Access to and provision of pre-primary and primary education to children with disabilities in Tanzania

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DPO mentoring project, Dar es Salaam

ABSTRACT

An action research project conducted by persons with disabilities in Tanzania

THE KESHO TRUST (Tz)

Access to and provision of pre-primary and primary education to children with disabilities in Tanzania

Data collected by:
Action researchers from DPOs in Hai, Moshi, Morogoro and Kilombero

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Abbreviations

ACT	Accountability in Tanzania
BEST	Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania
CCBRT	Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania
CHAVITA	Tanzania Association of the Deaf
CHAWATA	Tanzania Association of the Disabled
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DC	District Commissioner
DED	District Executive Director
DFID	Department for International Development (UKAid)
DPO	Disabled People's Organisation
DSC	District Steering Committee
DSEN	District Special Education Needs Co-ordinator
DSWO	District Social Welfare Officer
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOEVT	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
NSC	National Steering Committee
PEDP	Primary Education Development Program
SHIVYAWATA	Federation of Disabled People's Organisations in Tanzania
TAMH	Tanzania Association for Mentally Handicapped
TAS	Tanzania Albino Society
TASLI	Tanzania Association of Sign Language Interpreters
TLB	Tanzania League of the Blind

Introduction

This action research and its findings provide an overview of the situation facing children with disabilities in accessing pre-primary and primary education in Hai; Moshi urban; Morogoro urban and Kilombero districts of Tanzania.

This research was one of the main activities of the DPO Mentoring project, funded through DFIDs Accountability in Tanzania Program, which was jointly implemented by five DPOs: Tanzania Association of the Deaf (CHAVITA), Tanzania Association of the Disabled (CHAWATA), Tanzania League of the Blind (TLB), Tanzania Association for the Mentally Handicapped (TAMH), Tanzania Albino Society (TAS) and the Federation of Disabled People's Organization (SHIVYAWATA).

The project aimed to build the capacity of local persons with disabilities to carry out research as part of local advocacy. Action research methodology was chosen because it enabled data to be collected from a traditionally marginalized and difficult to reach group as well as providing opportunities for awareness raising and challenges to prejudice and stigma.

Since this research was covering different districts and researchers with a diversity of experiences, the research problem was developed through discussion and negotiation to find a subject which was considered to be significant enough to all communities. Through this process the research topic which was collectively adopted was: ***"Access to and provision of pre-primary and primary education to children with disabilities".***

All the researchers were people with disabilities who lived within the communities they studied.

Education and children with disabilities

The Education For All Global Monitoring Report, 2007, estimates that the majority of children with disabilities in Africa do not go to school. Of the 72 million primary aged children worldwide that are out of school, one third have disabilities (UNESCO, 2007).

The 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Report noted a strong link between disability and marginalisation in education. Despite overall increases in school participation over the past decade, children with disabilities continue to be left behind. In Africa alone, fewer than 10% of disabled children are in school. Other surveys suggest that disability has a greater impact on access to education than gender, household economic status or rural/urban divide (Filmer D. 2005).

Education for children with disabilities is essential for the alleviation of poverty and sustainable development. The impact of keeping children with disabilities at home and economically inactive, denying them education, as well as impacting family members who are unable to work due to caring responsibilities, all contribute significantly to the impoverishment of persons with disabilities, their families and their communities.

Children with disability in Tanzania represent a significant but largely invisible population. According to the 2011 report on Adolescence in Tanzania by UNICEF, about 0.5% of all children enrolled in primary school were children with disabilities. In secondary schools, 0.2% of boys and 0.4% of girls had disabilities. These percentages are extremely low when compared with the estimated 7.8% of Tanzania's population with disabilities (UNICEF, 2011).

The National policy on disability in Tanzania (2004) recognized the importance of education as key to developing the potential of children with disabilities and does suggest they should be given priority. It also acknowledges that the education system in Tanzania is largely inaccessible to children with disabilities. Despite this, as this research will show, there are still considerable barriers to education for children with disabilities in Tanzania and their educational needs have yet to be made a priority.

Since children make up over half the country's population, investing in their well-being represents an important long-term investment. A well educated population will be instrumental in securing economic, social and political stability and should raise the quality of life and reduce vulnerability for all of Tanzania. The question of access and availability of education to children with disability however is of particular importance since ensuring children with disabilities can succeed in education is not just an important human rights issue, but a way in which to ensure they can contribute to economic growth as adults.

SECTION 1 The Action Research Process

1.1   Goals of the action research

The research aimed to identifying barriers to and the provision of pre-primary and primary education to children with disabilities in the selected four districts of Morogoro urban, Kilombero, Hai and Moshi urban. It aimed specifically to:

- Assess the number of children with disabilities currently accessing pre-primary and primary education;

- Assess the enrolment trends in pre-primary and primary education for children with disabilities;

- Identify the academic performances of children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary education;

- Examine the status of teaching aids/ facilities for children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary education; and

- Explore the level of government support for children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary education.

1.2 Research questions

The specific research questions addressed were:

- What are the barriers / challenges in accessing pre-primary and primary schools for children with disabilities?

- What is the enrolment situation like for children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary schools?

- What is the academic performance level of children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary schools?

- Are there any aids or facilities to support children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary schools?

- Does the government provide capitation grants for students with disabilities in primary schools?

- Is the number of special education teachers sufficient for pre-primary and primary education needs?

