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Evaluating the Participation of Disabled People in Income Generating Activities in Jinja Municipal Council of Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluates the participation of disabled people in income-generating activities in Jinja Municipal Council of Uganda. Findings revealed that there are many challenges that a person with disabilities has to go through to secure employment and keep it. In some cases, you might find that people with disabilities are paid less than their counterparts without disability. In other cases, you will find them being mistreated at their workplaces and looked down upon as people who cannot be relied on simply because of their disability. It is in light of this that the study calls for continuous national sensitization and awareness of issues concerning PWDs. This would enhance attitude change since most people have a stereotypical understanding of the causes of disability. This is a result of the various cultural beliefs and ignorance among the communities. Above all the sensitization will let PWDs get informed on their rights to participation in IGAs. More so, there is a need for capacity building in PWDs for sustainability through education and training in starting and managing IGAs, record keeping, savings, and marketing among others to build on their knowledge and skills. Finally, the government and other development stakeholders should ensure free and fair access to IGAs and their resources. This can be done through adjustment of the environment to increase freedom and access to all the spheres of the community.

Keywords: Cultural beliefs, disabled people, Government intervention, Income-generating activities, Small-scale agriculture, Stigmatization

INTRODUCTION

During the Reformation period, Martin Luther King strongly advocated the killing of disabled babies, believing them to be incarnations of the devil[1]. The traditional model has been extended and replaced by the medical model. With the growth of medical knowledge, impairment is seen as 'abnormal' and needing 'curing'. Although the model is of significant use, its foundations on the concept of normality are potentially marginalizing for disabled people. It assumes a static environment and an unalterable human state. It is the disabled people to be changed not the environment. This gives the person with disabilities problems in mobility hence reducing their chances of participation in income-generating activities[2]. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[3], participation is the right of PWDs as everyone is free to get involved in the cultural and developmental affairs of the community and its benefits and it involves information sharing, capacity building,

empowerment, and collaboration. The traditional position of PWDs in the cultures is one of dependence on able-bodied people. Many cultures and religions have held the belief that disability is a form of punishment from some divine powers for sins or the sins of their ancestors. Those beliefs form a traditional model of disability and have figured in many of the world's religions including Christianity[4]. Persons with Disabilities Act[5] states that all persons with disability have the right to participate in income-generating activities, which is contrary to what is taking place in Jinja Town Council. It has been found that PWDs are left out of participation in mainstream activities including income-generating activities due to isolation and stigmatization, hence leaving them poor and vulnerable. For over 100 years, disability has presented a culturally embedded and accepted form of oppression against disabled people[6]. The traditional position of PWDs in the cultures is one

of dependence on able-bodied people. Many cultures and religions have held the belief that disability is a form of punishment from some divine powers for sins or those sins of an ancestor. These beliefs form the traditional model of disability and have figured in many of the world's religions including Christianity[7]. According to the report compiled by the disability group Jinja, there are over 300 persons with disability in Jinja town council (M.T.C), the report showed that there are about 200 disabled men and about 100 females with disability. Out of these, 150 have a physical disability, 70 have a visual impairment, 50 have a hearing impairment 20 have epilepsy and 10 have multiple disabilities.

Factors Affecting the Participation of Persons with Disability in Income-Generating Activities

Several books and authors have explained several factors that affect the participation of persons with disability in income-generating activities. Namkung et al.[9] stressed that parents may also feel ashamed for having given birth to a disabled child and therefore do not encourage them to participate in LGAs the same as other children till adulthood. A feeling of shame may often be found among adults with visual impairments due to public opinion or a feeling that they cannot prove themselves to the community. In the words of Podury et al.[10], sudden onset of profound deafness in an adult's life is traumatizing and disorienting in any way that the hearing persons will be isolated the person and the stereotypes from the community will also marginalize him hence restricting him or her from participating in income-generating activities and mainstream activities of the community as a whole. Wegner and Rhoda[11] highlighted that cultural beliefs about handicaps may influence people's attitudes and perceptions in many ways. Beliefs about handicaps are often associated with traditional assumptions that they are bewitched or cursed because of sins. Lack of sight makes it hard for one to move freely and to control and access the environment around him or her. Furthermore, it affects the individuals' performance in carrying out different activities including IGAs. As a result, the individual becomes less active and immobile, which affects him or her psychologically, physically, and economically[12]. Lack of schooling and training opportunities have mainly affected persons with visual impairments. In Africa for instance, only 5% of the children with visual impairments attend formal education in schools. 95% are not given the chance. Khasnabi[13] noted that the challenge of expensive assistive devices was caused by the limited assistive devices in the world market. Assistive devices like braille slates, and white canes

