people with disabilities. It has been the leading disability movement in Nepal since 1993 and works to ensure a dignified life for people with disabilities by “emphasizing social inclusion, mainstreaming, and opportunity equalization” (Welcome to NFDN). The United Nations are involved in many projects, and revolve around many main themes that they follow and tackle in different countries. Several of these themes include mainstreaming disabilities, disability and women, mental health and development, development and human rights and millennium development goals (UN Enable).
The role of NGOs, IGOs and other organizations is to provide relief and exposure of human rights violations against people with disabilities, whether it is extreme physical neglect or stigma and attitude. They shine a positive light on the issue, showing what they are doing to help and how citizens themselves can help. Without these organizations, many issues within mental institutions unique to certain countries would not be exploited, and therefore less likely to be solved. Media and public knowledge of issues concerning mistreatment of people with disabilities have so far proven the most effective ways of tackling this issue. Through these organizations children and adults with disabilities all over the world have benefited, whether it be from receiving equipment or moral support.

Unfortunately, international organizations are not as successful in their attempts to end abusive situations in psychiatric hospitals. This is because these hospitals are run by the government, and since most international organizations do not come from within the government where there are issues, they can have little effect. Cases of this occur in much of Latin America and some parts of Asia. International organizations can only do so much, but in the end the final word is from the government, and almost never has a government been able to, or in some cases tried to eradicate the situation. Sometimes, however, the government will make some improvements or accommodations and stepping stones are made for further development.

International organizations as a whole have a very important role and may be key to solving this issue. When pressure is put on governments by various organizations, the injustices occurring in their country can no longer be ignored. Once addressed, the issues are no longer
invisible. This is a huge advancement for any issue because it grabs the interest of people who want to do something about it. Mistreatment of people with disabilities is an issue that needs to have strength in numbers, and much of that already exists in international organizations.

Canada’s Role

Mistreatment of people with disabilities is present everywhere. This includes developing and developed countries; however the extent of this mistreatment does vary. In Canada, stigma is a problem in some areas, and neglect within abusive homes occurs too. Canada has come a long way from where many developing countries are in regard to treatment of people with disabilities, but of course there are still many problems. Canada’s main problems include domestic abuse of people with disabilities, some perceptions of people with disabilities and judgmental attitudes towards them. Canada belongs to many international organizations in support of people with disabilities and disabilities awareness such as Disabled People’s International. Canada also has many national organizations devoted to the cause, for example Independent Living Canada.

Statistics show that people with a mental disability have experienced higher amounts of abuse than any other group in society in Canada. Bullying because of stigma or otherwise is a challenge faced by people with disabilities in Canada, but more violent abuse has also been recorded. Physical abuse often takes place within an unstable or unfit home; however there are few public stories as this abuse occurs to many people unnoticed by others and untold (Council of Canadians with Disabilities).
A survey conducted by Disabled Women’s Network of roughly 250 women showed that 40% of the participants had been raped, abused or assaulted. Many people with disabilities in Canada are shown this disrespect and subject to abuse from several different aspects of their lives. Abuse can come verbally or physically, occurs through ostracism and rumor spreading and all types are seen in Canada (Harm and Abuse). Much verbal and social abuse comes from children bullying in or outside of school.

Bullying in Canada’s schools is very prevalent, and much is aimed towards children with disabilities. Bullying can lead to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. It can cause loneliness, trouble sleeping and headaches, a drop in academics and drops in class attendance. It negatively affects the lives of victims for a very long time and in extreme cases, can lead to suicidal thoughts or actions (McMaster University). Many people experience bullying at some time in their lives, however people with disabilities, particularly invisible disabilities, tend to be more susceptible to bullying. Some of these invisible disabilities include Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) or Specific Language Impairment (SLI). DCD is a movement disorder that affects motor skills. These children are targeted due to poor coordination; they may appear to be clumsy and awkward. Often due to lack of possibility for physical activity, children with DCD may be overweight and bullied because of this as well (McMaster University). Children with SLI have difficulty learning spoken language at the same rate as their peers, though they have average intelligence and no other neurological reasoning for the disability. These children have problems putting words together, understanding or telling stories, and understanding directions (McMaster University). Children with SLI can be targeted as being incompetent or stupid due to their disability. According to a study at the University of
Edinburg, bullying is the main reason the children with disabilities move from inclusive schooling to schools special to their needs (AEBC: Disabled Children). This occurs often and is a step backwards from integration and cohesion within schools; however many times children and parents do not feel as if they have a choice.

