

KENYA LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND INITIATIVE

POLICY BRIEF

EMBU COUNTY

April 2021

Ethos

This policy brief seeks to address the key gaps identified during the county-level research focusing on disabilities by the Kenya Leave No One Behind Initiative (*February-April 2021*). At the outset, the factor of disability itself in the county at the household and community level are informed by personal and social perceptions about disability and also by views and lived experiences with disability. The perceptions are strongly upheld despite a lack of holistic awareness, information, and knowledge and are driven by biases, stereotypes, and unquestioned beliefs on the root causes and reasons behind the occurrence of disabilities.

Summary of Issues

According to the Kenya Bureau of Statistics, at 4.4 % Embu County has the highest disability prevalence rate in the country. Research findings showed that in Embu County mobility, physical and mental disabilities were the highest. However, the research also noted that some locations in the County seem to constitute the largest number of persons with mental disabilities. The researchers noted that the number of secluded (*hidden*) persons with disabilities at the household level in the county remains undocumented as households do not disclose this fact.

These identified categories of disability, do not give adequate data and information on nature, types, severity, age, and locations where persons with disabilities reside in the county among other essential details. In Embu County, therefore, available planning and budget formulation data on disabilities is incomplete, and not adequately disaggregated to indicate the appropriate classifications of disabilities.

1. Organizations planning to conduct surveys to include questions on inclusiveness and meaningful participation

Embu County hosts several civil society and humanitarian agencies. It also has some partners of the Kenya Leave No One Behind Initiative operating there focusing on disabilities. No other organizations found in the county are currently planning to conduct upcoming surveys, to include questions on inclusion and meaningful participation or disabilities as a key factor.

In Embu County, social inclusion and meaningful participation have created some opportunities in employment, representation by persons with disabilities as political representatives and appointees. There are also opportunities for access to government initiatives, programs and projects, business, and employment by other employers locally or externally to the county. The research noted that participation, engagement, and involvement among persons with disabilities are hindered by among other factors:

- ϕ lack of education, awareness, knowledge, and skills,
- ϕ perception by society that does not regard persons with disabilities as adequately able to represent; voice issues;
- ϕ exclusion of persons with disabilities from meaningfully engaging and participating in forums of society, governance and leadership and decision-making roles;

Needed Policy Action: *Under the existing Social Inclusion Policy, Embu County should initiate and conduct surveys embracing questions on inclusiveness and meaningful participation. Based on the survey outcomes it will be able to use data to strengthen approaches, processes, and procedures that promote meaningful engagement, social inclusion, and participation by persons with disabilities. In addition, Embu County embarks on addressing root causes to factors marginalizing persons with disabilities and the most vulnerable in society.*

2. Structures, policies, systems, mechanisms, processes, programmes, and projects, that allow or hinder meaningful participation of the different social groups in the implementation of SDGs,

Embu County has departments that are mandated to address disabilities and strives to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in its strategies, e.g., the current CIDP. It has a County Social Protection Policy, Access to Education for All; Access to Government Procurement Opportunities, and Social Cash Transfer mechanisms. These programs and opportunities are available and target persons with disabilities.

Part of the existing programs ensures the promotion of inclusion in employment, business, and support, and self-help groups. There is also a representation of persons with disabilities in the County Assembly. The research found that the representatives of persons with disabilities need access to adequate information and knowledge about SDGs, human rights, and concepts of social inclusion, citizen engagement, and participation, budget formulation, tracking, and reporting, as well as how to use these in representation processes.

