

DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES KENYA



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About this report

This report was developed by the International Centre for Evidence in Disability at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and the Department of Public and Global Health University of Nairobi, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.

The report aims to inform Mastercard Foundation's disability and inclusion programming and strategy development. It draws on in-depth qualitative interviews with young men and women with disabilities, exploring their lived experiences related to education and employment in Kenya. This report is a part of a series developed for each of the seven countries for this project *Disability-Inclusive Education & Employment: (1) Country brief: Kenya; and (2) Understanding the context: Kenya.*

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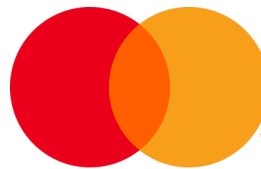
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Disability-Inclusive Education and Employment: Understanding the experiences of young men and women Kenya

Executive Summary

- This research explored the lived experiences of young men and women with disabilities in Kenya through in-depth interviews with 32 young persons with disabilities. The study included a mix of participants with various disabilities (including physical, visual, hearing, psychosocial, and intellectual impairments), aged between 15-35 years, based in urban and rural parts of Kenya. Participants were purposively selected to reflect varied access to education and vocational training, employment in the agricultural and the digital sector.
- The findings highlight that although the right to education and employment is provided for in the Kenya constitution, many youths with disabilities continue to experience exclusion.
- Families of children with disabilities often face challenges identifying and enrolling their children in appropriate schools. Their decisions are influenced by several multifaceted factors that include the type and severity of impairment, household socioeconomic factors, type and proximity of learning institutions.
- Financial barriers were widely reported as limiting access to education, including higher education. While education support such as bursaries are available, they only cover tuition fees and the family is left to manage the remaining costs.
- Young people's experiences in education were mainly shaped by inaccessibility of school infrastructure and lack of accommodations in teaching practices. Although these are the responsibility of the education provider, these barriers are sometimes overcome with support from peers.
- Despite the constitutional provision on employment for persons with disabilities, they remain excluded in gainful employment. Transitioning from education to employment was difficult for many young people with disabilities. Despite being skilled, they faced challenges related to inaccessibility of information about job opportunities, and discriminatory practices in hiring and providing accommodations. As a result, youth often took part in vocational training, internships, or re-trained as teachers.
- Although agriculture is a potential employment avenue for youth with disabilities, they faced several challenges. These include attitudinal challenges where youth with certain types of impairments were misperceived as unsuited for farm-based work. Inaccessibility and unavailability of training, lack of resources such as land and capital, and low availability of information about the range of opportunities in the agriculture sector were other key barriers.
- Young people interested in the digital sector experienced significant challenges translating their skills and technical expertise into employment in the sector. They reported knowing of limited job opportunities which were difficult to secure or retain due to reasons including discriminatory practices and inability to access adequate assistive products. Financial costs associated with appropriate assistive technology was another challenge for youth aspiring to work in the digital sector.

- Digital skills are an enabler to education and employment opportunities. However, it remains inaccessible to many youths with disabilities. Access was influenced by type and severity of impairment as well socioeconomic factors because assistive digital technology was costly, and skills training was limited in availability.
- Access to assistive products and to digital skills training were noted as facilitating factors in education and employment. Support from family members, friends, peers, and community members were also strong enablers of participation and attainment.
- Many youth participants had experienced stigma including negative attitudes and stereotyping, bullying, violence and abuse, and discrimination and exclusion in education and employment settings. Drivers of stigma included lack of awareness of the capabilities of youth with disabilities, and misconceptions around disability.
- This study also explored the intersectionality of youth experiences. The visibility of a person's impairment can influence how they are perceived and treated by the community. Women with disabilities experience compounded discrimination as both disability and gender carry forms of marginalisation and stigma.
- The evidence indicates a gap between young people's aspirations and opportunities available to them. These were most influenced by discriminatory attitudes and practices.
- Recommendations included stronger policy implementation and enactment of laws to increase inclusiveness of persons with disabilities; improved monitoring of provisions and policies to facilitate reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities; more efforts to create awareness and sensitise communities to address drivers of stigma; wider availability of assistive products and digital skills; and wider range of interventions and financial support options to better match the aspirations of young people with disabilities with opportunities.

Source: Light for the World



Introduction

About disability

According to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) people with disabilities include those who have *“long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”* [1]

Estimates suggest that there are 1 billion people (15% of the world’s population) living with a disability globally [2]. People with disabilities often experience barriers to accessing education and employment and this can cement cycles of poverty and exclusion [2,3]. Globally, people with disabilities also face marginalisation other aspects of society [2].

Research in Sub-Saharan Africa shows that with the right support, people with disabilities can achieve economic success. Investing in education and employment for people with disabilities should be part of development efforts, as based on an economic rationale, as well as social justice [4].

Disability in Kenya

According to the 2019 Population and Housing Census, the prevalence of disability in Kenya, among people 5 years and older, is 2.2% (2.5% among women and 1.9% among men)¹ [5]. Note that this is likely a low estimate, given that the World Report on Disability estimated 15% prevalence.²

Available evidence suggests that people with disabilities face a range of challenges and exclusion in key life areas, with barriers including negative community attitudes towards disability, inaccessible facilities, limited assistive products and accessible learning materials, lack of funding, lack of skilled and trained personnel, and ineffective enforcement of laws [1-3, 6-8]. Exclusion of people with disabilities in education and employment remains a challenge [1], and as a result people with disabilities are more likely to be poor [3]. While access to education and employment are a human right as provided United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), people with disabilities are persistently excluded [2].

¹ Disability was assessed using the Washington Group short set of questions and defined as reporting ‘a lot of difficulty’ or ‘cannot do’ with at least one of seeing, hearing, mobility, self-care, communication, or cognition.

² Disability is complex to measure. Differences in the way disability is measured and defined in different surveys may explain some of the variation in prevalence estimates. This includes the questions used, how they are asked and thresholds applied to define disability for the purposes of disability statistics. For more discussion on this, please see Box 1 in our Phase 1 reports.

Introduction

Disability policy context in Kenya

In 2003, the Government of Kenya adopted the Persons with Disabilities Act, and in 2008, Kenya ratified the UNCRPD. The Persons with Disabilities Act (2003) has recently been repealed and is in the process of being replaced by the Persons with Disabilities Bill (2021), to ensure the law is consistent with the UNCRPD and the Constitution, and to promote a rights-based approach to disability inclusion. The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Development have the mandate to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities, while the National Council for Persons with Disabilities is responsible for follow-up and enforcement of the law, ensuring that each government ministry mainstreams disability inclusion in their policies and services. Over the past decade, the government has established a National Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities (NDFPWD) and the Cash Transfer for Persons with Severe Disabilities (PWSD-CT) to increase access to employment, education, training, and rehabilitation services [9].

Research done for Phase 1 of this project involving interviews with key stakeholders (including government agencies, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, educators, and employers) revealed that despite a strong policy framework on disability inclusion, people with disabilities continue to experience exclusion from education and employment. Gaps in implementing, enforcing, and monitoring policy and programmes contribute to this exclusion [9]. See our Phase 1 report [here](#) for an in-depth analysis.

Education in Kenya

The right to education for all citizens is guaranteed in the Kenyan Constitution (2010). Within the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Special Needs Education is charged with the responsibility of coordinating the provision of education services for learners with disabilities.

Recent analyses of the 2019 Census data, conducted by the Disability Data Initiative, highlight a disability gap in education; youth with disabilities were less likely to have completed primary and secondary school compared to their peers without disabilities (primary school: 37% versus 43%; secondary school: 18% versus 33%) [10].

