

Inclusion of Youths Living with Disabilities in Socio-Economic Activities in Nyamira County

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Abstract

Youth with disabilities often face marginalization and severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities. This paper outlines the effects of inclusion of youths living with disabilities in socio-economic activities in Nyamira County. Being a descriptive case study, it targeted the county governor's office, which is directly responsible for policies concerning the youths with disabilities and employment. The population was 26 respondents and census sampling technique was used. The following objectives guided the study: To document best practices for inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities; to establish the state of preparedness regarding structure, content, and processes for socio-economic inclusion and employment of youths with disability; and to identify the challenges facing Nyamira County government in inclusion of youths living with disabilities in socio-economic activities. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages. Tables and graphs were the most appropriate techniques used in presenting the findings. Findings indicated that people with disability are commonly identified as a group with a higher risk of social exclusion. It concludes that Nyamira County has not fully integrated youth with disabilities in social economic activities.

Key words: Socio-economic inclusion, youth disability, employment, skills

Introduction

It is estimated that there are between 180 and 220 million youth living with disabilities (YLWD) worldwide, of whom nearly 80 per cent live in developing countries (UNDESA, 2012). Many countries throughout the world have, in recent years, adopted policies aimed at promoting the rights of people living with disabilities (PLWD) to full and equal participation in society. This has been in response to the ILO Convention No. 159 concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons (1983). Persons with disabilities in most countries, face numerous challenges that result in their exclusion from mainstream of society, making it difficult for them to access their fundamental social, political and economic rights. Many make their way through life impoverished, abandoned, uneducated, malnourished, discriminated against, neglected and vulnerable. For them, life is a daily struggle to survive. They are largely excluded from essential services and they lack the protection of the family and community, and are often at risk of exploitation and abuse. The factors contributing to this situation are many and varied but include poverty, unemployment, and social isolation, environmental, institutional, attitudinal, and economic barriers (UNDESA, 2012)

The need to address poverty issues, particularly in developing countries, provides a compelling rationale for promoting the economic empowerment of PLWD. It can also be argued, however, that increasing the productivity of this large chunk of society can only be beneficial to the economies of developing countries as a whole. Enabling one person living with disability to make a contribution to the production of goods and services not only increases the net economic benefit of that individual to society, but may also release family members from at least some of their caring responsibilities, thus enabling them to engage in productive activities themselves (Braithwaite, Carroll, Mont, & Peffley 2008).

Historically, definitions of disability have tended to relate directly to impairment, which can be defined as “problems in body function or structure such as deviation or loss” (PAHO & WHO, 2006). One example of an impairment-based definition is the one used in the 1970s by the WHO in its International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps, in which disability is defined as: any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.

Disability is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional wellbeing”. Thus disability is regarded as ‘a physical, sensory, mental or other impairment, including any visual, hearing, learning or physical incapability, which impacts on social, economic or environmental participation (Thomas, 1999).

Youth with disabilities often face marginalization and severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities due to a range of factors from stigma to inaccessible environments (Roggero, Tarricone, Nicoli, & Mangiaterra, 2005). However, building a socially inclusive society is an important objective of many governments (DFID, 2000). Young people with disabilities have needs similar to those of other people with abilities, as clearly stated in Article 23 of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2000; Crawford, 2003).

For many young people with disabilities, exclusion, isolation, and abuse, as well as lack of education and economic opportunities are daily experiences (HRDC, 2002). Disability prevalence rates in Kenya vary according to different data collection methods used, but according to National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (GoK 2008), 4.6% of the Kenyan population experience some form of disability, of which 3.6% are youths between the ages of 15-24 years old. Investing in youth is essential for inclusive and sustainable development, since young people do not only shape the present of any country, but also profoundly determine the future of the nation (Marks & Fleming 1999)

Nyamira County

Nyamira County is a county in the former Nyanza Province of Kenya and also was formerly part of Kisii County. With five administrative divisions; Borabu, Ekerenyo, Manga, Nyamira and Rigoma, the county has a population of 598,252 (KNBS, 2009). Agriculture is the main economic contributor to the county which includes tea, sugarcane, bananas maize,

dairy and livestock products. The county experiences relatively good weather patterns with rainfall occurring regularly throughout the year.