- What solutions are recommended to reduce the barriers and challenges faced by children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary education?
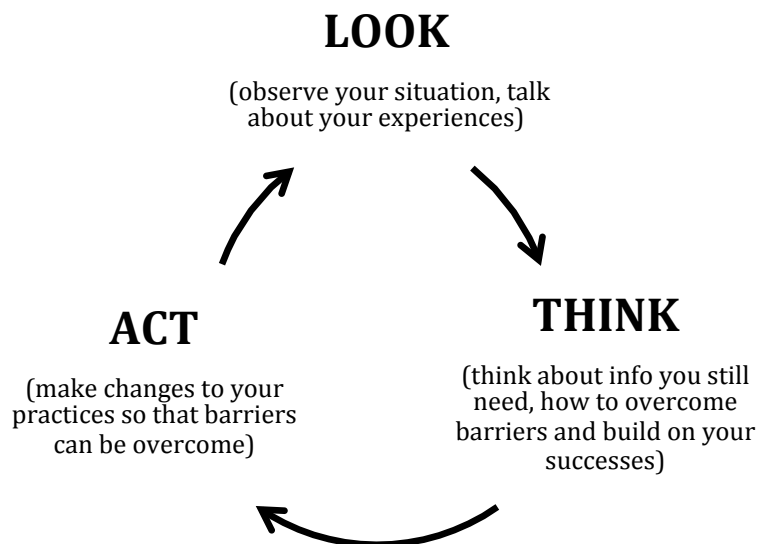
1.3 Description of the method

With reference to the training undertaken before the research process, action research was defined as 'A research/study done within the community by the members of the community themselves by systematically and carefully identifying the problem and finding ways to address it.' (Msigallah F. & Mwaisongole P. 2012, p.1)

A key principle in conducting action research is that there is a sense of ownership of the process so that any changes that result can be acted on. This method is especially useful in addressing power and powerlessness. It challenges the fact that the most powerful sections of society have control over the definitions and use of knowledge. Knowledge is a significant instrument of power and control; action research produces knowledge and actions which are useful to a group of people and empowers them through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge. This is one of the main principles of action research: that the people experiencing the problems are the ones who will be carrying out the research and developing the knowledge. It is the analysis of an experience which transforms that experience into knowledge and which provides the confidence to use that knowledge (Lintner N. & Issa M. 2012, p.6)

1.4 Starting the action research cycle

When embarking on an action research project and before introducing changes into their practice, it is important for the stakeholders to find out about and think about their existing experiences. It is also important to consider the particular culture and history of their situation. This helps researchers to determine what kind of information needs to be collected and recorded for analysis. In order for the action

research cycle to be completed, the looking and thinking should lead to action (Lintner N. & Issa M. 2012, p.6).

<div align="center">

LOOK

(observe your situation, talk
about your experiences)

</div>

ACT

(make changes to your
practices so that barriers
can be overcome)

THINK

(think about info you still
need, how to overcome
barriers and build on your
successes)

All researchers had to demonstrate a good understanding of the rights based perspective on disability and were familiar with the provisions contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This ensured that during the initial phase, action researchers could have detailed discussions on the barriers encountered by persons with disabilities in Tanzania and what experiences they had in dealing with these issues. Table 1 below presents the researchers initial experiences.

Table 1: Understanding and experience of the participants in protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in their local areas[i]

Rights of persons with disabilities identified	Experiences of the participants in promoting rights of persons with disabilities	Barriers in demanding and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities
• Right to life; • Right to accessible transport; • Right to employment; • Right to have a family; • Right to freedom of association; • Right to be protected; • Right to participate in decision making; • Right to own property; • Right to be respected; • Right to information; • Right to participate in politics.	• Educating people on the rights of people with disabilities in churches, mosques, public meetings and seminars; • Conducting awareness raising seminars to health workers, police, teachers and journalists; • Preparation and distribution of leaflets on disability and the rights of persons with disabilities; • Visiting families of children with disabilities and talking with them about disability and the rights of persons with disabilities; • Organizing meetings in schools to educate students without disabilities on disability issues and the rights of children with disabilities; • Using songs and drama to educate community members on disability.	• Low level of awareness in the community on disability issues and the rights of persons with disabilities; • Poor implementation of disability related policies, laws and directives which result in rights not being realized and needs not being met; • Lack of financial resources for provision of disability-related services and for awareness raising on disability issues; • Resources from the central level not reaching the targeted persons with disabilities at local level; • Lack of friendly or appropriate means of communication particularly for people with visual impairments and Deaf people.

The experiences summarized in the table above provide an insight into some of the more common issues people with disabilities face in Tanzania. It also shows that researchers had a good understanding of twelve of the twenty five substantive articles in the CRPD and were already using it as the basis for advocacy work. These initial discussions also showed that many of the researchers already had some experiences in carrying out advocacy activities. This gave the project confidence that this group of researchers could work competently and produce a good set of results.

1.5   Developing the action research

In preparation for the study, a three-day training course was organized in each district in the period from 13th January to 8th March 2012. The training was facilitated by Mr Fredrick Msigallah and Ms Pangrassy Mwaisongole from CCBRT. Ten persons with disabilities from each of the four districts were trained providing the research process with forty action researchers in total. Through sharing experiences, they developed the research topic, settled their objectives and decided on a range of tools to help them collect the required data.

The designed tools included:

a) questionnaires directed at teachers, children with disabilities and local government leaders in the specified locations;
b) interview guides for parents of children with disabilities attending school;
c) focus group discussion guides for children with disabilities who were not attending school;
d) focus group discussion guides for parents and their children with disabilities; and
e) an observation tool to identify environmental barriers in primary schools.

All the techniques used in the action research were designed to ensure they brought enough information for the research questions in a non-biased manner.

1.6   Fieldwork

The field research exercise was conducted between 11th and 19th April 2012, and targeted three to four Wards in each district as presented in the table below.

Table 2: Wards selected for action research in the four districts

District	Ward
Moshi urban	Rau/ Mfumuni
	Majengo/ Mjimpya
	Shirimatunda
	Njoro
	Msaranga
Hai	Machame kaskazini
	Masama mashariki
	Hai mjini
Kilombero	Ifakara
	Kibaoni
	Lumemo
Morogoro Urban	Chamwino
	Kichangani
	Kilakala

SECTION 2 Results

2.1   What is the current prevalence rate and profile of children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary education?

Before tackling some of the most searching questions in this research, the study wanted to establish a clear picture on the prevalence rate of children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary schools. Findings revealed that children with disabilities represented 3.2% of all pupils attending the primary schools surveyed in the four districts. Gender has a significant influence on school attendance; girls with disabilities composed 42.2% of all children with disabilities in school compared to 57.8% boys.

In the pre-primary education sector children with disabilities comprised just 1.8% of all pupils enrolled in the schools surveyed. This is despite the fact that 84.2% of primary schools included in the study reported having pre-primary classes.

