

KENYA LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND INITIATIVE

POLICY BRIEF

TAITA-TAVETA 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 disability itself is informed by personal and social perceptions about disability and also by views and lived experiences with disability. The perceptions and notions are strongly driven by a lack of holistic awareness, information, and knowledge. They are driven by superstitions, biases, stereotypes, stigma, suspicions, and unquestioned beliefs on the root causes and reasons behind the occurrence of disabilities.

Summary of Issues

According to the Kenya Bureau of Statistics, Taita Taveta County has a rate of 2.8% in the prevalence of disabilities. Research findings showed that in the County, mobility, visual speech, and hearing disabilities recorded higher prevalence than other types of disabilities. Observed evidence denoted that mental disabilities are high but might not have been adequately documented. The research also noted that there is an undocumented number of secluded (hidden) persons with disabilities at the household level in the county. This denotes that in Taita Taveta County data on disability is not fully comprehensively documented.

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

Taita Taveta County has several civil society and humanitarian agencies. It also has fully-fledged local CBOs focusing on disabilities in Taveta Sub-county. Organizations found in the county planning to conduct upcoming surveys were World Vision, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. In the envisaged survey the two are collaborating with other local organizations and partners to collect disaggregated data on disabilities at village, Ward, and Sub-County levels. There are no questions on inclusion and meaningful participation or disabilities as a key factor in the tool proposed for that survey.

In Taita Taveta County, social inclusion and meaningful participation by persons with disabilities have opportunities in aspects of employment, representation by persons with disabilities as political representatives, and appointments. There are other opportunities through access to government initiatives, programs, and projects, business and employment by other employers locally or externally. The research noted that participation, engagement, and involvement among persons with disabilities are hindered by among other factors:

- ϕ lack of awareness, information education, and knowledge and skills among persons with disabilities;
- ϕ the perception that society does not regard persons with disabilities as adequately able;
- ϕ exclusion of persons with disabilities from meaningfully engaging to participating in forums of social governance and others;
- ϕ perceptions that persons with disabilities did not have adequate capacity to represent; voice issues;
- ϕ strong sense of stigma, shame, guilt, and fear at the household level about disabilities in the family.

Needed Action: *Taita Taveta County has already identified the need to enhance disability disaggregated data and disability strategies. The relevant departments with support from the National Council for Person with Disabilities and other departments and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics have been working on some initiatives towards this. Currently, the National Council for Person with Disabilities in collaboration with World Vision and other actors is working towards locally based disaggregated disability data at Ward and Sub-county level using household sampling. The project can engage with National Council for Person with Disabilities in this imitative to strengthen the quality of analysis of the data collected and learn from the process upsizing it to other counties*

2. Existing structures, policies, systems, mechanisms, processes, procedures, programs and projects, that allow or hinder meaningful participation of the different social groups in the implementation of SDGs

Taita Taveta County is proactive about disabilities and has ensured that persons with disabilities are included in its strategies programs and interventions among them; the County Social Protection Policy, Access to Education for All; Access to Government Procurement Opportunities, the County Access to Health for All, and the County Social Cash Transfer mechanisms. These programs and opportunities are available and target "the most vulnerable" persons with disabilities. This means that some persons with disabilities do not have access to them.

Part of the existing programs has been through ensuring inclusion in employment, business, support, and self-help groups. There is also a representation of persons with disabilities in the County Assembly, and some notable persons with disabilities are often invited to attend County forums of one type or another.

The research found that persons with disabilities do not always participate in the decisions of who represents or leads them. It was also noted that some of the representatives of persons with disabilities do not have adequate information and knowledge about the Sustainable Development Goals, human rights, and concepts of social inclusion, citizen engagement, and participation, budget formulation, tracking, and reporting, as well as the Voluntary National Review mechanisms.

In this regard, the representatives of persons with disabilities do not have up-to-date knowledge and mastery of these aspects and issues including acumen on how to engage during processes and forums, and how to use frameworks appropriately in presenting issues on disability and to influence policy, targeted planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting. This is an aspect of the capacity building alongside building capacities of persons with disabilities in Taita Taveta County. Other hindrances identified include but are not exclusive to:

- ϕ inadequate mechanisms, and systems for assessment, identification, classification of disabilities;
- 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 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 employment and business opportunities;
- ϕ expressed levels of nepotism corruption and unfair consideration of persons with disabilities for opportunities;

Needed Action: *The project can collaborate with key actors in the disability sector in the County among them World Vision, Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya, Muhuri, among others to strengthen capacities of relevant county departments on mechanisms that deliver assessment, identification, classification of disabilities; issuing of registration cards, enhanced access to services. The effort would further embrace the processes to increase the dissemination of Disability Mainstreaming, and disability sensitive approaches, enhanced awareness among persons with disabilities of their role in engaging, participating, and seeking avenues for inclusion in county planning budgeting, budget tracking, and other forums to voice their issues on access to services, protection, justice, and opportunities.*

3. Voluntary National Review and Participation

Persons with disabilities pointed out that they did not have inadequate information knowledge on Voluntary National Review. They lacked awareness of opportunities, mechanisms, processes, and procedures and how to use them. This hindered their involvement, engagement, and meaningful participation in Voluntary National Review. Other factors hindering participation in Voluntary National Review include, but are not exclusive to:

- ϕ very few persons with disabilities have the means for movement to locations of meetings and forums to participate or and only very few can be reached on time to participate;
- 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.

