



Policy Brief

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Environmental Factors Affecting Persons with Disabilities

Despite various efforts by the Kenya Government, through the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and other stakeholders, to create an enabling environment to enhance the accessibility of various facilities by persons with disabilities, the problem persists. This was made very clear in responses to questions posed by the Kenya National Survey for Persons with Disabilities (KNSPWD), which found that two-thirds of PWDs had a big problem accessing their natural environment

What Does the Legislation Say?

Following wide consultation, the Government of Kenya enacted the Persons with Disability Act 2003, which came into operation in June 2004. The Act discourages discrimination against persons with disabilities (PWDs). According to the Act, PWDs are to be accorded full access to community and social services, as well as to available information and technical assistance.

Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the importance of accessibility of the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, health and education, and information and communication in enabling PWDs to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The measures to be taken to make this happen include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessing buildings, roads, transportation, and other indoor and outdoor facilities including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces.

How Was the Problem Examined?

The KNSPWD was a national sample survey undertaken between July and November 2007. The survey was the first of its kind to be done in Kenya and was designed to provide up-to-date information on persons with disabilities (PWDs). The information



This policy brief is intended to show that PWDs need to have available, accessible and affordable services, just like the rest of the population. The policy brief thus provides up to date evidence-based information about the availability, accessibility and affordability of services for PWDs.

was to assist the government in planning, monitoring and evaluating the various activities, programmes and projects intended to improve the wellbeing of persons with disabilities.

The survey interviewed persons with disabilities of all ages in sampled areas to get estimates of their numbers; distribution; demographic, socio-economic and cultural

KNSPWD adopted the following the working definition of disability: “a physical, mental, emotional or other health condition or limitation that has lasted or is expected to last six or more months and which limits or prevents one from participation in the activities of daily life, e.g., work, mobility, schooling, recreation and participation in community activities”.

characteristics. The survey also sought to know the nature, types and causes of disabilities, coping mechanisms, nature of services available to them, and community perceptions and attitudes towards PWDs.

Why Persons with Disabilities?

Many communities, in Kenya and elsewhere, harbour attitudes and practices embedded in cultural beliefs, taboos, rights of passage and religion that create obstacles to PWDs’ participation in social and economic activities. The common belief amongst many communities is that disability is a curse. This results in socio-cultural and economic prejudice that limits access to education, health, employment and rehabilitation services.

There is, therefore, great need to create awareness among the various communities to

Persons with disabilities need to work, move and integrate in a fully accessible environment.

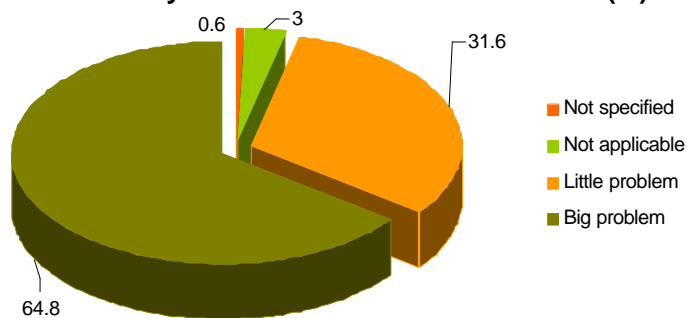
eliminate stigma and social discrimination. It is also imperative that information, education, and communication (IEC) programmes be put in place by both government and stakeholders to address social and cultural issues affecting PWDs.

These measures should encourage PWDs to fully participate in decision making processes at all levels in their communities.

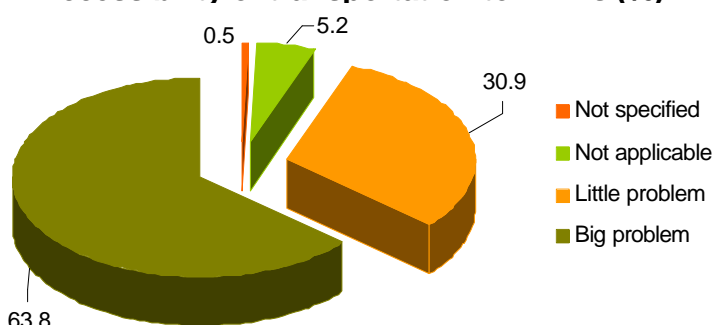
Key Research Findings

Do persons with disabilities have available, accessible and affordable services? Evidence from the KNSPWD says that often times they do not, meaning that they are limited in their ability to enjoy a quality life.