The research was able to identify what types of impairments were present for those children with disabilities who were enrolled in pre-primary and primary schools. Findings identified that children with intellectual impairments were the most prominent comprising 47.7% of all pupils with disabilities. This was followed by deaf children at 19.9%, visually impaired children at 16.1%, physically impaired children at 9.9%, albino children at 4.4% and pupils with multiple impairments at 2.2%.

The table below illustrates that this distribution is not fully consistent with national data on rates of impairments, with children with intellectual impairments significantly over-represented and children with visual and physical impairments seemingly under-represented.

Table 3   **Enrolment in schools by impairment type**

Impairment	Percentage of those attending pre and primary schools	Percentage of impairments represented at national level [ii]
Intellectual impairments	47.7%	8%
Deaf	19.9%	20%
Visually impaired	16.1%	27%
Physically impaired	9.9%	28%
Albino	4.4%	
Multiple impairments	2.2%	4%
Others	0	13%

It has to be recognized that the national statistics are an average across all age groups. Many impairments occur in adulthood or are not detected during childhood. Nevertheless the disparity between the two sets of data does indicate some children with disabilities are more likely to be enrolled than others.

It is suggested in part that the high representation of children with intellectual impairments could be due to the fact that they face fewer environmental barriers and are not affected by age limitations which restrict when most children are eligible for enrolment. Anecdotal evidence suggests that children with disabilities are often considerably older than their peers when they are first presented for enrolment, and are refused entry on the grounds of being over-age.

In fact one of the additional results from this research was to highlight that children with disabilities tend to be much older than their peers in the classroom. Findings obtained from this action research showed that children with disabilities enrolled in school ranged from 5 years to 25 years old.

The most prominent age group was the one ranging from 16 – 20 years which composed of 52.8% of all reported children with disabilities, and the least prominent was those ranging from 5 to 15 years (20.6%).

The higher than average age of children with disabilities in school is likely to be the result of a combination of factors such as overprotection from parents; initial rejection from teachers and the need to persist in getting school places; high levels of discrimination from society which prevents parents from pursuing education for children with disabilities and the higher chance that these children will be bullied; and late cognitive development of children with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual impairments.

2.2   What are the main barriers / challenges towards accessing pre-primary and primary school for children with disabilities?

Data on the barriers in accessing pre-primary and primary schools for children with disabilities were obtained from several respondent groups including: *school teachers, local government leaders, parents of children with disabilities in school, parents of children with disabilities who have missed school, children with disabilities who missed school and students with disabilities.*

Respondents replied on three big challenges that children with disabilities face in accessing pre-primary and primary schools: environmental barriers, attitudinal barriers and institutional barriers (listed below in descending order of importance).

Chart.1: Barriers/ challenges facing children with disabilities in accessing pre-primary and primary education.
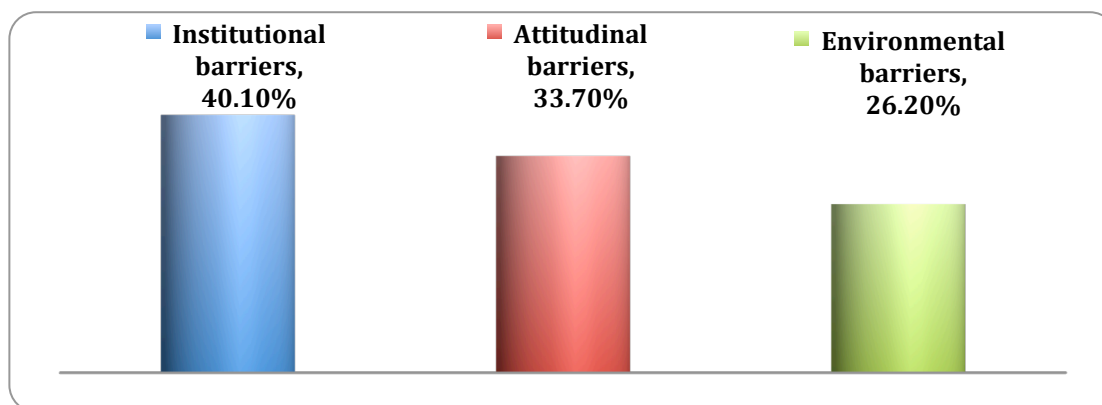
Institutional barriers were reported as being the most pressing challenge facing children with disabilities. Institutional barriers are those that are rooted in policies, practices and cultural norms. This study found many of these barriers were due in particular to a lack of attention by government to understanding what the practical implications are for disability inclusive education. The barriers highlighted include:

- An absence of the skills needed to teach children with disabilities;

"no communication among deaf pupils and teachers"
"teachers leave us behind in the class"
"no good relationship between teachers and disabled students,"
"we don't understand when teachers are teaching"

- An absence of / few special units in schools and pre-primary classes for students with disabilities;

- An absence of / few special schools for children with disabilities;

"parents have not been able to find a special school for his/her disability type"
"children with disabilities are not selected to join special schools"

- An absence of supportive aids / facilities in schools;

"teaching aid facilities are few, they are not available"

- The poverty facing families of children with disabilities;

"no food at school,"
"no daily subsistence allowance at school"

- The lack of specific government support;

"absence of funds for children with disabilities"
"government is not disbursing capitation grants for children with disabilities"
"government does not recognize the presence of disabled students in pre and primary schools"

- A lack of security;

"schools do not have enough security so children get lost,"
"no school fence,"
"my child is an albino, he could be killed"

- A lack of awareness about disability issues particularly on the rights of children with disabilities in families;

- The absence of health services for children with disabilities at school;

"the child gets sick from time to time"
"we get physical pain"

- No extra time for teaching children with disabilities;

"we do not get extra help to cope with all the children in the class"

Attitudinal barriers was the second most pressing challenge facing children with disabilities while trying to access pre-primary and primary school. Attitudinal barriers stem from negative myths and beliefs about the causes of impairments and the capabilities that persons with disabilities have. It often leads to high levels of stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities as well as low expectations of their capabilities which is particularly relevant to children with disabilities. This study found in particular:

- A lack of parental support for education of children with disabilities;

"parents neglect children with disabilities,"

"parents do not believe children with disabilities can attend and perform at school,"

"parents think their children are causing problems at school"

- Parents feel ashamed of their children;

"some parents lock their children inside instead of taking them to school,"

"parents do not accept the situation of their children"

- Discrimination from the community;

"the community despise us, they see us as useless,"

"most community members think children with disabilities cannot study with non-disabled students because they can't understand in class,"

"they are ignored"

- Discrimination and maltreatment from non-disabled students at school;

"they call us bad names,"

"they see us as dirty,"

"they steal our stuff"

- Discrimination and maltreatment from teachers at school;

"teachers punish us without considering our disability,"

"teachers leave us behind in the class, they discriminate us in the class,"

- A lack of parental support to children with disabilities. This happens when partners withdraw support after giving birth to disabled child;

"parents neglect their children with disabilities, specifically mothers, after being neglected by their husbands, they are ashamed of their children,"

"parents give up on their children (with disabilities)"

- Negative traditional beliefs among the community about disability. The persistence of the idea that disability is caused by witchcraft or bad lack.