In relation to this, existing county participation mechanisms for persons with disabilities in Voluntary National Review was inhibited by lack of information, inadequate mobility by persons with disabilities to forums and set locations to participate and inadequate resources for facilitating the county processes of engagement, involvement, and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

4. Participation mechanisms for Persons with disabilities

Taita Taveta County has mobilized many self-help and social support groups of persons with disabilities, several factors continue to inhibit citizen participation in important forums thus: -

- 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 the county did not have adequate means to provide transport of different categories of persons with disabilities from different localities to participate;
- 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 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 key offices in the county perceived that it is costly to have to include and involve persons with disabilities for they have special needs persons 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 inadequate capacity among groups and organizations of persons with disabilities on how to prepare, to represent, present issues, etc.

5. Disability Sensitive targeting Planning and Budgeting

In Taita Taveta County disability sensitive targeted planning, and budgeting is inhibited by a lack of appropriately relevant data to use for identifying, prioritizing, and targeting disability needs, outcomes-based planning, and budgeting appropriately. The research study identified the following hindrances among others:

- ϕ priorities, plans, and budgets were not adequately based on disability sensitive baselines thus plans led to generalized service delivery;
- ϕ budgets on disability are reduced or cut back when there was a financial shortfall;
- ϕ budgets on disabilities tended to be small and with limited scope for lack of adequate data and information about disabilities;
- 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.

6. Reporting and county budget formulation

The County budget formulation, budget tracking, and reporting did not adequately address the priority needs of persons with disabilities. The Taita Taveta 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. A cursory review of some of the county initiatives on disabilities denotes issuing of generalized assistive devices and appliances, some limited rehabilitation in few health facilities, Mwatate, Taveta, and Voi. Other aspects affecting budget formulation were thus: -

- 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 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 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 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 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;
- ϕ persons with disabilities could not therefore adequately influence budget formulation or provide feedback on budget plans and project implementation.

In this connection, there is a need for increased budgets, improved approaches to create mechanisms by which engagement, inclusion, and participation among persons with disabilities are promoted at the county level is improved. There is also a need to strengthen the capacities of persons with disabilities for their roles in representation, participation, presentation of issues, and influencing.

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.

Needed Action: *The project can undertake advocacy and lobby towards improved and enhanced engagement, participation, inclusion, and involvement of persons with disabilities in processes focusing on disability-sensitive county planning, budgeting, and interventions at all levels. This should be guided by disability-specific disability disaggregated data, information, and priorities, that promote continuity in service delivery on disabilities with adequate need-based budgets.*

7. Inequalities and intersectional disadvantages that lead to exclusion

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics has provided advanced coverage on disabilities in that it has reported six categories of disabilities up to the Sub-county level in each county (Kenya National Census 2019). However, the current data on disabilities is not disaggregated adequately to highlight in situ inequalities, nature, types, and severity of disabilities and intersectional disadvantages. Taita Taveta County has some immediate plans to address the disaggregation of data to address the gaps in data and has identified this as a crucial need. This will be undertaken by the County National Council for People with Disabilities in collaboration with World Vision and other partners.

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 society in Taita Taveta County is not open on intersectional exclusion associated with intersex and different sexually-oriented persons;
- 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 persons 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: *Aspects of intersectional inequalities are "silent" and community members, officials in county departments in Taita Taveta County, civil society, and faith-based entities prefer not to talk openly about the issues in this space. The project can support Taita Taveta County to systematically document analyzed data that profiles and highlights interventions that address intersectional inequalities publicly. This will build on interventions for addressing intersectional inequalities targeting root causes of marginalization through awareness building and engage key county departments to enforce improved access rights, protection, and justice.*

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

Taita Taveta County government is addressing disabilities and has a County Social Protection Policy. The County National Council for Persons with Disabilities collaborates with other county departments/units to facilitate inclusion participation and response to disability issues. In 2019, the County Assembly noted that there was inadequate data on disabilities and passed a motion that adequate data on disabilities be compiled to create a county-based database for planning, targeting priorities on disabilities in the county. The county is open to working with stakeholders and agencies with interest in disabilities in the finalizing of the policy. This provides 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

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, and how factors, drivers, and defined levels of marginalization at household and individual level associate 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 lived 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

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 and develop databases at the Sub-county level of the numbers of secluded persons with disabilities and the most vulnerable members of society at the household level and to examine the typical households socially, economically, politically and in other spheres they rank in society and provide evidential attributes on types of disabilities and vulnerabilities for which households find cause to seclude, with 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 Policy Action: *The project can support key actors in Taita Taveta County to undertake systematic research that collects and documents evidence on household caregiving, and caregivers of persons with disabilities analytically. The research should explore root causes of factors seclusion of persons with disabilities and refine commonly-shared benchmarks for household quality of care for persons with disabilities, which will contribute and influence the development of relevant policies informed by the research at the national level towards improved evidence-based work on disabilities. The outputs of research would inform the policy formulation relevant for the county and use that as a base to upscale issues at the national policy level.*