Employment in Kenya

Youth in Kenya comprise 60% of the labour force, although ILOSTAT data show that around a quarter of youth are Not in Education, Employment or Education (NEET) [11]. Data from the 2019 Population and Housing census (analysed by the Disability Data Initiative) found a much higher share of youth with disabilities were Not in Employment Education of Training (42%) compared to youth without disabilities (10%) [10]. A slightly higher proportion of youth with disabilities were in work (50% versus 44%), but they were more likely to do informal work compared to youth without disabilities (60% vs 55% of those working) [10]. According to 2015/2016 Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey over half of people with disabilities reported 'difficulties engaging in economic activities' because of their disability [8].

The government's efforts to address youth unemployment in Kenya include addressing barriers they face in entering the agriculture sector and digital economy. The Kenya Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2018-2022 [12] appears to address factors that hinder the participation of youth with disabilities in agriculture, such as gaps in appropriate technologies targeting youth with disabilities, limited awareness, and uptake of agricultural technologies and inadequate resourcing.

About this study

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of young men and women with disabilities in Kenya, highlighting barriers, facilitators, gaps, and opportunities regarding their inclusion in education and employment. This research involved in-depth interviews with 32 young people with various disabilities (including physical, visual, hearing, psychosocial, and intellectual impairments), aged between 15-35 years, based in urban and rural parts of the Nakuru and Bungoma counties of Kenya.

Regarding education, we collected data from youth with disabilities currently in formal education (secondary, tertiary, and vocational), those who had received some formal education but were not working, and those who were not in education and not working. In terms of work, the research focus for Kenya included disabled youth engaged in the agricultural and digital/Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sectors.

Further details of methods, and breakdown of participant characteristics are provided in the Appendix.



Findings

The findings of this study are presented in five parts: (1) education; (2) transition from education to employment; (3) experiences in the agricultural sector; (4) experiences in the digital sector; (5) reflections on cross-cutting issues that shape the experiences of young people with disabilities in Kenya. Case studies are provided throughout the report to demonstrate the experiences of selected youth participants (all names and identifiers have been replaced to preserve confidentiality and privacy).

EDUCATION

The Kenyan policies on education state that inclusive education strategies must be adopted at all levels of education, including university (e.g., Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities 2018 [9]). Inclusive education is where learners with disabilities are in classes together with learners without disabilities in mainstream schools. This differs from special education where learners with disabilities may attend some or all classes separate from non-disabled learners. Typical issues with special education schools are that they may be of poorer quality, while inclusive education, if not implemented well, may include learning material or teaching method are not adapted to suit a learner's impairment [13]. In Kenya, implementation of inclusive education policies is limited, largely because government investment is insufficient for schools and education institutions to acquire necessary accessible learning materials, or assistive products, to help students with disabilities learn. This leaves the financial burden of procuring assistive products and other accessible learning materials on students and parents. (See our Phase 1 report [here](#) for an in-depth analysis) [9].

Out of the 32 interview participants, three had incomplete primary education, one had completed primary school, one dropped out of secondary school, three were in secondary school, and 24 had attained secondary or tertiary education. Where possible, we highlight the ways in which their access and experiences differ by their level of education.

Nderitu

Nderitu is a 25-year-old man with a hearing impairment. He began his education studying in a mainstream school and it was not until when he was 12 years old and in Class Seven that his mother sensed a problem with his hearing.

Prior to his disability being diagnosed, learning was difficult for Nderitu, and his peers did not believe he had problems with his hearing. Following his diagnosis, he enrolled in a special needs school for the deaf. In the beginning, studying at the special needs school was not easy and he faced communication challenges. It took him a year to master sign language, but having teachers who could sign made learning easier.

Nderitu was determined to pursue a college education, but the path to higher education was not easy. He first undertook a course in electrical engineering but was forced to drop out after nine months as it proved too difficult. His mother then enrolled him in another institute where he studied Information Technology.

Access to education

Findings in this section will be presented according to key stages along the journey to access education, including (i) identifying and enrolling in schools or other educational institutions; (ii) paying for education; and (iii) reaching schools and educational institutions.

Identification and enrolment

The process of identifying and enrolling youths with disabilities into schools varied with type and severity of impairment, socioeconomic factors, availability/proximity of schools, and the level of education. Starting education in a mainstream school was common, but learners with disabilities were sometimes moved to special needs schools. As the quote below shows, special needs schools did not always match the impairment type for the learner, which meant the teaching and environment often did not match their access needs.

“As for me, I learned in a regular school where we are usually learning with other ordinary people. That is where I was until Class 7 when I got somebody who was teaching far, but he was from my area, and he took me in the disability school. It was not comfortable for me because it was for physically impaired [students] and I was visually impaired. I struggled until I did my Class 8.” (Female, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

Transition from secondary school to college was often difficult for youth with disabilities because they had to identify institutions suitable and willing to accommodate their access needs. This was the case for one youth participant who spent five years at home, after finishing high school, before being able to join college:

“...I thought it was just God willing I did my Form 4. I remained at home for about five years struggling with life. Then it was just like good luck, I met somebody who was somehow sympathetic, then she took me back to college. I don't really even know the process she passed [me] through. When I applied for the training to enter college, when I take my certificate to the county educational level [institute], my certificate was just ignored. They told me that you are not qualified to train as a teacher. So, I remained just struggling there, then this person just accepted my certificate. (Female, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

Interviews suggest that much more targeted support is needed to help young people with disabilities navigate key transition points—both into, and through education systems—and to identify facilities that accommodate their specific needs.



Source: Flickr

Paying for education

Since primary education is free, the burden of raising school fees was related to accessing secondary and higher education. Thus, household socioeconomic factors were instrumental in whether a young person with a disability attended or continued with education. For a household with limited resources, the decision to take some children to school and leave out others meant that the youth with a disability would often be the first one left behind. However, if the household income was stable, the youth with a disability was taken to school alongside the other children.

I: You told me that, is it only you that didn't go to school in that family, or the others didn't go to school as well because of fees?*

P: Just me alone that didn't continue with my studies. But the rest studied well.*

(Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

Several youth participants described parents struggling to meet their educational needs leading to delays in academic progression onwards from secondary school. This was a particular challenge in single-parent households:

"I grew up knowing that my mum was the only person who paid my school fees because my dad was not there" (Female, 18-24 years old, has a psychosocial impairment)

Some financial support options appeared to be in place, particularly for higher education. These included support from the government through the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), county-level bursaries, and scholarships from private organisations. As the quotes below show, the support varied greatly.

"Luckily enough I was placed at [detail removed] which is nearer to the National Council. So, when I went there, financially we were down. We didn't have anything to pay as school fees during admission. I thank God, the Dean of students at that time admitted me with zero payment. I paid nothing. I had applied for Higher Education Loan (HELB) as I wait to join. I was admitted, first term ended, no payment. The National Council paid for me 70,000 KES [700 USD] for two years and HELB paid for me 60,000 Shillings [600 USD] for one year. And the other arrears the school itself took care of it. That was 10,000 Shillings [100 USD]" (Female, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment).

"One time I applied to the National Council for school fees. At least they paid a small amount. They paid almost 20,000 Shillings [200 USD]. And another support I got was the county government CDF money. I applied there and they paid for me almost 15,000 Shillings [150 USD] and the rest of the school fees it was my father who paid for me." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Failure to complete tuition fee payments could result in delay in graduating and collecting final academic certificates.

“In high school, I faced a lot of challenges. Although we were paying half the school fees, my parents were not able to pay the remaining fees. When I was completing school, I had arrears but by good luck. The sponsors of that school came and paid school fees for those who had high arrears. Then when I went to take my certificate... I hope you remember when the Jubilee government in 2013 ordered the clearance of those who had balance and had not taken their certificate, I was among those who had not taken their certificates” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

In these instances, youth are forced to find work so as to raise capital to pay fees arrears to obtain their academic certificates. For example, the same participant from the above quote reported selling farm produce.