- Lack of awareness about the rights of persons with disability.

"we have never heard of the Disability Act 2010,"

Environmental barriers was the third overall most common barrier cited as a reason for children with disabilities failing to access schools. However, this was the one barrier which children with disabilities mentioned the most. It refers in particular to barriers in the built environment but also covers lack of access to communication and information. The most common comments were:
- Poor infrastructure:

"the special unit is not accessible, there are a lot of steps and very narrow doors "
- Distance from home to school:

"there is a long distance from home to school"
- An absence of supportive facilities such as wheelchairs/ tricycles.

- An unfriendly physical environment for students with disabilities:

"presence of open pits, large stones, and mud around school compound,"

"dirty toilets (meaning the child has to crawl through excrement)"

2.2.1 Discussion - barriers to education

It was particularly surprising that the research identified institutional barriers as being the most common issue cited for reducing access to education for children with disabilities rather than attitudinal barriers. To an extent, urban centres like Moshi and Morogoro are more likely to be disability aware since a lot of targeted awareness raising has tended to focus on urban areas. However it is encouraging to see that even in remote districts such as Hai and Kilombero where people have limited awareness of disability issues, their attitudes were not the main barrier to inclusion.

Most DPOs focus on attitudes and awareness raising when they advocate for inclusion yet this report suggests they could improve their effectiveness by identifying specific policies or practices which are preventing inclusion and targeting their campaigns on the actions of decision-makers.

It was clear that there has been a lack of attention paid to the specific educational needs of children with disabilities with their education being seen as low priority by government. This has led to an under-investment in skills and resources which leaves many schools unable to effectively respond to the needs of their disabled learners. Parents, communities and teachers are not putting pressure on the system to improve its treatment of children with disabilities largely it seems because expectations of their ability to succeed is so low.

It was interesting to note the overwhelming response from those surveyed was that children with disabilities always required specialist teaching and were best off in special schools or units. The majority of the solutions proposed were linked to making specialist teachers and schools more readily available rather than looking at how to create more inclusive local mainstream schools. It also revealed that most stakeholders still regard the problem of disability to be one that rests with the child (or the impairment). So that solutions were more prominently related to mitigating impairments (rehabilitation, health care, specialist facilities) or providing specialist services (special units/schools, special needs teachers). Considerably more awareness raising and support is needed on the role mainstream schools and teachers have in adapting to the needs of their students with disabilities.

The research also revealed that negative attitudes towards children with disabilities however are still widespread and damaging. It was especially significant to find that teachers are amongst those who openly discriminate against children with disabilities. People in positions of authority such as this are important role models for communities and if their attitude and behaviour demonstrates that it is acceptable to treat children with disabilities with disrespect then others will follow.

Clearly, DPOs need to work very hard on sensitizing this important sector of the community if their awareness raising and advocacy efforts are to be more successful. The least surprising results were that environmental barriers continue to prevent children with disabilities from accessing schools. Much more needs to be done on securing universal design standards for the construction of schools. A greater involvement by local government and the community is needed and DPOs would be well advised to look for ways to highlight how environments can be made more accessible.

2.3   What is the enrolment situation like for children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary schools?

As well as looking at the barriers facing children with disabilities in accessing pre-primary and primary schools in the study area, action researchers also assessed the enrolment situation of children with disabilities in those schools. The findings for this research question were obtained by checking school enrolment data for three years starting from 2009 to 2011. Results showed that the enrolment rate for children with disabilities in these schools increased by 12.5% between 2009 and 2011 (11.9% in 2010 and 0.6% in 2011).

One point to note is that overall enrolment for girls with disabilities has gone up recently. In 2011 girls with disabilities comprised 50.2% of all enrolled children with disabilities. In previous years boys had consistently outnumbered girls (girls 44.4% and boys 55.6% in 2009, and girls 44.3% and boys 55.7% in 2010). This is an interesting improvement although there is still some considerable way to go in redressing the long standing discrimination women with disabilities have experienced in accessing education.

Action researchers also tried to investigate the main reason behind not enrolling children with disabilities of school going age in schools. Several reasons were reported including:
- Absence of special teachers and supportive facilities;
- Negative attitudes from within communities towards children with disabilities. Communities assuming the children will not succeed which discourages both the parents and children from pursuing education. Many parents also fear that their children will be badly treated by community members and try to protect them by keeping them at home;
- Impairment status. Children with multiple disabilities have significantly less chances of being enrolled. With the lack of supportive teaching aids, special education teachers, poor infrastructure and all the other previously cited barriers, children with multiple impairments face greater challenges to enrolment;
- Lack of government commitment. There is little emphasis placed on the need for educating children with disabilities;
- An unfriendly physical environment or poor infrastructure;

- The socio-economic status of the parents. Many are very poor and they also lack awareness of the rights of children with disabilities and their rights as parents. This means parents are often quick to give up sending their children to school;
- Late entry. The research data suggested that children with disabilities are less likely to enroll in school at the appropriate age. This is because parents tend to keep their children at home for longer either to 'protect' them or through shame. The researchers found several examples of people with disabilities who were already adults being enrolled;
- The distance from home to school often prevents children with disabilities from attending because the journey is too difficult or takes too long.

2.3.1 Discussion - increasing enrolment

There are no definitive figures on the rates of enrolment by children with disabilities[iii]but the 2011 Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (BEST) suggest that only 3-5% of children with disabilities are in school.