Persons with disabilities in Canada face levels of poverty that are almost double of what a person without disabilities faces. Employment and institutionalization are all problems that people with disabilities in Canada face as well. People who have disabilities are one of the most underrepresented groups in the workforce in Canada. Institutionalization is still present in Canada, and fortunately these institutions have good living conditions. There is little if any physical neglect or abuse, however the segregation from the rest of society is still a problem. 10,000 people are still in institutions in Canada (Community Living). The hope of many organizations is that soon institutionalization will be completely absent from Canada and people with disabilities will all be fully integrated into society (CALC: Close Institutions).

There is much awareness and support behind each of these issues. Many organizations all over Canada raise money for help in all areas – employment, institutionalization, bullying including physical abuse and poverty. The Council of Canadians with Disabilities published a report that details how to make change and proceed with each of these issues. It states:

The focus for achieving [the full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities] will be joint work with emphasis on improving access to and funding for disability supports and services and for income supports for persons with disabilities, at the same time working
to build public awareness and stakeholder and government support to address the challenges facing people with disabilities (Council of Canadians with Disabilities).

There has been much improvement over the past few years, but of course these issues still exist to some extent. The government is working hard to resolve issues surrounding people with disabilities, including running campaigns that test stigmas and perceptions of people with disabilities (Independent Living Canada). The main difference between Canadian mistreatment of people with disabilities and mistreatment of people with disabilities in developing nations is the compliance of the government. This coupled with differences in economy make these issues, though rooted in common places are much different.

Canada also plays a role in combating the mistreatment of people with disabilities internationally. It is involved in many international organizations, including Inclusion International and Disabled Peoples International (Independent Living Canada). Canada also researches and publishes books for Disability Rights Promotion International (DRPI). All of these organizations work towards the betterment of lifestyle for people with disabilities particularly in developing countries (Independent Living Canada). Canada, although involved in the international scene of this issue, is also very nation-oriented. There are thousands of national organizations created to diffuse stigma and increase awareness and knowledge of disabilities in Canada (Arch Disability Law Center). Some of these include the Canadian Association for Community Living, the Canadian Down Syndrome Society, and many others. These range from organizations specifically for the blind or deaf to blanket organizations that cover all disabilities mental and physical.
Canada’s role in mistreatment of people with disabilities is to set an example to other countries about just how much things can change, and that though there are still problems, the government shows through practice an inclusive and integrated society. This is something Canada has not fully accomplished yet, however, is not far ahead.

**Solutions**

For the purposes of this section three separate solutions will be provided with an explanation, pros and cons, whether or not it has been tried before and if so whether or not it was successful and why it would be successful this time, as well as how it will help and change the issue. Three solutions for the issue of mistreatment of people with disabilities are awareness through organizations, education on disabilities, and pressuring governments to change the situations within their countries. Each of these solutions if demonstrated would provide a lack of stigma and overall betterment of life quality for people living with disabilities all over the world.

**Solution 1: Awareness through Organizations**

Awareness through NGOs, IGOs and non-profit organizations is a key solution to the mistreatment of people with disabilities. Through awareness, issues and cases pertaining to particular countries are unveiled. By making an issue public, and allowing the public to react to that issue is extremely significant if not crucial to solving a global issue. Without awareness, there can be no money raised, aid given, or anything else of the like that are the cornerstones of progress. The positives of this solution are plain. Through awareness, the issue is drawn to
the attention of the public and when the attention of the public is had, opportunity for strength in numbers is achieved. The more people that know about an issue, who care about it, the better the chances are of it becoming solved.