Overall, the data suggest that cost of education, and availability of financial support for tuition, are key barriers to education for young people with disabilities at all post-primary levels of education in Kenya. Lack of financial resources is a common driver of non-attendance in this setting, even among non-disabled learners. However, people with disabilities are on average poorer and can face additional costs associated with disability (e.g., for accessible transport and assistive products), and are therefore likely to be disproportionately affected by financial barriers to education [3, 14].

Accessing schools or other educational institutions

Across the different levels of education, parents and siblings played a key role in supporting school attendance for young people with disabilities. These experiences varied by type of impairment. For those with visual impairments, environmental factors often made it difficult to navigate to and from school, and within school, on their own.

“I was being guided to school by my parents in the morning or my siblings... When it was raining, most of the time I missed school, whereby I could not be able to reach school because of the rain. Sometimes, you don't have an umbrella [because] your siblings have gone because they fear strokes in that school. So, you are left behind. Then, for example the rain is over, you fear you will be beaten by the teachers. Then you just remain home.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

There were also challenges even when distances were short. Youth with physical impairment reported missing or arriving late to school during rainy seasons during which the terrain became impossible for users of wheelchairs or crutches to navigate.

“Sometimes it starts raining when we are on our way. And when it rains, the road is so bad. When it rains in the morning, it makes me get to school late because it forces me to wait for the rains to stop before I leave for school” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

Another participant, a young woman with both intellectual and physical disabilities said although her home was not far from the school, the journey to school makes her tired:

“I come to school on foot, and it makes me so tired, but I just have to press on and hurry to school” (Female, 18-24 years old, has an intellectual impairment)



School timing was also a factor, for youth with some impairment types, in terms of safety and ease of navigation.

“In primary, as I was in a day school, I missed most of the morning lessons, whereby they were teaching from 5AM in the morning I was not able to walk at that time to reach school.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Youth with disabilities reported facing a range of barriers to educational participation which – taken together – suggest that support with transport, and human support for day-to-day mobility, are much-needed interventions in the country. While some informal support is provided by family and peers, this is idiosyncratic, and formalised services are needed.

Experiences during education

For those youth with disabilities in Kenya who successfully navigated access to educational institutions, their experiences during education were shaped by two main factors: (i) accessibility and accommodations; (ii) teaching practices. These are in addition to the other cross-cutting enablers and challenges reported under the ‘Reflections’ section of this report.

Accessibility and accommodations

Accessibility and reasonable accommodations are an essential component of inclusive education, as well as a fundamental human right for people with disabilities, yet they are often inadequate, inappropriate, or entirely non-existent. Young people expressed positive and negative sentiments around access and accommodation at education institutions, and these varied with type and severity of disability. Students with physical impairments noted the lack of enabling adaptations such as ramps and lifts for those who use wheelchairs and crutches. For some, their situation was further aggravated by worn out and ill-fitting assistive products:

“The challenge that I always encounter is that in most cases, they will want us to get in a [multiple] storey building for ICT practical. So the building has no lift and I find myself struggling with the crutches and they don’t have a sponge.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

Infrastructural barriers also include the lack of accessible washrooms, particularly in institutions outside Nairobi:

“Some institutes lack washrooms. Walk around institutes in Bungoma, you may even end up not getting any institute having that toilet for the disabled. I even went and [marked] Sigalagala, which has one.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

There were few mentions of accessible environments allowing easier mobility:

“First the compound is disability friendly. At least in that compound you cannot slide because it was well constructed. Even the classes are in good position.” (Female, 25-35, has a physical impairment)

Physical inaccessibility of educational institutions was an ongoing challenge reported by young people with disabilities. It appears that both the lack of appropriate assistive technology, and a dearth of adaptations to physical spaces, were drivers of inaccessibility, pointing to the need to provide assistance and accommodations at the individual and institutional levels.

Teaching practices

A few students attending mainstream schools described situations that contravene the principles of inclusive education, where they should be taught alongside non-disabled students via teaching and learning material that have been modified to suit them. In one case, teachers who were unwilling to adjust their teaching left the students with disabilities to be taught by one teacher, regardless of impairment type and varying access needs.

“So, life in school was very hard but it was just the struggling. [...] We only had one teacher and the other teachers did not care about us. So, for example, if you want to inquire something from the other teachers, they were just telling us, ‘Just go and wait for your teacher.’ And the teacher was the only one teacher dealing with about 15 physically impaired students at that time.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Inadequacy in teaching led some youth to drop out of school, sometimes without basic reading and writing skills, because they did not get the required help.

“I don’t know how to read. When exams come, I just fill in what I will get.... When the teacher explains and doesn’t write them on the board, I don’t understand. So, I had to come to this place and do a tailoring course” (Female, 18-24 years old, has an intellectual disability)



Source: Flickr/Oxfam East Africa

For youth with visual impairments, in addition to their challenges navigating around the institutions, there was a lack of material in braille or large print (for partially sighted students). Although these are the responsibility of the education provider, these barriers are sometimes overcome with support from peers.

“So, it was just a struggle as we paid our fellow students who are willing to assist us or who are able to assist us with any support possible. For example, in terms of reading. So, for those who were totally blind and for me, I am partially blind. So, I was not able to read those textbooks or storybooks. So, I just asked my friend, or that one who will be willing to read for me as I listen, and then I answer the questions as they come in the exam.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Those with hearing impairment had challenges accessing sign language interpreters in the learning institutions, and this was more significant among those in higher education. In one case, it appeared that engaging sign language services were left for the students to arrange, and not the university.

“I had to look for an interpreter, where I was paying that interpreter to help me understand what other people were saying or what the lecturer teaches. [...]. For a day, I was paying him 5000 Shillings (50 USD). Sometimes I had a challenge of lacking the money, so it became a challenge for me to have an interpreter, because at the time I was getting money from my parents. When I was in school it was very hard for me to have that money, sometimes I cooked myself food because I carried food from home. When sometimes I do ask my parents to send me money, they take a long time. So, most of the time I wasn't with the interpreter” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a hearing impairment)

Despite gaps in inclusive teaching practices, some youth participants noted how support from the school administration created positive attitudes in the teachers and fostered the same among the students.

“...but also, the environment, it was very conducive. We were given our rooms to read so they were very clean. I can say for those who were totally blind, in fact, the one who was organising the rooms made sure that they are clean so that we read comfortably, or we don't have accidents.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

In some instances, the support included the school communicating to the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) about the learner's accessibility needs.

“They communicated with KNEC [that] I do large print and they gave me more time for the exam. That's the reason I'm here where I am, because of the school management of [detail removed] for giving me ample time. I didn't have any difficult time with that school.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Similar to experiences of the physical environment of educational institutions, youth with disabilities encountered numerous barriers to participation in learning due to a lack of appropriate educational materials. This seemed to be particularly marked for youth with sensory impairments, and there is a clear need for wider coverage of provisions for inclusive education, including teacher training. In the latter respect, it is clear that where teachers are motivated, trained, and supported by the wider educational environment, they make a significant positive contribution to youth's experience of education.

TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT

The youth participants shared various experiences of transitioning from education to employment with most expressing difficulties. Key challenges identified in youth narratives included informational barriers (e.g., job adverts are not sent out in braille or large print formats), and difficulties proving their academic qualifications: a knock-on effect from those who could not complete course fee payments. Other challenges included discriminatory practices because of their disability (elaborated under Reflections).