The World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011) estimates that around 15% of people in any given population have a disability. In Tanzania it is hard to get an accurate picture of prevalence rates since disability has only recently been surveyed and the results are not yet available. However there are some local statistics, for example the Youth with Disabilities Community Project (2007), suggesting the percentage of children with disabilities is around 5% (lower than expected due to relatively high child mortality rates). According to the data used for Net Enrolment Rates by the MOEVT the total population of children age 7 – 13 years in 2007 was 7,271,198.

Using these estimations, the number of children with disabilities eligible for enrolment in Tanzania could be anything between 218,135 and 1,090,679. According to the MOEVT data, 34,661 children with disabilities attended primary schools in 2008, representing 3 – 16% of all children with disabilities depending on the baseline figure used for the number of children with disabilities. Findings from this research show that 1.7% of children enrolled in pre-primary and primary schools have an identifiable disability which is lower than might have been predicted.

This research found there has been an increase in reported enrolment of children with disabilities in primary schools locally over the past three years with a particular spike in 2010. There are a number of reasons for why this may have occurred including: a) awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities is spreading amongst communities, due in part to the activities of DPOs and NGOs; b) changes to legislation affecting the education of children with disabilities; and, c) the number of children with disabilities is increasing in line with a general increase in the population.

In 2010 the government introduced an Inclusive Education Strategy with a specific aim to increase the enrolment of children with disabilities in both specialist and mainstream schools. In addition, the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2010 part IV

specifies the right of education and training for person with disabilities. There has therefore been a positive change in the legislative environment which is more encouraging towards the education of children with disabilities. Given the findings of this review however it would seem these changes are yet to significantly impact on the enrolment of children with disabilities.

The increased number of children with disabilities in primary schools in 2010 also correlates to an increase in awareness specifically brought about by the tragic situation of albino killings which rose to prominence in Tanzania at this time. The killings acted as an eye-opener for various stakeholders including government, civil society organization, political parties and the mass media in observing, claiming, reporting and granting human rights to persons with disabilities. Though stakeholder's responses were largely passive, it could have contributed to an increase in educational access to children with disabilities for the year 2010 (11.9% increase). The fact this was followed in 2011 by a nominal increase of just 0.6% seems to suggest that the initial advantage gained from the increased media attention to disability has not been built on and that increased enrolment is not a general trend.

The reasons provided for school age children with disabilities not being enrolled were consistent with the barriers noted previously. This again reinforces the suggestion that although there was a significant increase in enrolment in 2010 this is not a trend resulting from reduced barriers. Significant and unknown numbers of children with disabilities are still not accessing education of any kind in Tanzania.

It was also interesting to note that poverty continues to be a factor in enrolment despite the fact the current education policy provides for free pre-primary and primary education. Clearly there are still costs involved in sending children to school and for poor parents especially, the need to see positive results from their investments is an important factor in whether they keep their child in school. For children with disabilities it seems the school environment is not providing them with the opportunity to succeed and as a result parents remain unconvinced the effort is worth it.

2.4   What is the performance level for children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary school?

Enrolling children with disabilities in schools is just one step toward attaining education but this does not necessarily mean they are receiving quality education. This assumption triggered the action researchers to assess the performance level of children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary schools. Actual exam data / test papers were not available to the researchers, instead they asked teachers to rank the performance of children with disabilities in their classes. Teachers reported:

Chart.2: Performance level for children with disabilities in pre primary and primary school
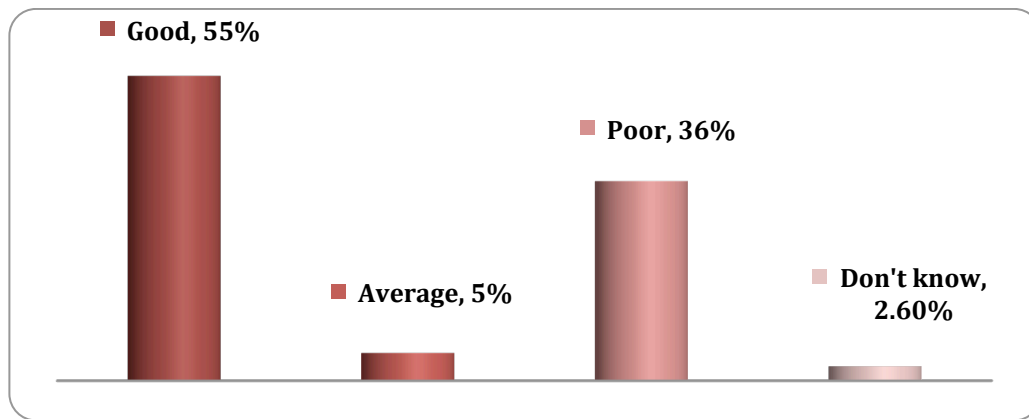
In searching for the reasons behind reported good performance, action researchers wanted to know what teachers felt was contributing to the good performance of their children with disabilities. Several reasons were mentioned including;

- Good behavioural practices such as regular attendance at school. Children with disabilities who regularly attend school are judged to perform better overall;

- Less severe impairments leading to greater independence. Enrolled children with disabilities who are not regarded as severely impaired, such as those who have low vision but can read and write; those who are physically disabled but can walk long distances, and/or have the ability to read and write independently, are all judged to perform better than those with more severe impairments;

- Inclusive learning environments. Children with disabilities who are enrolled in mainstream schools with non-disabled pupils are also judged as performing well when they integrate themselves into the classroom. This is also affected by severity of impairments with less severely impaired children more likely to be enrolled in mainstream classes in the first place.

Action researchers were also interested to know the reasons why teachers felt children with disabilities were not performing well. Several factors were mentioned including;

- Discrimination and maltreatment from non-disabled students at school;

- Discrimination and maltreatment from teachers at school;

- The absence of 'special care' for children with disabilities at the school. This included comments such as the absence of a special unit for children with disabilities at the school; the absence of special need teachers; and the absence of extra time for educating children with disabilities;

- Absence of health services for children with disabilities at the school;

- Inadequate supportive facilities such as a lack of teaching aids or specific materials to use with children with disabilities;

- Unsupportive parents. Teachers feeling they do not get enough support to understand the needs of the children from their parents; parents less likely to bring them to school or check their attendance records; parents less likely to provide them with school equipment etc.;

- The poverty of the families in which children with disabilities live. Children arriving at school hungry from having missed meals; arriving late or missing class altogether because of lack of money for transport to/from school; not having enough money to pay for the right equipment for the child to use at school.