Persons with disabilities in Jinja town council do not participate in income-generating activities apart from only 40% who operate small-scale retail shops, 60% agriculture, 20% bicycle repairers[8]. Sadly, despite available legislation, policies, laws, and strategies set up by the government to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in income-generating activities, it has been found that persons with disabilities do not participate in income-generating activities. This article evaluates the participation of disabled people in income-generating activities in Jinja Municipal Council, Jinja District of Uganda.

crutches, are expensive to make, which makes the few available ones very expensive to afford by the majority of PWDs who are poor hence limiting their participation in income-generating activities. This is due to the existing negative attitudes and the persistent stereotypes and cultural taboos about the various disabilities. PWDs lose pride in themselves and tend to place themselves low in their potential, exercising their privileges and demanding their rights to participate in the mainstream activities of society. Azabo et al.[14] stressed that employment is scarce for persons with visual impairments. Out of 5% of the PWDs who attend school, very few of them reach employment level. Therefore, many of them are not considered for employment due to a lack of qualifications. Furthermore, employers still doubt their adequacy and accuracy because they do not know how to communicate with them or teach them jobs. However, self-employment which seems to be the best alternative is still a problem for PWDs because of a lack of capital, and competition thus abandoning their work and turning to be dependent on others. Jaiswal and Rizal[15] stressed that blind people face many challenges when seeking equal opportunity within their community. PWDs are cut out from the rest of the environment, negative attitudes, and cultural taboos about visual impairment. Emerson et al.[16] stressed that, socially, PWDs are kept or locked indoors and institutionalized, making them isolated and detached from their families and societies at large hence rendering them vulnerable and having low levels of participation in the mainstream activities of the community including income-generating activities. This is especially due to shame, fear, and negative attitudes of the people, the family, and the PWDs themselves towards the disabling conditions.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study adopted a survey research design. The essence of adopting this design is that it enabled a

clear, greater, and proper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through an

intensive collection of data to be analyzed. More so, the design was chosen because it brings reality closer to the people for better understanding since it

brings a great deal of interactions with the respondents.

Area of Study

The study was carried out in Jinja District and covered Akado, Oret, Kbwor, Alupere, and Town Board parishes. This area was chosen for the study because there are many persons with disabilities, many IGAs, alongside government programs, and NGOs. As an aside, the population comprised of

PWDs, family members of PWDs, Community Development staff like CDO, market vendors without disability, and local leaders (LC 1), tallying 35 respondents. They were chosen as respondents because they are believed to possess the required information.

Sample Size

A sample size refers to part of the target group accessible or a population that has been procedurally selected [17]. Bearing in mind that the study population is small, the researcher adopted the

total population of the study as the sample size, which means that the sample size is 35-comprising 12 PWDs, 10 family members of the PWDs, 5 local leaders (LCI), 1 COO, and 7 market vendors.