Given these difficulties securing suitable employment, young people with disabilities engaged in a range of activities to increase their chances of employment, including vocational training, retraining, internships, and freelance work.

Bella

Bella is a 21-year-old young woman with intellectual and physical impairments. She resides in Nakuru county with her parents and siblings. When she was a child, her parents noticed she had mobility problems, and she was taken for corrective surgery. She moves with the help of walking aids.

She attended a special needs school for her primary education. Although she was keen to study up to Form 4, she had difficulties grasping what was taught unless the teacher wrote it on the board. As the school mostly had learners with physical impairments, the teaching was not adapted to her needs, and she stopped progressing. Because of the demand for space at the special needs school, Bella was forced to drop out of Class 7, and was advised to move to a vocational school.

Her parents enrolled her in a four-year course to learn tailoring and fashion design. Although she learned to make only a few items because of her learning difficulties, she finds the students and teachers to be supportive. Bella does not yet have a phone which she would like to use to take pictures of her sewing and post on social media.

Vocational Training

Vocational training is one way to obtain skills for employment. However, there were relatively few mentions of vocational training (such as baking, sewing, and hairdressing) that were offered to the youth participants. The interview data suggest that students moving to vocational training were largely those who were not progressing in education due to lack of school fees, having attained poor grades, or because they were not well-matched to the class they were enrolled in.

“So, I had to come to this place [vocational centre] and a course was decided for me, so I came here. I am doing Fashion and Design. Because I wasn’t progressing in primary [school], I was told to sew this and this, then I knew how to sew” (Female, 18-24 years old, has an intellectual impairment)

The young woman’s above quote highlights a lack of autonomy; young people are sometimes moved to vocational training classes without being given the opportunity to choose which kind of skill or vocation they want to pursue.

Retraining and freelancing

Despite having technical expertise, young people with disabilities remained without work. Some youth described re-training as teachers to increase their chances for employment.

“I trained there for a diploma in ICT, so after completing I went to [detail removed]. After completing my training at that college, I went to advance and came back for teaching practice.” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

Some report being encouraged to do freelance work:

I: How did you get to learn about freelancing?

P: Through friends, online, and also through family as well. They see what I could do and they could see it is a good idea if they could hook me up with one or two clients and now it has just become referral.

(Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Although these are both examples of how young people with disabilities try to leverage their existing skills and training, it is important to note that not all youth with disabilities will have the resources to retrain or do freelance work.

Internships

Young people also reported seeking internships as a way to prove their capabilities to potential employers:

“Later I requested a job because I was one of the trainees there and the principal told me that I will start as an intern until a chance comes up then they will confirm me on the board” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

However, there was a perception that some employers were offering internships with no real intention to follow it with job opportunities, but instead using it as a way of claiming they have fulfilled the 5% employment quota required by Kenyan legislature.

“There is also this notion with the 5%. No, it could have been much better if the government had said 5% of employment not intake. Because they usually count even internships and attachments as part of the 5%. They will call you in for an internship, but they will never call you back in for a solid job. So they count the internship as having given someone a job and or an opportunity. It is good they are giving you something but knowing there is no opportunity after this... [that] there is no guarantee of getting a job no matter how good you perform and it actually breaks your heart” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Overall, all the steps on the pathway from secondary school to the labour force were paved with challenges for youth with disabilities. Opportunities for systems strengthening include financial support for needs-aligned education and training, wider availability of work experience opportunities with appropriate remuneration, and structures to support youth with disabilities’ retention in the workplace.



Source: Flickr



Source: Flickr

EXPERIENCES IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

The agricultural sector is the predominant sector of Kenya's economy, accounting for 54% of those in employment and 80% of the rural workforce [15]. Agriculture and the wider value chain further account for 60% of Gross Domestic Product and 69% of export earnings. Despite the importance of agriculture, there is limited evidence available on the experiences of people with disabilities in this sector.

Eight participants were sampled to provide deeper insight on experiences of people with disabilities working in the agriculture sector in Kenya. In addition to those sampled, several others reported varying levels of engagement in some agricultural activities.

The analysis highlighted two types of challenges, and several needs with which people with disabilities may be supported.

John

John is a 29-year-old man with multiple physical impairments. He was born with epilepsy and acquired a severe physical disability following a fire accident that led to the amputation of both legs. He is currently a university student pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in animal health and production.

Prior to the accident, John was a student pursuing a course in Medical Laboratory. The decision to change to animal health and production was motivated by the need to pursue a career that could lead to self-employment.

Despite facing doubts from peers that his disability will limit his work as a veterinarian, John aims to prove them wrong. In the future, he hopes to work in veterinarian labs and looks forward to starting an agro-vet business, in addition to poultry farming.

Challenges related to type of impairment

Interview participants with experience in agriculture included two young people with physical impairments, two with visual impairments, two with hearing impairments, and one with an intellectual impairment. Challenges varied depending on the nature of the impairment and type of agricultural activity.

Those with physical impairments reported experiencing challenges around mobility, as well as assumptions from peers and prospective employers about their physical limitations:

"Yes, there were challenges that I faced at school. Okay you will find these people, 'You are an amputee of both limbs, why are you doing this course? Because this course needs people who go to field work'. While I was doing my course going for an attachment, it was like this: 'Vets go to the field. How will you manage it?' But as I told you, creating more friends is good. I got a friend who told me why can't I try [detail removed], that agricultural [training institute] where there are labs there?" (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

Participants with physical impairments also highlighted challenges with transportation, such as being unable to take common (and affordable) means of transportation, such as a motorbike, to and from farms, and difficulty transporting produce from the farm to the market.

"I really like farming but maybe in terms of cultivation I have a challenge. And also transporting the agricultural products from my farm poses another challenge to me. Maybe I have harvested maize, but I don't have the tools and equipment to help me." (Male, 25-35, has a physical impairment)

For those with intellectual impairments, it was typically the case that they helped on family farms rather than undertake agricultural work on their own. Family members report that youth with intellectual impairments were productive and independent members of the team, but that some allowances had to be made for high- and low-functioning days, much like how non-disabled people also have high- and low-productivity days.

“She is very hardworking as I told you. When she is tired, she can be, like I am, tired. At first when we had just introduced it to her, it was a bit difficult still the issue of having a reverse brain at times [...] When it happens, you just know that the head is not functioning well, and you just have to send her home. But the day she is not disturbed, she can really do good work. [...] We are trying to train her in that area also knowing that as she is growing, she is growing into a woman. Where at least she should be able to have food for her children in future and even for herself” (Caregiver of Female, under 18, has an intellectual impairment)

It was evident from the analysis that people’s impairments were not considered insurmountable barriers to working in agriculture. Much like non-disabled people that own small farms, they too require people to assist them with certain tasks, and these employees needed to be trustworthy and supervised. Thus, with proper assistance, success is possible for people with disabilities working in agriculture.

I: So, how is your experience as a person living with disability and doing farming at that level?

P: Now, I do tree planting. However, I bring on board the right people to help me. This requires money which not everyone may have. For instance, you are growing trees, you need a tractor for instance to plough for you, find seedlings. From there, take care of them... It is an elaborate process. Remember, you are not seeing what you are doing. If a person helping you is fishy, you will not get anything. So, you need to get the right people on board and have the money to help you. Remember, you are not doing it by yourself. You know! Like, I grow matoke, you know! You have to find the right suckers, then put in money, you have to get a tractor... because I do it in a large scale. So, you also need to get the right person to do it for you. Remember [as a person with visual impairment], you are not seeing it. So if you are not careful, there can be a lot of manipulation. (Female, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)



Challenges because of attitudes

It is evident from interviews that negative attitudes, assumptions, and stigma often permeate all aspects of life for young people with disabilities, including in the agricultural sector. Attitudinal barriers presented here only pertain to that of working in agriculture (for all others, see Reflections).