- A general lack of government support. There is no recognition that children with disabilities often need additional materials or support in order to access the curriculum. The current capitation grant for children with disabilities was noted as being inadequate to cover the real costs of adjustments and is not being made widely available to all those who require it. During the first phase of free universal education under the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP I) (2002-2006), the capitation grant policy stated it to be 10 US dollars per pupil per year. This policy was revised to 10,000 TZ Shillings in PEDP II (2007-2011) (Twaweza, 2010. p.4). Neither figure is an accurate reflection of the initial costs of adjustments for many children with disabilities.

2.4.1 Discussion - performance in schools

The fact that 55% of children with disabilities were judged to be performing well by their teachers is a good indicator that children with disabilities do have the potential to learn and succeed in the classroom. This should help challenge existing negative stereotypes of children with disabilities as being unable to cope with mainstream learning environments and of not benefitting from education.

The reported reasons given for good performances (i.e. good behavioural practices and inclusive learning environments) demonstrate that calls for more special schools as a way to increase access (expressed by some parents and teachers) do not reflect the growing success of integration into mainstream classes. Evidence from this survey suggests that improving mainstream classrooms to make them more inclusive, including teachers ability to accommodate the needs of their students with disabilities, should take priority over special schools.

It was also interesting to note that the reasons given for why children with disabilities are under-performing rest predominantly with barriers – not as a result of their impairments precluding them from learning. This is an important distinction to make because barriers can be removed. The focus of efforts to increase access to education for children with disabilities therefore should look at ways to minimize the environmental, institutional and attitudinal barriers that are hindering their progress.

The fact that 2.6% of teachers reported not knowing the performance level of their pupils with disabilities is supportive of the fact that some teachers have very

negative attitudes towards children with disabilities. Though not reported directly, this might also be a reason for some parents to stop sending their children with disabilities to school. It is important for parents to know that their child is progressing academically but if teachers are not concerned about how children with disabilities are doing then parents may well consider education a waste of time.

One of the most popular ways reported by parents to try to minimize the barriers and improve the performance of their child was to consult teachers on progress. However despite these efforts they also reported it did not significantly alter the results. Interestingly this research found that parents often blamed teachers for not taking care of their children whilst at the same time teachers shared their concerns that parents were not giving teachers enough support. Both parents and teachers blame the community and the government at all levels for not giving priority to the education of children with disabilities.

This finding suggests therefore that a follow up study is needed to understand more fully how the relationship between teachers, students with disabilities and their families affects overall educational attainment and what role government and the community can play in promoting disability inclusive education.

2.5 Are there any aids or facilities to support children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary schools?

A key question in the research focused on what facilities are available to support children with disabilities in schools. For the purpose of this research supportive facilities refers to all aids that could assist a child with a disability to fully enjoy the education service provided by the school. This included teaching and learning aids, special needs teachers and accessible environments.

Results for this question were obtained via interviews with teachers, children with disabilities attending school and through observations conducted by the action researchers. Results revealed that 85.7% of the children who needed additional facilities were not being provided with any services. Only 14.3% of children with disabilities in the schools surveyed were getting the appropriate levels of support for their impairments.

Only 36.2% schools reported having special needs teachers, leaving 63.8% of schools without access to specialist teachers.

Interviews with students with disabilities also revealed that their access to classrooms, toilets and teachers' offices were often reduced. Across all schools 39% lacked appropriate access to classrooms, toilets and staff offices.

According to observations conducted by the action researchers in schools it was found that:
- All schools (100%) had at least one ramp.

- 75% of schools had no supportive aids for children with disabilities at the school.

- Accessible routes[iv] around the school compound for children with disabilities was present in 20.5% of schools.

- Only 10.3% of the schools had toilets which were considered to be clean.

- Only 25.6% of entrances and doors to rooms were wide enough for wheelchairs to pass.

- 48.7% of teachers expressed negative views about children with disabilities.

- 41% of non-disabled students expressed negative attitudes towards students with disabilities.

2.5.1   Discussion - specialist support provisions

The overwhelming response to the issue of whether appropriate assistive devices and educational materials were available was that they were rarely provided. This is significant because several of the schools in the survey were special units or specialist schools. It is possible to assess this in a number of different ways:

a) Lack of demand. One of the reasons why adapted teaching and learning materials and assistive devices are not being routinely provided by schools is that very few children with disabilities are coming forward for enrolment. Parents and communities have low expectations of schools and of their children with disabilities and as a consequence are not pushing for better services. This means schools and local government continue to believe that this is a minority issue and not worth investing in. What is needed is a major increase in parent's willingness to enrol their children with disabilities in their local primary schools and to demand that an appropriate level of education is available to them. Without this demand schools will lack the incentive to push for changes from government and overall the situation is unlikely to improve.

b) Lack of responsibility. Some facilities such as accessible pathways within school grounds, ramps, toilet cleanliness, accessible doors etc., can be solved by using available community resources. Communities regularly agree to contribute to the construction of secondary schools in wards, so it should be equally possible for them to contribute towards accessible toilets, ramps, and even the provision of wheelchairs for children with disabilities. What it takes however is an understanding of what the barriers are and how including children with disabilities in schools can result in really positive outcomes. In other words communities have to value people with disabilities as equal citizens and look out for ways to improve their participation.

There is no doubt that there is also a desperate shortage of teachers with specialist skills to support the teaching of children with disabilities as a direct result of a lack of priority and planning by government. The main reason for the shortage is limited

funding from government towards the training of special needs teachers. It can also be seen that mainstream teachers are not yet being adequately prepared to teach children with disabilities in their classrooms. All teachers should be equipped with basic skills in how to teach inclusively (including children with disabilities) and this should form part of pre- and in-service training curriculums.