RESULTS

Table 1: Respondents' responses on the kind of IGAs PWDS Participate in

Kind of IGAs PWDS participate in	No. of responses	Percentage%
Agriculture/farming mainly for subsistence	12	28
Bicycle/radio/watch repair	3	12
Shoe mending or cobbling	5	14
Sale of food items and small businesses	5	16
Wage/casual laboring	3	9
Hairdressing/plating	3	9
Carpentry/woodwork	1	4
Non participants in IGAs	3	8
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: Primary Data

The findings showed 12 responses indicating that 28% of the respondents engage in agriculture and farming as their main IGA. This is performed on a small scale with little surplus produced for sale in the markets. This is because PWDs are poor and do not have enough resources for doing large-scale agricultural activity, coupled with their low levels of education that make them result to farming since they do not have the knowledge and skills for carrying out other IGAs. 5 responses with 16% of the respondents said that they sale food items on a small scale due to limited capital for expansion. This was followed by 14% of the respondents with 5 responses who said they do shoe mending/cobbling.

Furthermore, the findings above showed that PWDs who undertake casual labor and hairdressing were both at a constant rate of 9%, 4% of the respondents said they do carpentry and 8% of the respondents said they do not participate in any IGA, primarily due to the negative attitudes of the community and lack of start-up capital. These major findings therefore showed that the level of participation of PWDs in income-generating activities is generally low, though a majority of them engage in agriculture at a subsistence level; this is mainly because they are unable to undertake their IGAs due to negative attitudes and stereotypes among others.

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the factors affecting the participation of PWDS in IGAs

Factors	No. of responses	percentage
Negative attitudes/stereotypes	10	30
Lack of rehabilitation and devices	5	16
Lack of education and training	4	10
Lack start-up capital	6	20
Lack of information on IGAs	2	4
Inaccessible environment	3	8
Conditions brought by disability	3	8
In adequate government support	2	4
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: Primary Data

The information presented in Table 2 above showed that most PWDs are faced with negative attitudes and stereotypes as the greatest factor hindering their participation in IGAs, this was represented by 30% of the respondents. These negative attitudes come as a result of ignorance and lack of information on the possible causes of disability, and cultural beliefs on disability, as it is regarded as a punishment for sins of the parents or ancestors, which lead to discrimination of all kinds against PWDs and as a result, hinders their participation in IGAs. The table also revealed lack of start-up capital and poverty were a great challenge to PWDs' participation in IGAs, this constituted 20% of the responses. This is because most PWD homes lack to start and run IGAs, this is also caused by a lack of support from the government, NGO families, and the community in boosting their participation in IGAs. 16% of the respondents said that lack of rehabilitation and assistive devices hinder their participation in IGAs in Jinja District. This is due to a lack of financial resources to access the assistive

devices coupled with their ignorance of locally available rehabilitation initiatives for PWDs. Also, the findings further showed that inaccessible environment and their disability condition that make them vulnerable also hinder their participation in IGAs both at a constant response rate of 8%. This is due to a lack of modification of the physical environment that stems from the negative attitudes towards them and the lack of access to rehabilitation that makes them more vulnerable. While lack of information on IGAs and inadequate government support to PWDs in IGAs both showed the least response represented by a constant rate of 4%. This is due to high illiteracy among PWDs and the presence of other conflicting priority areas for the government to support. From a general perspective, the majority of the PWDs experience negative attitudes towards them by the community that hinder their participation in IGAs and make other challenges inevitable as depicted from the study findings above.

Table 3: Strategies/suggestions to enhance the participation of PWD in IGAS

Strategies/Suggestions	No. of responses	Percentage%
Sensitization and awareness-raising	11	24
Education and training	7	18
Adjustment of the environment	5	14
Government intervention/supp01t	3	12
Provision of need-based assistive devices	5	14
Supervision and follow up of PWD projects	2	9
Training experts on disability issues	2	9
TOTAL	35	100%