For example, participants reported negative attitudes from employers and assumptions that the young person would be unable to handle farm equipment:

“As I had told you earlier, this disability makes many employers look down on you while you know your ability. Eventually you get dismissed. Some employers also say that you might mishandle the equipment and maybe destroy it in the process.” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

One participant described people with disabilities being vulnerable to theft, as community members can exploit their impairment to steal poultry or crops:

“Another issue is the ignorance of the community. When they see that a person living with disabilities may be in poultry keeping, they steal your chicken. When you have planted your maize, they can steal maize from the farm because they take advantage of your disability. They say that that person will not run and get me, so I will get it and run away. Or when you have no vision, they say that that person cannot see me, let me steal. So when you get to go to the farm, you find that there is nothing.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Several young people highlighted the importance of education and skills training in helping people with disabilities navigate and resist discrimination. They described how education can empower people with disabilities to understand and fight for their rights. One participant recommended that agricultural trainings should include information on resisting stigma as they pursue a career in agriculture:

“That is easy. [I recommend] they be given that opportunity of having a course like that. [So] they get their certificate and also, they should be taught how to overcome the stigma that is there. So, they should be taught that the about managing stigma.” (Female, 18-24 years, has a psychosocial impairment)

Needs

Analysis of youth narratives highlighted three ways in which youth with disabilities may be supported in the agriculture sector. These are in addition to cross-cutting enablers like assistive products that are detailed under Reflections.

Land

Land ownership was another overwhelming barrier for young people with disabilities. The young people highlighted that access to land lies at the intersection of power dynamics, familial discrimination, lack of capital, and limited information.



In Kenya, land is typically passed down through the family. However, young people with disabilities are often refused this inheritance due to discriminatory beliefs from the family that they are undeserving or incapable of successfully cultivating it because of their impairment.

“People living with disabilities are getting challenges even in the family. They see it so hard to give a person with disability the land. They see that maybe this person tomorrow is going to die, there is no need of giving them the land. So, most of the families deny giving them the land.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

“Maybe that person doesn’t have that land where they can cultivate because parents of the disabled children do oppress them very much. That’s why most disabled people like living with their friends, they don’t want to live with the family because they undermine them. Because a lot of the deaf parents don’t take care of their children knowing that they don’t have any importance in life.” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a hearing impairment)

When asked if participants knew of any young people with disabilities who were successful in acquiring land independently, one interviewee explained that this is likely only possible if the person is educated, has a higher status, and knows how to navigate the process.

“There are few, not many. And maybe that one person, if you look at their status, they are more educated, they are working and they know their rights. But people who have not gone to school they are not more informed about it.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

The interview data showed that when it comes to engagement in agriculture, and the other sectors explored in this report, both the problems and solutions are complex. To address issues of land ownership, it is important to combat discriminatory attitudes within the family and community, increase opportunities for people with disabilities to obtain capital, and improve access to information on how to navigate the system, develop their skills, and exercise their rights.

Training

Outlined below are some training needs, described by young people aspiring to succeed in agriculture, highlighting clear gaps to which programmes could respond.

Most participants engaged in agriculture had little to no training and learned their skills informally.

“We find that person does not have the skills necessary for maintaining the vegetables. So, we need to have, at least people especially in agriculture, we need to have the project supporting persons with disabilities to go for training and afterwards they can support them with fertilizer. Maybe they can also support them with maize seeds to plant and also do a follow up.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

One participant reported benefitting from free agricultural trainings in his district, but suggested it would be more helpful if trainers offered visits to inspect individual projects and provide specific advice:

"I think some more professionals should be involved. And also, a follow up should be done. For example, when you meet with experts, I think they should be in a position to visit individual projects. For example, they can come to my place and observe what I am doing. What am doing right, what am doing wrong and to help me improve what am doing." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Financial support

Lack of capital was reported as one of the central barriers keeping young people with disabilities from working in agriculture, including capital for start-up costs, land, training, and fertilizer.

"I wanted to start my agricultural projects, but you see for you to start any project you need money of which I don't have now. That's why I'm still staying with my sister, but I wanted to start an agricultural project like chicken farming, something like that. I have many projects in my projects book that I really want to start, but cash is everything." (Male, 25-35, has a physical impairment)

For those who do have access to land, participants pointed out that without the necessary start-up capital to purchase materials and equipment, some are forced to rent their land to others rather than cultivate it themselves.

"Yes, there are some, and others have land, but they hired because they don't have the money to take part in farming. They rent it to someone who gives them a small amount." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Given the high cost of agricultural endeavours, improving access to loans and other funding schemes to cover start-up costs is an important gap that needs to be addressed. One participant recommended increasing access to microfinance for people with disabilities to engage in agriculture:

"First, they may give them something like microfinance whereby they start a business, or they start farming. Before they start farming, they empower them through youth groups where they gain information, after that they empower them with microfinance and start a business. After the business, they will start to earn a living through the self-employment." (Male 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

Good practice examples

Youth narratives highlighted three examples that improved their experiences in the agricultural sector.

Bee keeping initiative

One participant described a community-based organisation that runs a beekeeping initiative using donated equipment and honey harvesting material. The project is supervised primarily by those who are visually impaired, as well as a few members who are sighted, making it a positive example of an inclusive agricultural initiative by and for people with disabilities.

"The idea was that beekeeping is not as involving as other forms of agricultural you know, farming, right? Because all you need to do is just find a good place to place your beehive. Make sure that the environment is conducive for beekeeping... You sit back and wait because the honey, the bees, will do the rest of the work for you till the three months they are over then you can come around smoke them through the honey harvest and you let them come back." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Flexible payment scheme for farmers

Another participant highlighted the positive impact of a farming collective providing seeds and fertilizer which allowed payments to be made in instalments. This model allowed the young person to begin farming without the initial start-up cost. After the harvest, he earned enough to pay for both the materials and unsettled school fees.

"I joined a farming group called [detail removed] and they gave me maize seeds and fertilizer, but you pay in instalments. Since I was not able to pay the [farming group] I made sure the output was good and sold, so that I could manage to pay them. Then the remaining balance I went and cleared my school fees." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)



Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO

Agricultural Workshops

Two young people reported participating in short agricultural training workshops in their local communities that benefitted their engagement in agriculture. One workshop was offered for free through a local agriculture office and provided important information related to raising produce and livestock:

"Yeah, sometimes agriculture, we have visitors who come, from, from, how do we call it? They do they do, I do attend seminars here and thee, to help me understand the, for example, how to control diseases on poultry, how to do hygiene, and also how to improve production." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

This participant found the workshop highly beneficial in terms of learning useful information that could be implemented on his farm and connecting with other experts in the field of agriculture.

"The best part is the information part! You get the information, and you are able to use it and you see the fruit of it. That's the best part. And to interact with the experts, in search fields, that's the best part." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Another participant attended a training that improved her knowledge of poultry keeping, particularly regarding disease prevention and vaccines, as well as understanding how to market and sell her produce.

"For me I went for training at [detail removed], so I got knowledge about the steps a farmer needs to take maybe when you plant. So not only in farming but also live-stock. Maybe in poultry keeping, especially I'm interested in poultry keeping. You have some stages of vaccine you need to give that chicken, and also the feed the chicken need to eat and also after there, you need to look for the market to sell you products... It gives exposure and you get money from that." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)



Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO

EXPERIENCES IN THE DIGITAL SECTOR

Six interviews provided deeper insight on experiences of people with disabilities in the digital sector in Kenya. These experiences ranged from digital marketing to social media content creation to teaching in Information Technology (IT). However, nearly all participants in this sub-group reported having to rely on another job for income while their work in the digital sector remained aspirational or voluntary or as an income supplement.

