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Rattan and Bamboo: Equipment for Physically
Handicapped Children

by: J.K. Hutt

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RATTAN AND BAMBOO

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Equipment for Physically Handicapped
Children designed by J. K. Hutt, while
physiotherapist for the Spastic Children's
Association in Johore, West Malaysia.

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INTRODUCTION

In September 1976 the National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases with generous assistance from the Commonwealth Foundation and with the support of the Ministry of Overseas Development, mounted a symposium on appropriate technology for the disabled in developing countries. This symposium was held at Oriel College, Oxford, and, as I said in an introduction to the proceedings: "That the meeting was successful is beyond doubt. Letters received from the participants after they had dispersed went far beyond the normal courtesies and made the value of the meeting extremely clear."

A peripheral contribution to the symposium was a display by Miss J. K. Hutt, as she then was, of rattan and bamboo aids for physically handicapped children. This equipment was made locally to Miss Hutt's designs when she was working as physiotherapist for the Spastic Children's Association in Johore, West Malaysia. Miss Hutt had been led to pioneer the local manufacture of such aids by the cost of imported equipment. The imported equipment was in any case usually unsuited to the build of local inhabitants and their way of life. For instance, the custom is to sit either on the floor or on much lower seats than those used in the West and to use squat toilets so that walking aids needed to be designed to enable the user to reach a standing position easily from a sitting position on the floor. Rattan is available locally and well-established rattan workshops exist in all large towns. Repairs can be carried out at any small village cane shop. Good quality cane also withstands the changes of a tropical climate, is cheaper than wood or metal, is more pliable and when heated can be moulded into almost any shape which it then retains. The woven network used for seats and backs of chairs etc. allows the air to circulate and thus reduces perspiration and subsequent heat rash.

DSU was fortunate in obtaining the working drawings for this equipment and in response to requests from as far away as Jamaica and Mexico has now been able to reproduce them for publication in a single volume. We believe that these designs will be of use in many countries, even if the materials available locally are not identical with those of Malaysia.

Our greatest debt of gratitude is of course to Miss Hutt herself, but we should also like to thank those who worked with her, those who were responsible for the excellent drawings and, may I add, those for whom the equipment was first made and who almost certainly did not realise that they were acting as guinea-pigs in appropriate technology. Finally we thank the National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases for sponsoring the original meeting and for welcome co-operation thereafter.

Amberley,
West Sussex.

DUNCAN GUTHRIE
July, 1979

