There are a few cons to this approach. First, most of the projects that are done by international organizations through awareness are small and local projects. It is not unproductive to start with small and local areas; however this means that the solution of awareness would take a very long time to turn into a final effective product. If such a global awareness project were to take place that it touched nearly every country that could make a difference to the situation financially the results may be different than what has been seen in the past. The key to avoiding this downside is to make the awareness too widespread that it simply cannot be ignored. Another possible repercussion regarding this solution is the matter of where to put people once mental institutions are closed, or what to do about the education system if full integration is achieved. These matters would have to be solved by the government itself. Instead of mental hospitals the government could move into community care, where people within their own society help out and live with people with disabilities. This would be another hurdle for the government and if not executed properly could leave people in a worse state than before. Education systems would have to be completely re-arranged to incorporate special needs classes, and teachers will have to receive special training in order to teach these classes. The presents further complications for the government.

Awareness through international organizations has been and is currently being executed through the world. Various projects of Disability Rights International have been published
online with graphic and exploitive pictures and articles about mental institutions in Mexico, Peru, Serbia, Kosovo, Romania and others (Disability Rights International). Possibly the most well received awareness campaign was that of mental institutions in Serbia. A news reporter and crew flew to Serbia and filmed disturbing footage of the reality of Serbia’s mental institutions, screening their findings online and on television on a popular show, “The Today Show” (Dark Side of Serbian Mental Institutions). Publicity for this issue continued to expand, and currently there is an advocacy movement within Serbia itself for the rights of people with disabilities. It promotes citizen participation and local awareness, and is targeting the rights of those who are currently most in danger living in the mental hospitals of Serbia (DRI: Initiative Serbia). It is the most successful case of solution by awareness, and though little improvements to the situation in mental hospitals have occurred, having advocacy within Serbia itself is a building block to confronting the government about these issues.

To make awareness happen it is necessary for international organizations to continue on the paths they have already started. Campaigns need to be made to educate people everywhere on the issue and to create a domino effect of awareness. Once campaigns are happening from different international organizations at once in various places, more people will have the opportunity to become involved in the process. Awareness would eventually become so widespread that the government would have to be confronted and pressured into rectifying the issue.
Solution 2: Education about Disabilities

Much of the stigma surrounding people with disabilities in many places of the world stems from lack of knowledge. People fear what they do not understand and so make judgments and create a perception that in most cases is not true. Without education about what disabilities are, how they come to exist or how each disability affects the life of the person who has it, people cannot sympathize nor detach the stigma from the person underneath. Since stigma is one of the main causes for neglect and mistreatment of people with disabilities, education is a viable solution to this issue.

Several cons to this solution would be the variable of just how many people within these societies would follow and bother to learn about disabilities. Since many cultures may not be open to this idea, the solution would take time to take effect. The only way to have this solution succeed would be to make sure there is understanding of people with disabilities through knowledge. Scientific facts would be presented, but there is no way to guarantee that the attitudes towards people with disabilities will change in all societies.

To implement education about people with disabilities learning would occur at school. With a small unit about children with disabilities for other children, there is an opportunity for new perspectives to be seen. Education would also have to occur outside of school. Billboards on the street, newspaper articles to the public would present facts such as the fact that autism is a disorder of brain development occurring before birth or that people with a certain type of autism contain an extra X chromosome (University of Florida). With educational facts in less
knowledgeable areas of the world, it is possible to lift the stigma that is the cause of so many problems for people with disabilities.

Education about disabilities in developing nations has been attempted before. Small organizations with campaigns much like the previously mentioned Rose International Fund for Children. There have been campaigns run with similar billboards supporting rights of people with disabilities. This solution is different from supporting rights – it is attempting to bring a new perspective to people in nations where little is known about disabilities. In some cases, this solution has not been attempted before due to governmental reasons. The government ultimately controls what is taught in their own schools. Even with the funding of international organizations, it is extremely difficult to make that kind of impact on a country without permission from the government. In places like Ghana in the case of Doris Apiah, however, people themselves can spread the knowledge and education. Community outreach programs have also been successful in educating people about disabilities, however a more large scale approach is needed.