The reasons behind this difficulty, leveraging their qualifications in IT for income, were not always specific to their disability identity. For example, one participant with an interest in creating digital content to raise awareness about mental health conditions lacked the skills in videography. Similarly, another with training in digital marketing aspires to put these skills to use as an online vocational teacher but struggles to complete her teaching qualification.

These gaps in skills and opportunities are likely also experienced by many young people without disabilities. However, there are two factors that make this translation of skills to employment in the digital sector more difficult for youth with disabilities than those without: limited opportunities and financial barriers.

Njenga

Njenga is a 31-year-old man with a visual impairment. At the age of 25, he lost his sight and subsequently his career as a graphic designer.

Njenga then trained in radio journalism and works freelance as a professional voice over artist. He has faced challenges obtaining work as a journalist and often relies on word-of-mouth referrals, particularly because job adverts are often in a format that is inaccessible for him, and others with visual impairments are excluded.

Challenges due to limited opportunities

One barrier to participating in the digital sector stemmed from challenges in securing any employment, reasons for which include discriminatory hiring practices and inability to access adequate assistive products (detailed under Reflections). As a result, youth with disabilities tend to seize any offer of employment, particularly ones that they feel they can manage with their impairment type.

*"Before I got this internship, I had failed five interviews. One thing is that when you have psychosocial issues, anxiety is a key player. You could easily lose a job you are qualified for, because maybe you are tense during the interview and lose words. So, that has been one of the challenges and truly anxiety can make you not get the job. And as I said earlier at some point it really gets to you especially when you have mental disorder to be consistent to work."
(Male, 25-35 years, has a psychosocial impairment)*

Challenges because of financial barriers

People with disabilities must tend with extra costs related to their impairment, such as procurement of assistive products to aid their functioning (see Reflections). As a result, they are often poorer and require financial support to participate in education and work [3, 14]. This support is available to some but may not be sufficient. For example, one participant with hearing impairment described a sponsor managing the cost of a sign language interpreter, though it still meant he could not afford other essential things.

"No... [transport] fare was my own responsibility, and lunch... so that's how it was. So sometimes if I had something in my pocket, I would get lunch. If not, I would just fast. Because if... okay, you see, for the attachment, they were not paying. But if it could be an internship then maybe they could pay, but for attachment there was no payment." (Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

Needs

Despite these challenges, several young people described a keen interest in working in the digital sector and were engaged in the field in various ways. One youth participant applies his skills to fix computers during his studies:

"This skill will help me learn online. This skill will help me do my... even if I get employed somewhere... that's why I will tell my friends 'Why take these things to town? Why can't you give me I do it for you?' And be part time. 'Don't take this thing to town. Give it to me'. [...] While on campus, it helped me a lot in getting more cash. And you see on campus, every almost everyone has a laptop. [It] is at least daily and [I] get like 500 Shillings (5 USD) and like 1000 Shillings (10 USD)". (Male, 25-35 years, has a physical impairment)

The analysis revealed several ways they may be supported to transform these activities into livelihoods, including through access to training and equipment.



Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO

Training

One participant had created a digital space for people to talk about mental health that he moderates and supplements with information he finds online. He dreams of scaling up this project. This requires him to learn videography and editing, which he cannot afford on what he earns from his regular job. Another has been teaching himself graphic design through YouTube, which he hopes will increase his chances of success with his job search.

In addition to providing these technical skills training, it was also evident that these young people wanted to learn about monetizing these skills. For example, one young person was skilled in digital marketing but needs guidance on how this can be applied to her ambition to become an online tutor.

Equipment

Although there were some options for support, it was noted that sometimes these were mismatched to the opportunities available in the digital sector. This was a source of frustration for some:

"[The National Council for Persons with Disabilities NCPWD] have a platform called NCPWD Exclusive and it is a platform, a job platform, in partnership with FUZU (non-disability-targeted job platform). It is a job platform, you look for jobs to apply for, jobs for persons with disabilities are uploaded there. And most of these jobs are digital. I don't remember the last time I got onto the platform and saw opportunities for tailors. Yet you are telling me what you can give me is a sewing machine. We are educated and we have the skills and even the person using the sewing machine is a graphic designer. And he needs to do some designing and some research, but you are saying you cannot give them a laptop. It does not make sense. Stop buying us these sewing machines and get us laptops." (Male, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

Good practice example

One youth participant described how he was supported from training to internship placement, through his job search. Sponsored by an International NGO, he first attended an IT course that included a range of supports.

"You know at [detail removed], I also had sponsors. They gave us laptops; we were also given new teachers from Kenyatta University [...]. We had a privilege, lunch, we were also given breakfast, we also had accommodation for the day scholars, they were also given [transport] fare. So, they had so many opportunities." (Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

He was then placed in a seven-month paid internship at a major telecommunications company where he was able to apply his IT knowledge. During this, he was provided with a sign language interpreter, and had a supportive work environment where his manager was responsive to his access needs. Following his internship, he applied for a job with the company for which he has been interviewed. He is still being supported by the NGO in searching for opportunities and job applications.

REFLECTIONS

Described below are reflections on cross-cutting factors that shape the experiences of young people with disabilities in Kenya.

Esther




Esther is a 28-year-old woman born with Spina Bifida. As a child she underwent several surgical procedures, which resulted in challenges like incontinence.

Esther holds a diploma in Business Management and currently works as an administrator with an agriculture project outside Nairobi. In terms of assistive products, Esther uses a crutch to enable her mobility; however, she reported needing adult diapers, as incontinence limits her mobility and engagement with the public.

Although products like diapers are not typically thought of or provided as an assistive product, Esther says we must look beyond what is ordinarily known to provide more comprehensive assistive support.

Assistive products

Assistive products are equipment or devices that enhance an individual's functioning in education, work, and daily life. The table below shows the type of assistive products used by the study participants, noting that this study did not involve assessing the need (or unmet need) for assistive products.

Impairment type	Number of participants	Assistive products used
 Physical	8 (All 8 had mobility difficulties of varying degrees)	Wheelchair = 1 Walking stick = 4 Crutches = 3
 Visual	6 (Of these, 3 could not see at all, and 3 were also people with albinism)	White cane = 1 Glasses = 3 Sunscreen = 3
 Hearing	6 (Of these, 4 could not hear at all)	Hearing aid = 1 Never used = 2

The analysis of narratives on assistive products revealed three aspects: (i) variation in access; (ii) ineffective or faulty products, and (iii) the high cost of products limiting initial access, replacement, and upgrading to more effective models. Ultimately, these factors contributed to increased dependence on friends and caregivers.

Access to assistive products varied greatly across participants. Some young people had no access to assistive products and others discontinued use over time due to faulty products. However, the central theme throughout was the exclusionary cost of purchasing, replacing, and upgrading appropriate assistive technology.

Variation in access

Several young people reported having no access to assistive products, such as one visually impaired participant who described attempting to obtain a white cane in secondary school and being turned away. They did not receive a cane until attending college.

P: Back then I had no help. I got this after enrolling in college. There's a certain group that came and gave us this white cane but back then there was nothing I used. I tried in secondary school, but they said that I had applied for too many forms and that I should let others apply so I just gave up.

I: So in secondary school you never used any device for movement at all?

P: Yes.

I: How did you manage?

P: I just had to. Those who saw that I was blind would help me but I just moved around without any device.

(Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Ineffective or faulty products

Nearly all participants with hearing impairments reported challenges with their hearing aids, including loud buzzing noises, only picking up very loud sounds, and general issues with hearing aid fit and dysfunction.