Study Problem

Kenya's National Youth Policy (2008) considers youth living with disabilities a priority group; however, as Mugo, Oranga & Singal (2010) note that this category is neither mentioned in any of the ten objectives, nor is there any strategy geared at realizing the objectives for this category. All of these policies are framed within Kenya's Vision 2030 (Government of Kenya, 2007) a development strategy encouraging sustainable economic growth, tackling poverty, and combating discrimination, including that faced by PLWD (Mbithi & Mutuku, 2010). There is strikingly little information available on the employment of youth living with disabilities; in some cases, broad information on employment rates for disabled young people may be available through national censuses or large scale surveys, but this information is rarely disaggregated by gender, type of disability or geographic location. The Kenya National Survey for Persons with Disabilities Report (GoK, 2008) indicates that there is dire need for assistive devices and support services which would enhance the lives of PLWD and allow them to participate more efficiently in day-to-day activities. Despite the presence of government legislations aimed at providing equal participation of all people in social economic activities, youths with disabilities in Nyamira County still face challenges in accessing employment, quality health care, education and in taking part in social economic activities.

Study Objectives

The following objectives guided the study:

- a) To document best practices for inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities at Nyamira County headquarters.
- b) To establish the state of preparedness regarding structure, content, processes and employment for socio-economic inclusion of youths with disability at Nyamira county headquarters
- c) To identify the challenges facing Nyamira County government in inclusion of youths living with disabilities in socio-economic activities

Significance of the Study

The study is of importance to Nyamira County government in the review of policies meant to guide the inclusion of PLWD in social economic activities. Findings of this research will be of useful reference to other researchers or for further research in the same field. This study will also increase the existing body of knowledge on inclusion of youths YLWD in socio-economic activities.

The study is also significant to the management of Nyamira County in the construction and building office environments suitable for PLWD, giving equal opportunities to people living with disability in socio-economic inclusion, Making strong documentation and other legislations of PLWD. The study is of great significance to the government in that it would

facilitate knowledge with regard to influence policy on effective management of PLWD.