Despite policies for and structures for inclusion, citizen engagement in planning and budgeting, budget tracking, and reporting, at the county level, there are hindrances to targeting, disability sensitive planning, and budgeting that targets concrete types, severities, and individuals in specifically targeted locations in the county. Lack of disaggregated data on disabilities renders representatives of persons with disabilities to be without knowledge of issues on disability and how to influence policy, targeting planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting. This is an aspect of capacity strengthening among persons with disabilities in the County. Other hindrances identified include but are not exclusive to:

- ϕ inadequate coverage in the issuing of registration cards to persons with disability;
- ϕ centralized system for issuing registration cards faltered by bureaucratic processes and procedures;
- ϕ inadequate mechanisms, and systems for assessment, identification, classification of disabilities;
- ϕ inadequate number of the required competent personnel to conduct a continuous assessment, identification, and classification of disabilities;
- ϕ limited access to services such as rehabilitation, and access to assistive devices and appliances;
- ϕ inadequate access to a source of income, employment, and business opportunities;
- ϕ expressed levels of nepotism corruption and unfair consideration of persons with disabilities for opportunities in government initiatives;

Needed Action to address gaps: *There a need for the Leave No One Behind Initiative to support disaggregation of disability data creating baselines. This should be addressed to inform all aspects in prioritizing needs, targeting, planning, and all-inclusive and disability-sensitive budgeting processes; as well as processes for addressing identified hindrances and root causes to factors of marginalization.*

3. Voluntary National Review and Participation

In Embu County, persons with disabilities have inadequate information knowledge on Voluntary National Review. They lack awareness of opportunities, mechanisms, processes, and procedures and how to use them for involvement, engagement, and meaningful participation in Voluntary National Review. Other factors hindering participation in Voluntary National Review include, but are not exclusive to:

- ϕ low levels of education, awareness exposure, and knowledge on Voluntary National Review processes and issues among persons with disabilities;
- ϕ very low level of involvement locally, low representation and engagement hinders meaningful participation;
- ϕ inadequate resource means at the County government for facilitating added cost of inclusion of persons with disabilities in Voluntary National Review mechanisms, including the planning, monitoring, and budget formulation and reporting processes.

4. Disability Sensitive targeting Planning and Budgeting

Disability sensitive targeting, planning, and budgeting are inhibited by a lack of appropriately relevant data to use for identifying, prioritizing, and targeting disability needs, outcomes-based planning, and budgeting appropriately. The following hindrances were identified among others:

- ϕ there was a general perception among county personnel and the general public that issues of disability were regarded perhaps as less important hence they were not given priority in budget allocation at the county.
- ϕ priorities, plans, and budgets were not adequately based on disability sensitive baselines thus plans led to generalized service delivery;
- ϕ budgets on disabilities tended to be small and with limited scope for lack of adequate data and information about disabilities;
- ϕ budgets on disability are reduced or cut back when there was a financial shortfall;

5. Reporting and county budget formulation

Embu County budget formulation and reporting did not adequately address the priority needs of persons with disabilities. The County did not fully engage, include, and create adequately sensitive spaces and forums in locations where persons with disabilities could meaningfully participate in budget formulation, tracking, and reporting. Some of the county initiatives on disabilities generalized issuing assistive devices and appliances, e.g., wheelchairs and some limited rehabilitation. Other aspects affecting budget formulation and exporting are thus: -

- ϕ some county personnel had the perception that reporting and budget formulation have "*technical aspects*" and persons with disabilities were therefore assumed not to be able to grapple with such technicality for lack of education, information, and knowledge;
- ϕ due to distances, persons with disabilities could not be reached on time with information and for engagement as the county does not have capacities to launch an outreach program to enhance the reporting and budget formulation mechanisms close to where could engage and participate;
- ϕ persons with disabilities could not therefore adequately influence budget formulation or provide feedback on budget plans and project implementation.
- ϕ reporting and budget formulation were not done on a regular continuing basis, and persons with disabilities were not informed ahead of time when next to engage and in budgeting and reporting processes;
- ϕ reporting and budget formulation was not based on concrete data on the status of disabilities at household and individual level, but rather on Sub-county project level.
- ϕ County reporting and budget formulation mechanisms and processes did not have adequate resources of time, finances, and transport for outreach to localities more persons with disabilities could engage and participate;
- ϕ due to poverty, lack of income, and mobility challenges, they could not adequately attend forums meetings and engagement where reporting and county budget formulation were taking place;