"Maybe when I received some sounds or voice that's the only thing it could [do]- amplify the sounds. Maybe to get something, but it wasn't that comfortable. Or maybe when a vehicle is approaching, you are able to hear the sound because the... mostly they are picking up that sound, yeah so that's how [I] hear but when [people are] talking it was hard." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a hearing impairment)

Participants also highlighted issues around ineffective, broken, and outdated devices. For example, one young person described difficulty using the school's braille machine:

"School had a braille machine but there was no paper, it was easier for a friend to help. I'd just have to use my phone or just team up with a friend and when they write in their normal handwriting, they'd read it out for you and that too was hard because sometimes it's hard to understand other people's notes when they maybe write in short form or maybe they also missed a certain subject." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

One participant reported having access to E-readers through school, but that they were in poor condition and the teachers said the school could not afford to replace them. Instead, like the previous participant, the young person depended on friends to assist rather than available devices:

"The readers were there, but they were not in good condition, whereby I was just asking for my friends to read for me. So, they were there but they were not in good condition for me to use." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Prohibitive cost of assistive products

Participants highlighted difficulty accessing assistive products due to prohibitive costs. This varied based on the participant's impairment and needs. Those requiring more expensive assistive products were disproportionately affected, such as participants in need of electric wheelchairs, prosthetics, or hearing aids.

I: Have you used hearing aids before?

P: No, I have not.

I: Is it something you'd want to use?

P: Maybe.

I: Have you tried to get some?

P: I have always wanted but the problem is money

(Female, 18-24 years old, has a hearing impairment)

Source: Flickr/Moving Mountains Trust



For some of the young people, they were able to access basic versions of their assistive products, but reported needing a new, or more advanced version that was too expensive. One participant described needing a smartphone for specific features:

"It takes quite an amount of money because by the fact that I'm visually impaired I cannot use a single simple phone. I need a smartphone that has that is enabled with a screen-reader and talkback have voiceover with a screen-reader, a screen-reader that is actively up to date because some of the screen-readers are so old school they don't they don't seem to merge well with other software. (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

He also described the high cost of more advanced screen-reading software, which pushes young people to download it through the black market:

"No, not yet. That is only a computer and unlike the phone, a phone comes installed with a screen-reader. For the computer, again you have to install, which costs another 40 thousand (40 USD) for a one user screen-reader software called JAWS, which is the best. You can go with a free user which is actually free, and it is called NVDA but again it is a bit limiting because there are some keystrokes in the computer that do not work with NVDA but they work with JAWS... I mean which, as an assistive software, it should make work easier for me, right? So, we opt for JAWS. Now most of us end up getting it through the black market, the cracked versions, because the cracked version is half the cost, but again it is still quite risky because is not well insured. It can get locked at any given time whenever you are connected to the internet. It can come along with viruses and affect your computer. So, it is still expensive and is a risk that you have to take, but what do we do?" (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Similarly, he reported being able to access a normal white cane through local OPDs but wanting an enabled cane to connect to a smart phone.

"Come to the white cane a normal white cane. You can walk into, let say the Kenya Society for the Blind and get a free white cane but again it is not a standard white cane, like this, is made in China because it is wide and a standard white cane is usually slimmer and the reason why I have to use it is because it is the only one available... [...] This one is not enabled, the other one can be enabled because it is slim because what happens is, the smart cane device is usually slipped from the bottom all the way to the top. So, now you can use it using echolocation because it usually has haptic vibrations. Sensors that usually detect obstacles that are above knee level from two to eight feet depending on the range that you've set, right now with this one, I cannot use that haptic device." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

Several participants reported that a lack of access to more advanced assistive products reinforced their dependence on other people.

One of the goals of assistive products is to allow people with disabilities to be more independent, yet the data indicates that many of the young people interviewed still rely on caregivers and friends to assist with tasks that should be made easier with assistive products.

"Yes, I require both because even though you have the assistive products, you need someone to help you to transport commodities such as maize. When I go somewhere, I cannot just go alone. I must go with somebody." (Male, 25-35 years, has a physical impairment)

Another young person also expressed frustration around increased dependence due to being unable to afford prosthetics:

"But you see, they are expensive. They're expensive. And you see when my family supports me... I want a lightweight product again [...] when you are disabled and dependent on others [it] is always like this person is disturbing. Just like this person. They criticise you, you pretend and live carefree pretending like you are okay when you're not." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

With assistive products that are often inaccessible, faulty, or too expensive, many of the participants reported this limiting their ability to work. For example, this visually impaired young person:

"The challenges I am having to get work; so, you know without being employed as a teacher with the [Teaching Service Commission, TSC]. When I get employed by the TSC, I may look for a guide or I may buy the spectacles to guide me and teach. But at the moment I am not able to go and teach because I don't have the devices to help me to teach comfortably." (Male, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

Taken together, limited access to, and the low quality and high cost of assistive products, created barriers to participation in education and work for youth with disabilities.

Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO



Digital skills

Digital skills were powerful facilitators to enhance young people's independence, participation in society, education, and work.

Like many young people, the youth participants with disabilities embraced digital skills as it gave them a sense of independence. Apart from the youth participants in school, most of them had smartphone and had the skills to use them for functions of daily life. This was of particular benefit for those with visual impairment who would otherwise have to depend on another person for these activities:

"When you called, we were talking and yet I was operating my phone very easily. I do transactions on MPESA (digital banking) very easily. I chat on WhatsApp and social media, I send emails, I receive them." (Male, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

Having digital skills varied with the type of impairment, primarily because trainings or classes did not accommodate their access needs. These ranged from training venues being inaccessible to use of interfaces that were difficult with their impairment type without the necessary adjustments:

"Okay, in terms of course delivery, sometimes we found it difficult because of the method we were using. Maybe we were doing a practical, and we were not able to see very well. [With] the computer, you struggle, but when it's theory, it's easy. But issues with the practical, it made me sometimes struggle a bit." (Female, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

Some youth with disabilities reported having to organise their own learning:

P: ...lucky for me I had someone who had used it before who is also a [visually impaired person]. It's a friend of mine from Kingston, Jamaica. He's the one who taught me how to use it so I would call him on WhatsApp every single day at nine in the morning and he could train me how to use it for an hour and allow me to do whatever I have been trained on for that day till the next day for about a month and it was so much fun.

I: So that means there was no one there [at the institute] who would train you?

P: No, even my own teacher who taught me journalism did not know such a software existed. It was not well known in Kenya.

(Male, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

As the above quote shows, there is a reliance on knowledgeable friends with similar impairments, or there would be financial costs associated with this. Thus, not many young people with disabilities can arrange or afford this.

There were some mentions of good practices in providing skills training for young people with disabilities. Kenya Society for the Blind, and the Disability Centre of Kenya were among some examples named. A group called the Digital Trust Organisation were also named as providing ICT as a co-curriculum activity.

Regarding the ways in which digital skills may help facilitate employment, the interviews indicate that a lot remains to be done. For example, online job portals are great sources of opportunities for those with enough digital skills to navigate them. However, if these portals are inaccessible to people with visual impairment, they are being excluded from these opportunities.

Stigma

Participants described experiencing stigma and in many aspects of their lives, including from family members, peers, teachers, prospective employers, and the community at large. Below, we outline the ways in which stigma affects education and employment, highlighting key forms of stigma that young people with disabilities often experience including (i) negative attitudes and stereotypes; (ii) bullying and violence; and (iii) discrimination and exclusion.

Negative attitudes and stereotypes

For some young people with disabilities, negative attitudes are experienced first within their own family. Participants described assumptions and stereotypes from family members that they are not capable of doing well in education.

