

Case study – working with village councils to resolve barriers

A number of trained action researchers with disabilities visited Mahunga primary school, Ifakara to conduct research into the barriers disabled children face in accessing education. The head teacher welcomed the research because although he has disabled children in his school, he had no real understanding of what their experiences were like or what their needs were.

As a result of an environmental barrier assessment he realised that toilets were a big problem. Children who have to crawl to move around were unable to use the toilets because they were so dirty. There were no ramps into classes or into the toilet block so anyone with a physical impairment was having to work really hard just to get into class. The head teacher saw for himself how difficult it was for children with physical disabilities and decided to act on the information immediately. In conjunction with the village executive, they raised funds to renovate the school building, creating an accessible, clean latrine and ramps into some of the classes.

This is the first time an issue like this has been brought to the village council for discussion, but now they are aware they want to do more to understand and resolve more of the barriers faced by disabled people.