6. Participation mechanisms for Persons with disabilities

Even though Embu County has mobilized some self-help and social support groups of persons with disabilities, several factors continue to inhibit their participation in important forums thus: -

- ϕ the county did not have adequate means to provide transport of different categories of persons with disabilities from different localities to participate;
- ϕ some key officers in the county perceived that it is costly to have to include and involve persons with disabilities for they have special needs that must be met e.g. providing means of transport and specific care during forums and processes and available budgets could not cover such costs;
- ϕ the majority of persons with disability are socially economically and politically in a position they cannot influence and inform policies, access to services, rights, and justice;
- ϕ participation in Voluntary National Review, planning, and budgeting processes required movement (mobility/transport) to a defined location distanced from households and this is challenged by inadequate means for movement/transportation;
- ϕ groups of persons with disabilities and their leaders had inadequate capacities in aspects of how to prepare and present issues during mechanisms of Voluntary National Review planning and budget formulation;
- ϕ representatives drawn from among persons with disabilities were perceived to be unable to adequately voice issues in the existing framework by those planning and coordinating such mechanisms;
- ϕ inadequate capacity among groups and organizations of persons with disabilities on how to prepare, to represent, present issues, etc.

There is a need for increased county need-based planning and formulation of budgets prioritizing disabilities; improved use of Disability Mainstreaming and sensitivity approaches to strengthen mechanisms by which engagement, inclusion, and participation among persons with disabilities.

Needed Action to address gaps: *The project can contribute to aspects of capacity strengthening among persons with disabilities, at the groups, associations, and organization level to improve their capacities in engagement, preparation for meaningful participation, as well as on how to represent, engage and present issues. There is also a need to strengthen the capacities of persons with disabilities to be more effective in representation, participation, and presentation of issues and influence.*

7. Inequalities and intersectional disadvantages that lead to exclusion

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics has advanced its coverage disabilities in that it has reported six categories of disabilities up to the Sub-county level in each county (KNBS Census Data 2019). The categories are not disaggregated for purposes of targeting and planning for and disability-sensitive budgeting in the county. Embu County has no immediate plans to address disaggregation of data or address the gaps in data yet even though it has identified this as a crucial need. Some other factors that drive inequalities and intersection disadvantages and exclusion include:

- ϕ budget constraints limit the scope of the county from dealing with data the disaggregation issue;
- ϕ lack of disaggregated data inhibits the county's ability to target, plan and budget specifically on disabilities at the household and individual need level;
- ϕ inadequate documentation of secluded persons with disabilities at a household level among them persons with very severe types of disabilities, mental disabilities, intersex, pregnant and breastfeeding females with disabilities;
- ϕ inadequate data and evidence on abuse and sexual violation committed against a person with disabilities;
- ϕ inadequate knowledge and competence how to collect and preserve evidence in the case of abuse loss of rights and sexual violations among households with persons with disabilities, and in groups and organizations of persons with disabilities;
- ϕ inadequate access to protection, justice, and rights at the family level, society level and also in the justice systems (police, courts, and local public administrators) in particular for persons with mental disabilities, persons with visual, hearing, and speech disabilities;
- ϕ inhibited access to services caused by lack or poor infrastructure inhibiting mobility, high cost of transport, among persons with disabilities;
- ϕ inadequate awareness and knowledge about rights, and human rights among persons with disabilities;
- ϕ inadequate capacity among organizations at the county level that presses for justice and rights of persons with disabilities;
- ϕ inhibited access to services is inhibited due to a lack of registration cards for persons with disabilities.

In this connection, factors promoting inequalities require awareness building at individual, household, and among service providers, such as law enforcement, justice personnel, and local public administration.