Conceptual Framework

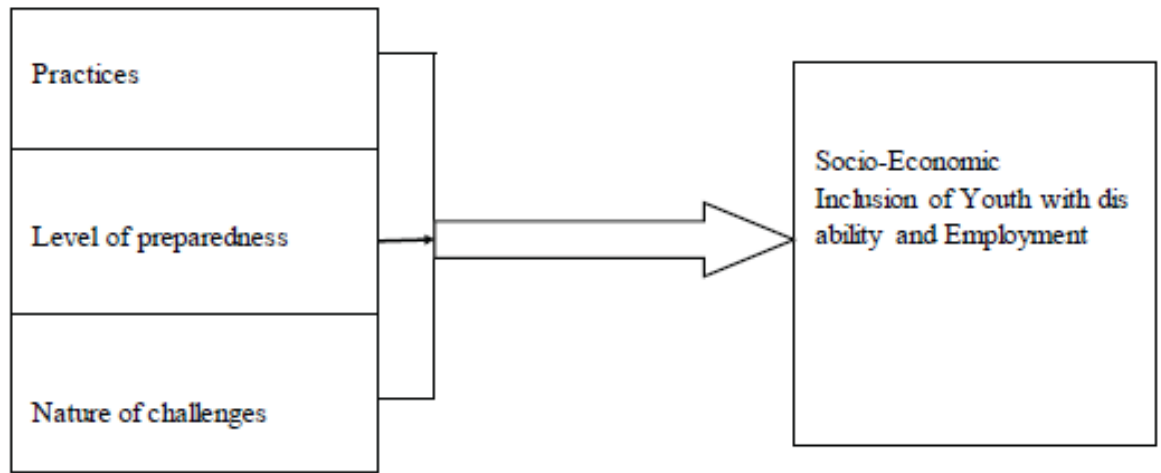


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

In both developed and developing countries, promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for PLWD requires improved access to basic education, vocational trainings relevant to labour market needs, making the physical environment more accessible, encouraging them with equal chances of employment opportunities and by providing information that challenge attitudes and mistaken assumptions about them (Filmer, 2008).

Literature Review

Socio-economic Inclusion

People with disability are commonly identified as a group with a higher risk of social exclusion. The exclusion of youth from central societal sectors represents tremendous social and economic costs to the society, as much as it denotes important failures to promote and protect the rights of young people. Youth with disabilities often face marginalization and severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities due to a range of factors from stigma to inaccessible environments (Roggero, Tarricone, Nicoli, & Mangiaterra, 2005).

According to Yeo (2005), the processes of social exclusion, which apply to disabled people, such as limited access to education, employment and basic health services are very similar to those that apply to poor people in general. For example, the disabled poor might face additional exclusion, such as lack of physical access to public buildings, due to the nature of their particular impairments, while, conversely, the non-disabled poor may face additional disadvantage, as they would not benefit from positive discrimination measures targeted at those who are disabled, such as employment quotas.

Youth Disability

Disability prevalence rates in Kenya vary according to the different data collection methods used but the National Survey on Persons with Disabilities (GoK, 2008) found that 4.6% of the Kenyan population experience some form of disability, of whom 3.6% of youth between ages 15-24 years have disabilities, with visual and physical impairments being the most frequently reported (1.1% each). 12% of youth with disabilities had either never been or were unable to currently attend school in Kenya at the time of the survey. In most parts of Kenya, the transition between primary and secondary for children and youth with disabilities is rare, and from secondary to tertiary education, all but unknown (Mugo, Oranga & Singal, 2010).

According to WHO (1980), disability is any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. There are between 180 and 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide, and nearly 80 percent of them live in developing countries such as Kenya (WHO, 2011). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN, 2006) recognises people with disabilities as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which when combined with negative attitudes or environmental barriers prevent them from taking a full and active role in society. Often, it is the interaction between the individual and his or her environment that leads to disability, not that person's physical limitations. Such an understanding of the social nature of disability helps to promote disability as a human rights issue (Peters, 2003)

Youth Employment and Disability

Young people constitute a major proportion of those living in poverty across the world – almost 209 million live on less than US\$ 1 a day, 515 million live on less than US\$ 2 a day (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN-DESA], 2005). Youth with disabilities face dual disadvantages as individuals with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty even in developed countries such as the United States, thus multiplying their risk factors. Persons with disabilities across many developing countries experience multiple dimensions of poverty at higher rates and in higher breadth, depth, and severity than persons without disabilities. Additionally, households with members with disabilities generally have lower incomes than other households and are at a significantly higher risk of living below the poverty line.

Skills Development for People with Disability

Education for All (EFA), as a means towards inclusive and equitable society, needs to take into account diversity, which is by no means limited to disability. The mission of EFA/IE is to address issues of social justice, inequality, human rights and participatory democracy. It is argued that failure of crossing boundaries towards a broader spectrum of inclusion by disability advocates leaves them in alliance with special education systems that serves to limit the participation of disabled children in education and to segregate them in special settings (Polat & Kisanji, 2009).

According to HRDC, (2002), inclusion in education and training include: involvement in disability programming by increasing technical skills through education and professional development, and functional independence and rehabilitation; access to community public and private sector resources and services, and support to manage and participate in youth decision making. The problem is that these resources and skills remain largely inaccessible (Elwan, 1999).