To make this solution happen, it is necessary that the governments of countries where education is needed comply with the requests of powerful groups such as the United Nations. Without the government to implement the education into the country, there is no way for the solution to work. This is the biggest obstacle in the way of this solution. The final word is in the hands of the government, and if they do not want to follow through with the solution because of financial, economic or political reasons, there is no choice but to conform to their wishes.
If education is put in place in countries that need it and it was accepted, it would be extremely beneficial to people with disabilities in these nations. It would help to end stigma over a long time period, thus increasing the respect for and better treatment of people with disabilities.

Solution 3: Pressure Governments

Governments are the controlling factor in almost every issue concerning people with disabilities. In several cases, governments have laws against discrimination and have rights for people with disabilities set in place, however choose not to show this in practice (Futures Stolen). When governments do not follow through with their laws, the laws are not monitored or enforced properly. There is little knowledge at times that laws and rights protecting those with disabilities even exist, and so people are denied their rights without knowing. This is unjust and if rectified would change many things in many countries. It would improve the quality of education given to people with disabilities, and end many of the dehumanizing institutions. Confronting the government with research, strength in numbers, and solid facts leaves them with no other choice than to address these issues. International organizations play a large role in making this solution happen. With the support of powerful organizations such as Disability Rights International and the United Nations, challenging the government’s actions versus their theories and laws would be achievable.

Pressuring the governments to take action about the issues they have at hand would be highly beneficial to people with disabilities in these countries. The government would be confronted by numerous organizations that would maintain pressure until immediate actions
were taken to save and protect the lives of citizens within their country. This is a rather drastic approach, but has possibility of being highly effective. Already the Serbian government has been briefly confronted about the conditions within their mental hospitals, and has noted that it will take a long time with much process to end these unlivable conditions (Dark Side of Serbian Mental Institutions). With more pressure from multiple organizations at once to speed the rate of change or to at least implement temporary solutions, the government could be more inclined to do so.

Possible negatives and problems to this solution are that the governments will follow through with their laws and/or implement new laws that protect the people and change the conditions in which they live but only until the pressure is gone. Afterwards, if the government does not find the new system is functioning well, they could put things back to what they were prior. Also, if the new system started to fall back into the old, there would be little to be done. To avoid this repercussion organizations would have to continue monitoring and checking up on governments that have these issues. Another problem is the very likely possibility that the government cannot supply the money and expertise to comply to the pressure. To solve this, organizations would need to provide constructive aid to the country. To do this, much more planning and organizing is involved, but if done properly the aid would provide a basis for the country to build up from. This would eventually lead to the betterment of living for people with disabilities in developing countries.

To make this solution happen, the compliance of numerous powerful international organizations would be needed. This would not be very difficult as there are already a few
influential organizations involved in this issue. With the unity of many organizations that continue to travel, expose, and confront the government at once, this solution would be possible. This solution has not been attempted before but is in the unorganized process of being half-attempted currently. The difference between what is happening now and the solution being proposed is communication. Organizations must band together and schedule when each will monitor and where for this solution to be successful. They must be tactful in their approach, but maintain pressure so that the governments have no choice but to assess the situation and validate their position.

**Conclusion**

The mistreatment of people with disabilities is a global issue that has existed for centuries. It affects many people without disabilities through stigma, and affects the way people with disabilities live. Since people with disabilities live all over the world, no area is exempt from some form of mistreatment. Be it physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect, mistreatment of people with disabilities is everywhere. Many cases are found in developing nations such as Paraguay, Ghana, and Nepal. The situations in these countries range from cultural stigma stemmed from religious beliefs to forcing people to live in inhumane conditions against their will. There are steps being taken towards a brighter future for people with disabilities in developing nations, through the help of many volunteers and organizations. International organizations contribute greatly to publicize this issue and inform others about the atrocities taking place. More awareness is a key step in the process of finding a solution. Governments and the economy remain in power, but by pressuring governments further
progress can be made. Education among people who have little knowledge about disabilities is also very important. This issue will not be solved until there is a drastic change in actions from governments. The best place that any person can start at in solving this issue, however, is awareness. People should be knowledgeable about what is happening in the world and what they can do about it. Shining a light on this mistreatment is the first step in moving forward to a brighter future for people with disabilities.
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Appendices

Appendix A
Appendix B