2.6 Does the government provide capitation grant for students with disabilities in primary schools?

When the Tanzanian government re-introduced free primary education in 2002 with the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP), it came with a particularly important innovation: the **capitation grant**. The primary aim of the grant was to replace the revenue lost to schools because of the abolition of school fees and to improve the quality of education by making resources available at the school level. In particular, the capitation grant is meant to finance the purchase of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials, as well as to fund repairs, administration materials, and examination expenses (Twaweza, 2010. P 4).

Data about capitation grant disbursements to district councils and at school level are surprisingly inaccessible. Since capitation grants are public money intended to improve the quality of learning, it is in the interests of citizens that such information be more readily available. The Government would equally benefit from access to such data as its monitoring is essential for appropriate planning (Twaweza 2010 P. 4-6).

In order to assess the level of government commitment to people with disabilities and their development, researchers wanted to know if the government disburses caption grants for students with disabilities in primary school. Two groups of respondents were interviewed including head teachers/teachers and local government leaders. The research found that 87% of the respondents claimed the government did not disburse the grant, 9% said the government was disbursing grant and 4% had no information at all about caption grants for children with disabilities.

Some of the reasons cited for why schools were not accessing caption grants included:
- Government fails to prioritise this as an issue to be followed up:

"allocated funds were for all students not specifically for children with disabilities,"
"the government has not yet allocated the special fund for students with disabilities"
- Poor government planning leading to a lack of available funding:

"absence of funds for village government,"
"government not realizing the potential of people with disabilities,"
"government sees no need, so the government does not provide aids,"
- The are no children with disabilities in the school so the grant is not needed.

- The process lacks transparency and is hard to negotiate through.

- Grants are only being disbursed within a specific period rather than on demand.

- There is misuse of grants by local government authorities.

2.6.1   Discussion - Resourcing inclusion

The capitation grant is one of the Tanzanian government's commitments towards education improvement at various levels so it was surprising to find that in 87% of cases it had not been disbursed and that 4% were unaware of its existence. Since schools generally have few other income generating options this grant is essential to maintain the running of the school.

It is clear from this research that there is an underlying lack of transparency in the grant disbursing system which is leading to confusion and increasing opportunities for misuse. Currently the community cannot effectively hold schools accountable for the grant because they often remain unaware of how much should be received and when.

There have been some complaints raised by politicians and leaders from teachers union on the late disbursal of capitation grants by the government, but so far none seem to have focused on initiatives to raise community awareness on such matters. Only few civil society organizations such as Twaweza and HakiElimu do this but they struggle to reach rural communities because of difficulties with communications. Nevertheless it is an area that DPOs might usefully become involved in, using their grassroots networks to investigate how well grants are being distributed and in particular what impact it is making on access for children with disabilities.

2.7   What solutions are recommended to reduce the barriers and challenges faced by children with disabilities in pre-primary and primary education?

Respondents suggested various measures which could be taken to address the barriers to education experienced by children with disabilities in accessing pre-primary and primary education. The solutions provided are based around institutional, and attitudinal barriers.

Solutions for institutional barriers were the most commonly mentioned by respondents which is consistent with this having been identified as the most common type of barrier. The range of responses led the researchers to categorize them into three sub-groups directed at government, parents/ family and schools or education institutions as presented below:

Solutions for institutional barriers directed at government;
- Asking government to pay for the school fees of children with disabilities.
- Government to cover all the education cost for children with disabilities or provide them with free education.
- Special needs teachers to be motivated by getting good salary/ wages.

- The recruitment of special needs teachers in schools.
- Provide supportive aids/ facilities to children with disabilities in school.
- Government to give priority to children with disabilities.
- Provision of health services to children with disabilities at school.
- Government to provide caption grants for children with disabilities.

Solutions for institutional barriers directed at parents/ family
- Send children with disabilities to rehabilitation services.
- Teach them when they are back home (provide extra tuition).
- Ask for more assistance.

Solution for institutional barriers directed at schools or education institutions
- Allow children with disabilities to repeat classes as many times as needed.
- Construct special schools or classes for children with disabilities.
- Every school must have a disability department.
- Introduce boarding schools for children with disabilities.
- Schools have to provide food for children with disabilities.
- Setting up separate times for educating/ teaching children with disabilities at school.

Attitudinal solutions reported by respondents were categorized into four sub-groups: those targeting community, teachers, parents, and students. Results are presented as follows;

Attitudinal solutions directed at parents
- Give the children more attention and care.
- Give the children courage and send them to school.
- Be close to the children when they are facing difficulties.
- Consult with the children's teachers.
- Arrest parents who lock/ hide children with disabilities at home.

Attitudinal solutions directed at teachers and students
- Educate teachers on how to discipline children with disabilities in appropriate ways.
- Head teachers must accept children with disabilities into their schools.
- Raise teachers' awareness on the rights of children with disabilities.
- Educate all children on the need to respect children with disabilities.

Attitudinal solution directed to community
- The community has to be educated on the rights of persons with disabilities.

2.7.1   Discussion - Finding solutions

Many of the solutions suggested in discussions with stakeholders focused on government responsibilities (institutional barriers) indicating that although there may be reasonable policy frameworks in place, implementation of disability inclusive education remains a problem.

It was interesting to see that despite pre-primary and primary education being free in Tanzania respondents were still claiming that school expenses were putting them off sending their children to school. It would be worth investigating further what the underlying issues are here – if there are expectations that parents should fund adapted teaching and learning materials for example, or if this is primarily related to the cost of basic school equipment like paper/pens and uniforms.

The research highlighted that there is a real need to train and resource more specialist teachers and ensure that some level of specialist support is available to schools. Anecdotal evidence from special needs teachers suggests that they often feel isolated and unsupported in their work and have little opportunity for further training and skills development. Many end up transferring back to mainstream classes where the work is less intense and they can enjoy more peer support. There is a real need to look at training more specialist teachers but also to provide those already working with greater opportunities for peer support, training and career development.

Training large numbers of specialist teachers however is unrealistic and arguably unnecessary. If the government renews its focus on developing inclusive education then mainstream schools should expect to see increasing numbers of children with disabilities enrolling. All classroom teachers therefore should receive appropriate and adequate training on how to effectively include children with disabilities in their classes. This should be introduced initially during pre-service training courses (so that all newly qualified teachers begin with a basic understanding) and followed up with more specialist in-service training.