Experience has clearly demonstrated that disabled people continue to be excluded from society (Hans & Patri 2003). The needs of people with disabilities need to be identified and addressed in a manner consistent with and reflective of their dynamic qualities, capacities, vulnerabilities, and expectations. Community-based, integrated, accessible, and participatory principles and strategies for development, building on local capacity, need to replace the inadequacy of past exclusionary and specialized institution-based, paternalistic services (Elwan, 1999)

Youth Civic Participation

Globally, employment is a problem for all the majority youth. Formal education for most of the world's young people ends by mid-adolescence after which most males and many females are expected to work outside the home. The ILO has termed the problem of growing global youth unemployment as "stark" (ILO, 2002). Young people world-wide are at higher risk for unemployment, partial employment or full employment at lower wages than adult workers. The ILO works to achieve its goals of decent work for all through promoting labour standards, advocacy, knowledge building and technical cooperation services and partnerships, both within the ILO and externally (Crawford 2003).

Structure, Content, and Processes for Socio-economic Inclusion of Youths with Disability

The International Labour Organization has made a concerted effort to identify issues and challenges facing persons with disabilities in attaining decent work (ILO, 2002). They have produced a number of reports and guidelines on promotion, training and employment opportunities for PLWD, including those with intellectual disabilities, although few are specifically focused on youth (e.g. Parmenter, 2011). It is important to note that such training for persons with disabilities has begun to move away from programmes delivered through specialized institutions to mainstream programmes offered through the government, service providers, NGOs or private companies.

Kenya acknowledges disability as a phenomenon that cuts across all spheres of society and which requires support from all sectors. Despite the lack of accurate data on the number of PLWD in Kenya, it is noted that persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group but are varied in terms of the nature of their disability and their mental, physical and social needs. Like in most developing countries people with disabilities in Kenya are a marginalized population and face problems as a result of their disability (Elwan, 1999).

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive case design. This design was the most appropriate since it allowed the researcher to study a relatively small population for accuracy of findings and was concerned with describing, recording, analyzing and reporting conditions that existed (Orodho, 2008).

A census sampling technique was adopted where 26 respondents were selected, among them, 12 were senior officers working in Nyamira county headquarters, 12 were middle cadre employees, 1 was the representative of PLWD in Nyamira County, while 1 was the leader of all the youths living with disability (YLWD) in Nyamira County. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The fundamental premise of a census is that the population is not known and a new estimate is to be made by the analysis of primary data. The raw data was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages and tables and graphs were the most appropriate techniques used in presenting the findings (Kothari, 2005).

Findings and Discussions

Practices Put in Place by Nyamira County Headquarters for Inclusion of PWD

The practices as stated by majority of respondents for inclusion of PLWD in the county were: improved access to basic education, making the physical environment more accessible, supporting the vocational training relevant to labour market needs, encouraging people with disabilities with equal employment opportunities and providing information that challenge attitudes and mistaken assumptions. A key role in empowerment of youth with disabilities is to ensure they are trained in skills which are appropriate to the local labour market. This leads to a greater degree of independence and autonomy, as well as increased capacity to weather economic shocks, such as price increases or crop failure (Adams, 2007). In both developed and developing countries, promoting more inclusive societies and employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires improved access to basic education, vocational training relevant to labour market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests and abilities.

Preparedness Regarding Structure, Content, and Processes for Socio-economic Inclusion of Youths with Disability in Nyamira County Headquarters

In the second objective, researchers wanted to determine the nature of preparedness regarding structure, content, and processes for socio-economic inclusion and employment of YLWD at Nyamira county headquarters. The findings as indicated in table 1 show that; 6 (23.0%) of respondents were aware of the construction and building office environments suitable for PLWD, 6 (23.0%) indicated that PLWD were given equal opportunities when it comes to employment, 6 (23.0%) of informants stated that the county government had enacted strong documentation and other legislations of PLWD, 4 (15.3%) showed that there were recommendations for the construction of schools suitable for PLWD, while a similar number of respondents indicated that construction of market stalls/sheds for PLWD is

taking place as a means for socio-economic inclusion of youths living with disability and employment. These findings agree with ILO, (2002) that posits that various barriers ranging from environmental, communication, social to economic, prevents persons with disabilities from attaining acceptable quality of life.