Source: Primary Data

According to the findings of the study, 24% of the respondents suggested that through sensitization and awareness, PWD participation in IGAs could be increased. This enhances positive attitudes towards PWDs and enables them to be supported with finance and labor among others that would increase the participation level of the PWDs in IGAs. Education and training in IGAs were also another strategy/ suggestion presented with 18% of the responses. Through, this suggestion, PWDs would acquire the necessary skills for initiating and maintaining IGAs and would also build on their self-esteem and confidence this also increases their competence in carrying out IGAs for independent livelihood. The study showed adjustment of the environment and provisions of assistive devices was consistent with 14% of the responses as a way forward to enhance PWDs participation in IGAs. One of the respondents

suggested devices like wheelchairs since those with physical disability are the majority in Jinja District. And 12% of the respondents suggested that the Government intervention in supporting IGAs and implementation of existing policies regarding the employment of PWDs would also give them the morale to participate in IGAs. Support and follow-up of PWD projects alongside the training of disability experts would also enhance their participation in IGAs at a constant rate of 9% as depicted from the findings above. In an overview, the findings depicted that awareness raising and sensitization on disability could be the primary strategy to enhance the participation of PWDs in IGAs in Jinja District to change the community attitudes towards them and their eventual social integration alongside other strategies above upon their implementation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

According to the findings of the study, most PWDs in Jinja town council engage in agriculture but

mostly on a small scale with little engagements for sale, which makes them poorer with 28% of the

responses. This is a result of a lack of capacity, lack of training skills, and ability to undertake large-scale agricultural enterprises, which is worsened by a lack of support in terms of labor and funds from the government, NGOs, family members, and the community at large. These findings are in line with the findings of Carrol and McCoy[18] who observed that sometimes, persons with disability get trapped in poverty their entire lives for reasons such as the family has spent their entire fortune on the individual's health and being born poor. There are also some instances where persons with a disability grow up in care centers as their parents neglect them. Poverty would hinder the individual, no matter how qualified they are, from reaching the interview grounds or dressing well as they attend the interview. Also, it is not definite if they would be chosen for the post; hence the majority stay at home for lack of finances to groom themselves for the opportunities. Findings also show that some of the PWDs do engage in casual/wage labor. This has presented 9% of the responses. This finding is in line with the findings of Tah-Alon et al.[19] who noted that for many business owners, employing a person who has a disability is a sign of poor leadership since there is considerable skepticism and misconceptions concerning this group. Doubt emanates from the person's inability to recognize the achievements of the person with a disability and judge them based on their disability. No matter how much they try, many

persons with disability do not fit in at work when they get employed as they are given meager roles, which the boss thinks is the only thing they can handle. Such instances anger persons with disability, and they may lead to depression and lowered self-esteem. Doubting an individual's capabilities doesn't bode well for an employer. They might let go of one of the best employees they would have hired because they doubt their ability. Interestingly, you might come across a person with a disability carrying out their objectives easily and making their employers considerable profits after being given a chance.

According to the findings of the study, negative attitudes and stereotypes have been seen as the greatest hindrance faced by PWDs in IGAs with 30% of the responses, justified by the cultural beliefs and perceptions towards PWDs and their lack of exposure to successful PWDs who have to engage in IGAs. These findings are related to the findings of Brewer, Urwin, and Witham[20] who noted that persons with disability often face stigmatization, especially if their disabilities are visible, such as the inability to walk. Some of the employees are isolated by their peers who fear that the disability might be transmitted. This is a high level of ignorance since no person would contact disability from another person unless they were engaged in a fight that leaves the person without a disability, having a disability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many challenges that a person with disabilities has to go through to secure employment and keep it. In some cases, you might find that people with disabilities are paid less than their counterparts without disability. In other cases, you will find them being mistreated at their workplaces and looked down upon as people who cannot be relied on simply because of their disability. It is in light of this that the study calls for continuous national sensitization and awareness of issues concerning PWDs. This would enhance attitude change since most people have a stereotypical understanding of the causes of disability. This is a result of the various cultural beliefs and ignorance

among the communities. Above all the sensitization will let PWDs get informed on their rights to participate in IGAs. More so, there is a need for capacity building in PWDs for sustainability through education and training in starting and managing IGAs, record keeping, savings, and marketing among others to build on their knowledge and skills. Finally, the government and other development stakeholders should ensure free and fair access to IGAs and their resources. This can be done through adjustment of the environment to increase freedom and access to all the spheres of the community.

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