Accessibility of natural environment to PWDs (%)



Accessibility of transportation to PWDs (%)

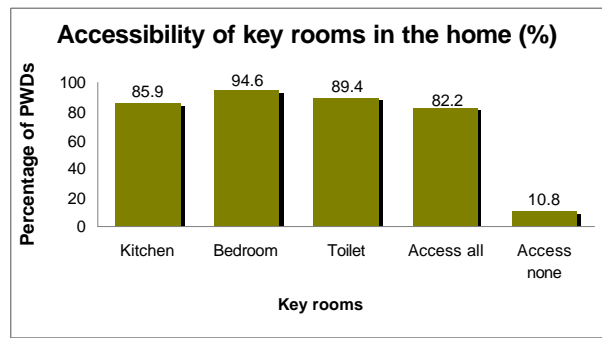
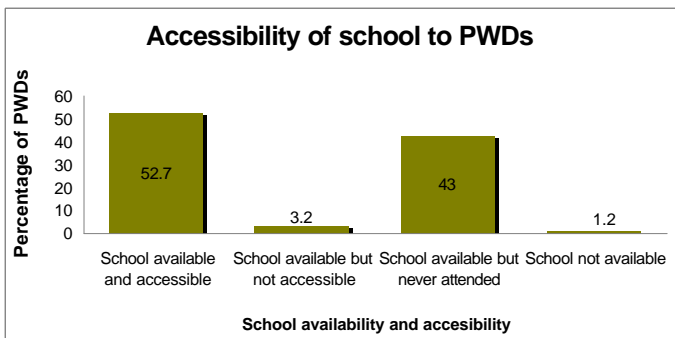


Access to Transportation

Over 63 per cent of PWDs indicated that access to transportation is a big problem while about 31 per cent said that it posed a little problem. This suggests that there are no public vehicles that are accessible to PWDs.

Access to Information

Availability of and access to information are critical in decision making and hence prompting people to be active and productive members of society. Conversely, the lack of access to information is a barrier that limits one’s participation. The results from the KNSPWD show that 57 per cent per cent of PWDs had a big problem and 38



It is well known that stigma, socio-cultural and economic prejudice may keep PWDs from participating in community activities. This may result in limited or even no access to education, health, employment and rehabilitation services.

per cent a little problem with accessing information.

Access to Their Natural Environment

Environmental factors can have a positive or negative influence on the performance of individuals as members of society.

PWDs are at greater risk of experiencing restrictions in per-

forming tasks or participating in community activities. The lack of a supportive environment or assistive devices curtails the participation of PWDs in the community.

The results from the survey indicate that around 65 per cent of PWDs had a big problem accessing their natural environment and 32% had little problem doing so.

Access to Health Care and Medical Services

A large proportion of the population can still not access health care services and its benefits. The results of the survey show that half of the respondents in rural areas and a third of urbanites had experienced difficulties with the availability of health care and medical services.

Access to Rooms in the Home

Society has a responsibility to ensure that PWDs participate and contribute to society without hindrance. This entails attention to the basic physical accessibility of homes, schools and other facilities.

Society may hinder an individual's performance because it creates barriers such as inaccessible buildings or fails to provide facilitators (unavailability of assistive devices). About 17.2 per cent of PWDs could not access either kitchen, bedroom or toilets in their own homes.

Specifically, the results indicate that 14.1, 5.4 and 10.6 per cent of PWDs could not access kitchen, bedroom and toilet, respectively, in their homes.

Access to Schools

Education plays a key role in an individual's development life. The survey shows that only 52.7 per cent of PWDs said that schools were available and accessible. Likewise, 43 per cent said that they had never attended school even though the schools were available.

Programme Implications

1. There is need for the Government to implement and enforce Disability Act 2003 on transportation.

The interview team on site learns first-hand about the experience of a PWD accessing his environment.

2. There is need for the Government to implement and enforce Disability Act 2003 and other laws related to accessibility to information.
3. There is need to develop policies to enhance the accessibility of the natural environment to PWDs.
4. There is need to train health workers on disability needs and also to mainstream disability issues into health workers training curricula to enable PWDs to access health care.
5. There is need to develop a housing policy that is disability compliant to enable PWDs to access buildings.
6. There is need for the Government and stakeholders to comprehensively enforce the Disability Act 2003 on the education of PWDs.

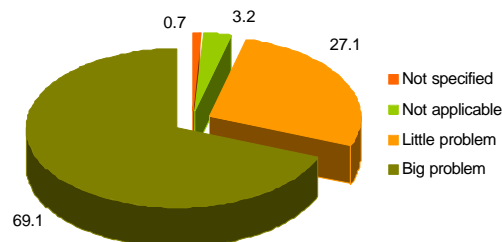
Policy Recommendations

Several policy directions and programme activities arise from the results of the survey. Two key recommendations are:

- ◆ Remove barriers faced by PWDs in the environment, infrastructure, information and service provision through aggressive and effective public education and comprehensive implementation of the disability policy.
- ◆ Ensure that existing and proposed infrastructure is

universally accessible and friendly to PWDs in all aspects and avail and domesticate reproductive health and HIV/AIDS information to suit the specific needs of PWDs.

Magnitude of accessibility to healthcare and medical services by PWDs (%)



Implementers

KNSPWD was conducted by the National Coordinating Agency for Population & Development (NCAPD) in collaboration with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services (MGSCSS), the Ministry of Health (MOH), and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST).

Other participating organizations were United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK), Kenya Programme of Disabled Persons (KPDP), Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK) and Africa Mental Health Foundation (AMHF).

Support

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NCAPD is a semi-autonomous government agency that formulates and promotes population policy and coordinates related activities for sustainable development in Kenya.