Table 1: Preparedness Regarding Structure, Content, and Processes for Socio-economic Inclusion of Youths with Disability in Nyamira County Headquarters

NATURE OF PREPAREDNESS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
The construction and building office environments suitable for PLWD	6	23.0
Giving equal opportunities to people living with disability in socio-economic inclusion	6	23.0
Making strong documentation and other legislations of PLWD	6	23.0
Construction of some schools suitable for PLWD	4	15.3
Construction of market stalls/sheds for PLWD	4	15.3
TOTAL	26	100%

Source: Research data (2015)

Challenges Facing Nyamira County Government in Inclusion of Youths Living with Disabilities in Socio-economic Activities

The major challenge in the world today is to find ways of living and working sustainably, so that all people take part in socio-economic development. Table 2 below, shows findings on the common challenges facing Nyamira County government in inclusion of YLWD in socio-economic activities; 7 (27.0%) of the respondents indicated that there is not enough/sufficient legislations on people living with disability (PLWD) in the county, 6 (23.0%) gave opinions that there is no sufficient awareness/ and or the contributions of PLWD and their socio-economic inclusion in development, 5 (19.0%) of respondents stated that there were no enough infrastructures/educational and economic opportunities for PLWD, 4 (15.3%) indicated that lack of strong documentation and reliable data of PLWD in the county was an issue while a similar number of respondents indicated that defining disability is a major challenges, both to the county government and the community when making the connection between disability and development.

Table 2: Challenges facing Nyamira County Government in Inclusion of Youths Living with Disabilities in Socio-economic Activities

CHALLENGE DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Not enough/sufficient legislations on people living with disability (PLWD)	7	27.0
Lack of awareness and/or the contributions of PLWD and their socio-economic inclusion in development	6	23.0
Lack of strong documentation and reliable data of PLWD	4	15.3
Lack of enough infrastructures/educational and economic opportunities for PLWD	5	19.0
Defining disability is one of the major challenges, both to the county government and the community when making the connection between disability and development	4	15.3
TOTAL	26	100%

Source: Research data (2015)

Conclusions

Despite a range of policies and interventions, there are still a number of constraints facing young people with disabilities entering employment in Kenya. These range from a lack of suitable employment; little or no access or adaptations; limited expectations of families and employers; lack of networks, contacts or social and inter-personal skills (Mugo, Oranga & Singal, 2010).

For the case of Nyamira county government, the construction and office building environments that are suitable for PLWD, providing equal opportunities to PLWD in socio-economic inclusion, making strong documentation and other legislations of PLWD, construction of some schools suitable for PLWD and construction of market stalls/sheds for PLWD, were some of the practices put forward to ensure inclusion of YLWD in socio-economic activities.

Even so, Nyamira county government faces challenges in ensuring inclusion of youths living with disabilities in socio-economic activities, they include; insufficient legislations on people living with disability (PLWD), lack of awareness and/or the contributions of PLWD and their socio-economic inclusion in development, lack of strong documentation and reliable data of PLWD, lack of enough infrastructures/educational and economic opportunities for PLWD, and defining disability is one of the major challenges, both to the county government and the community especially when making the connection between disability and development.

Recommendations

This paper makes the following recommendations: the needs of PLWD should be improved by ensuring access to basic education with supportive physical environment; and there should be establishment of stronger links between education providers, TVET providers and business/employment sector, including incentives for apprenticeships that lead to employment and local labour market requirements. This could include a commission to develop policies on youth training and employment, with specific focus on marginalized groups, such as youth with disabilities.

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