The issue of providing health services to children with disabilities through the education system was an interesting recommendation. There is emerging evidence showing that where services link up (e.g. education, health and social protection) there are improved outcomes for children with disabilities. Providing access to rehabilitation services (e.g. through Community Based Rehabilitation) can help reduce the impact and severity of many impairments in children, leading to improvements in educational achievements. Schools could be used as referral points, helping link parents to community rehabilitation services with little resource implications.

Whilst arresting parents who lock away their children with disabilities might seem an appropriate way to treat such behaviour, a more effective method might be to look at increasing awareness. In fact, the research itself proved that raising awareness does result in children being released. As a direct result of the issue having been identified and discussed at community level, 30 children were released during this research.

SECTION 3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1   SUMMARY

According to this research, there is a strong need for projects like the DPO mentoring program to continue to make sure children with disabilities are accessing pre-primary and primary education. The research findings highlight that there are many children with disabilities who are not accessing appropriate pre-primary and primary education.

Some of the most significant outcomes from the research include:

- All villages reported having children with disabilities.

- The majority of children with disabilities do not appear to be enrolling in school.

- Schools have large numbers of children with intellectual impairments, despite the fact that mobility and sensory impairments are the most common.

- Girls with disabilities continue to be less well represented in education.

- Locally there has been an increase in primary school enrollment for children with disabilities in the past three years.

- There were a diverse range of reported barriers facing children with disabilities as they try to access pre-primary and primary education.

- There is an absolute lack of adapted teaching and learning materials and accessible environments for children with disabilities, even in special units and special schools.

- There is increasing awareness of the need to accept children with disabilities into mainstream schools although a continued lack of confidence and skills from amongst teachers to teach them appropriately.

- There are still high levels of discrimination and abusive behaviour shown by students and teachers towards children with disabilities in schools.

- None of those interviewed knew of the CRPD or of the Persons with Disabilities Act.

3.2   RECOMMENDATIONS

More awareness campaigns on the importance of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The focus of these campaigns should be towards increasing the awareness of parents of children with disabilities and primary school teachers in particular. These two groups are central to improving enrollment and educational progress and yet this research found them to be largely unaware of the importance of education or of the rights that children with disabilities have. Most stakeholders

still believe that special schools are the only option for children with disabilities and are therefore less motivated to including them in mainstream classes.

Involve local government officials in advocacy on disability rights. This research found that although local government has a mandate to ensure all children are receiving appropriate education, they are rarely held to account for what they are providing for children with disabilities. Much more focused advocacy needs to be directed towards government stakeholders and they need to be held more publicly accountable. The 2014 local government elections is an excellent opportunity for the disability sector to work on promoting disability issues into candidates plans.

Increase community awareness on the CRPD, and the **Persons with Disabilities Act** and in particular work with parents to help them understand what their rights are. This research found that none of the respondents had heard of the CRPD or of the Persons with Disabilities Act. In order to ensure government can be held accountable for its services, rights holders need to be sensitised. More work needs to be done with persons with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities to sensitise them on the legal obligations of service providers.

Increase social protection and income generating opportunities for parents of children with disabilities. The findings from this research highlighted that many families with disabled children face serious economic hardships. Most of the parents with disabled children interviewed (89%) were subsistence farmers and poorly educated themselves (97% were educated to primary level only). This is consistent with most international research which makes a strong link between poverty and disability (Mitra, Posarac, & Vick, 2011). Government social protection schemes, livelihoods programs and adult training opportunities need to be targeted specifically towards households in which there is a disabled member.

Encourage community members to participate in addressing the barriers faced by persons with disabilities. This research found a lot of support and interest amongst all stakeholders towards wanting to help resolve many of the reported barriers facing children with disabilities. DPOs and other civil society organisations could make much better use of this interest by engaging with the whole community when addressing disability issues rather than just focusing on individuals with disabilities and/or their families.

Lobby government on the issue of disbursing capitation grants for children with disabilities in schools. There is a real need to make the disbursal of capitation grants to schools a more transparent and accountable process. It is also important that the real costs of the inclusion of children with disabilities is made known so that grants can take proper account of their needs. DPOs and other civil society organisations need to research this issue more thoroughly and help encourage government to ensure it provides enough resources to enable children with disabilities to be meaningfully educated.

3.3   CONCLUSION

This research proved beneficial not only in providing some good evidence for the need to improve education access to children with disabilities but also in helping to raise awareness at community level over the discrimination faced by people with disabilities. The action research nature of this study proved highly empowering for the people with disabilities who took part as researchers and provided motivational role models for the many children with disabilities who were interviewed by them.

The researchers helped to challenge many of the deep rooted negative attitudes towards people with disabilities through their questions, interviews and observations and even before the results of the research were collated changes in communities and schools had begun. During a review of the research process with community representatives, local officials expressed how this had been the first time in their professional life, they had been asked to be accountable for their services to children with disabilities. There was a general sense at this level that they could make changes to improve the lives of persons with disabilities and that they were willing to engage with DPOs to find appropriate solutions. Despite the many challenges highlighted by this research it was also encouraging to see that communities are ready to work more closely with persons with disabilities especially in the area of education.

There is no doubt that initiatives like the CRPD and the Persons with Disabilities Act are helping to provide the legal frameworks within which more inclusive communities can be built. However, as this research showed, considerably more has to be done by government to resource and support implementation of disability inclusive policies. To this end DPOs and other civil society groups need to be much more familiar with the legal frameworks and more targeted over their advocacy approaches so that they can work more closely with government and private sector representatives over implementation of legislation.

The need for attitude change remains important. When communities change their negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities and become aware of their rights and potential contributions the levels of exclusion will reduce. An increase in the participation of persons with disabilities in the social and economic life of communities will help make them more resiliant and successful and in the longterm reduce the need for welfare.

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Endnotes

[i] Information on the table 1 was obtained from the action research report written by *Msigallah F and Mwaisongole P, 2012*

[ii] National Policy on Disability 2004

[iii] National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2009

[iv] Smooth structures created to enable wheelchair and tricycle users to pass especially in sandy areas.