Needed Action to address Gap: *The project can collaborate with the NCPWD and County level counterparts to intervene in addressing inequalities focusing on root causes of marginalization through awareness building and engage key county departments to enforce improved access rights, protection, and justice for people with disabilities. In particular aspects of intersectional inequalities are "silent" and community members, as well as officials in county departments and CBOs, prefer not to talk about some of the issues in this sphere. The project can support the county in developing data based in this sphere for use in profiling and highlighting interventions that address intersectional inequalities publicly.*

8. Planned county policies, strategies, and programmes that the project can influence at the drafting stage

Embu County government itself is addressing disabilities and has a County Social Protection Policy. The researchers noted that the Social Protection Policy is focused on service delivery and did not address the gaps, hindrances, and root causes of marginalization in the disabilities sector adequately. Partners of Kenya Leave No One Behind in Embu are open to working with stakeholders and county government agencies on addressing these aspects in disabilities. This would provide an opportunity for Kenya Leave No One Behind Initiative to engage in policymaking at the county level.

9. Research to close out knowledge gaps on drivers and level of marginalization among marginalized groups

Several aspects for which there is an opportunity for further research themes were identified thus:

Caregiving and caregivers

- ϕ There is a very limited systematic analysis, and documentation on household-based caregiving and caregivers in disabilities that provides a defined level of knowledge and understanding on the nature, types, and quality attributes of care households provide to both persons with disabilities, and the most vulnerable marginalized individuals in society.

The envisaged research would include linkage to map out root causes, types of factors, drivers, and defined levels of marginalization at household and individual level associated with caregiving, and the individual caregiver. The research should also include a systematic assessment and analysis of the basic costs, the challenges, constraints, and other experiences in caregiving at the household level. Attributes of quality and required competencies for household-based caregiving and among household caregivers could also be included. This gives rise to an opportunity to carry out collaborative and participatory research at two levels: -

- i) one to create concrete and systematic analysis and evidence-based documentation on household-based caregiving and caregivers and their status, situation, condition of life, well-being and the significance of caregivers and caregiving and how these influences the disability space;
- ii) second research to set basic standards and benchmarks to enhance the quality, monitoring, and tracking of household-based care on disabilities thus establish basic baselines for household quality of care indicators in disabilities.

Seclusion of persons with disabilities and other most vulnerable persons at the household level

φ There is very limited systematic documented data and analysis on seclusion in disabilities and among the most vulnerable members of society at the household level which provides insights on reasons causing seclusion, nature of seclusion, and its effect on the household as a whole and the secluded persons with disabilities. This is an opportunity to carry out collaborative and participatory research to: -

i) explore and document seclusion in all its types, and develop databases at the Sub-county level of the numbers of secluded persons with disabilities, classification of their disabilities, including documenting the most vulnerable members of society at the household level. It should also examine the typical households socially, economically, politically, and how in other spheres such households rank in society and provide evidential attributes on types of disabilities and vulnerabilities for which households find cause to seclude, linked to a systematic analysis of the factors, elements, and drivers of seclusion.

ii) systematically examine the psychosocial perspectives and elements of seclusion at the household and the individual secluded person level and document empirical evidence on the effects of seclusion on the individual and then on the household. Establish whether or not, only disabilities and vulnerabilities are secluded or whether other roots and causes exist that induce and drive seclusion at the household level.

iii) Recommend to County Governments means mechanisms and processes and procedures to monitor and track seclusion and how the counties might go about facilitating reduction of seclusion of persons with disabilities, the most vulnerable and others unforeseen individuals whom the study might identify.

Needed Action: *The project has an opportunity to undertake further systematic research focusing on household caregiving and caregivers of persons with disabilities. The research would need to explore factors that define benchmarks for household quality of care for persons with disabilities, and then document root causes of factors seclusion of persons with disabilities. In addition, it can support Embu County to develop relevant policies informed by the research to influence the national level towards improved evidence-based work on disabilities.*