I: Why didn't you ever go to school?

P: You know in many families; they find a child who is born with albinism like a curse or just bad luck. So, some of the parents who understand take their children to school. The majority don't take their children to school because they don't find a reason to.

I: So, in your family, they decided because of your disability there was no need to take you to school?

P: Yes

I: And did you have the desire to go to school?

P: Very much

(Female, 18-24 years, has a visual impairment)

This extended to peers and community members too, where people with disabilities were thought of as needy or burdensome:

"Sometimes maybe a person, he is passing along the road and when I greet them, they don't respond. Or when they respond, they do it unwillingly. Sometimes when I need support and when I try calling someone, they don't pick my calls. Because they just think I am after money." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

Bullying, violence, and abuse

The young people interviewed also experienced bullying, (i.e., derogatory language, harassment, being demeaned by peers), and violence.

"Yes, she would tell me, 'You have become mad (umekua chizi)', and sometimes I would do things, and they would laugh at me with my brother saying, 'Look how she looks (ona vile kanakaa)'. Those words really hurt me." (Female, 18-24 years, has a psychosocial impairment)

They experienced this in the community, and in learning institutions and work environments. Sometimes the mistreatment and violence were experienced at home:

"Since I was young, it was good with my parents, but when I reached Class Eight they started mistreating me. I had one [nonverbal] friend, I used to go to his place, we stay, and speak because we could understand each other. But when I go back home, my parents get mad at me. My parents [would] say, 'Don't eat here, don't sleep here. Go back to your friend, and eat and sleep there.' So, it forced me to sleep outside like street children. That's what made me decide to leave home. But during school time, when I go to school, I felt that I am more at home. When I came back home, my uncle punished me, [he] cut my legs with [a] razor blade. So, I just had to endure the torture that I was going through. When I completed Class Eight, I decided to run away from home and came to wander in [detail removed]. I don't even remember home that much. Here I found friends, and I am moving on with life." (Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO



Discrimination and exclusion

Discrimination and exclusion based on disability is a pervasive form of stigma highlighted by many of the participants. In the interviews, young people reported discrimination during and in their pursuit of employment:

“As I had told you earlier, this disability makes many employers look down on you while you know your ability. Eventually you get dismissed. Some employers also say that you might mishandle the equipment and maybe destroy it in the process.” (Male, 25-35 years, has a physical impairment)

Sometimes this was related to the accommodations the employer would need to make if they hire a person with disabilities:

“...what happens is when I apply for a job and you apply for the same job, there is higher chances that you will get a job and I won't. Not because that I am not skilled or am not skilled [...] but because they look at me like a liability. Why? The moment they hire a person who is visually impaired or rather someone who has a disability that means they have to incur the cost of adjustments of the workplace, that means having to put in place assistive equipment, a computer that is compatible, software that are compatible, all of which they could avoid by hiring a person [...] who does not have an impairment. Secondly, is that there is that belief that persons with disability don't have much [...] So, I'm working twice as hard to get to where you are. It's not easy. It takes a lot of intervention. [...] because when I get hired by a company, the government requires them to give me an allowance of 20,000 Shillings (200 USD) for my guide from their pocket and they will be like, 'Why [should I] hire you, when I can hire someone who does not need such accommodation?'” (Male, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)

There were numerous reports of being excluded by peers and other community members, leading to isolation.

“They always say that I am like a stone, because [they say], 'We have tried to make her leave, but she is still here.' I just look and keep quiet.” (Female, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment).

Drivers of stigma

Understanding the drivers of stigma towards people with disabilities can highlight strategies to change negative attitudes and improve inclusion for young people with disabilities in education and employment. For example, lack of awareness and understanding often frames disability as contagious, or divine punishment, attaching shame to people with disabilities.

“My friends were running away from me, and [saying] that when I became deaf it's something like a curse. That I have been cursed. So, my friends were running away from me. They thought they would even be cursed as I was. I stayed alone, I walked alone, but I thank God it was a short time” (Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

Ted

Ted is 16-year-old young man with a physical impairment. He acquired his disability at the age of 13, suffering an injury while playing football. Ted's mother could not afford to have his injury treated, resulting in permanent mobility challenges.

Ted is currently in his third year of secondary school. Although Ted loves to study, he experiences a lot of stigma from his peers. They tell me that "you are *bure* ('nothing' in Kiswahili), you are following us, and you cannot walk. In case of danger, you will get caught and put us into problems; make us get caught because you cannot run."

Negative attitudes from peers makes it difficult for Ted to watch them play football—the sport he loves—and contributes to social exclusion.

Some of these also stem from spiritual beliefs, perceiving disabilities as a form of punishment.

"Mostly in the community people look at you and tend to think that you did something wrong that's why you are disabled. Some speculate it was an act of witchcraft which made me disabled. There is a lot of gossip around the community." (Male, 25-35, has a physical impairment)

These beliefs are particularly prevalent towards people with albinism, making them vulnerable to violence.

"So, sometimes when we get a person living with albinism in the community, they are isolated. Some say that it's a curse, some say that you are a devil some even say that you are medicine." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

"So, we should be treated like other [non-disabled] people. The only difference is our skin, our hair and the colour of our eyes. You find someone saying that they should pinch you a little bit to see if you will bleed. If you pinch me, I will feel the same pain you will feel." (Female, 18-24 years, has a visual impairment and albinism)

It is evident that stigma remains a significant issue for young people with disabilities in Kenya. As such, it is imperative that any intervention to support education and employment for these youth also address these beliefs held by family members, community, educators, and employers.

Support structures

Despite the pervasive stigma and discrimination people with disabilities continue to face, the young people also described examples of support from family, friends, teachers, and community members.

Family

Family support was said to make a difference in the lives of many youths, most commonly in helping them achieve personal aspirations and giving them a sense of belonging.

"Sometimes when I go home my uncle, I lived with my uncle, he helped me. He taught me math, we revised with him math. Any subject my uncle could support me. I improved slowly..." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a hearing impairment)

Friends and peers

Support from friends and peers had a range of benefits including creating a sense of belonging, lessen impairment-related barriers, and reduce the impact of stigma.

The support of peers in learning institutions was important in reducing mobility challenges and accessing learning materials.

Yes, most of them knew me even before losing my sight and after losing my sight we now even become closer and bonded and became more friends to date. So, they could pick me up, one of them, one of them could pick me [and] [...] take me up to school. And on my way back I could just call him. Then I headed down to the entrance then he picked me up from there, and we headed back. So that was part of your support system. It is actually, still is, because we formed a bond that I don't think any [bond] ever existed as such because even now, whenever I feel like I'm getting stuck, if I call one of them, he will come and pick me up from where I am to anywhere I want, for free. (Male, 25-35 years, has a visual impairment)



Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO

Peer groups were also instrumental in supporting youth who may not have had supporting families.

"I was not proud of myself, I could not even look myself in the mirror and say, 'You are beautiful'. However, since I entered [detail removed], I found... I can say people were like a family to me. Like the family that I never had, because at times they would call me and ask, 'How are you?'" (Female, 18-24 years, has a psychosocial impairment)

Belonging with other persons with disabilities

Connecting with other youth with disabilities who share similar experiences provide a powerful support system and it also offers opportunities for mutual empowerment and shared resources.

"I'm a member of [detail removed] Deaf Club [...] We practice football, we contribute on how we are going to travel. And it has been very hard for us because we don't have any support considering we are also people who are not employed. We also enjoy [it] when we communicate together, and we feel like we belong when we meet in that group. Okay, in our club, we feel like we are a family and whenever one of us is having challenges we always support each other" (Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

Shared understanding of experiences also led to help with problem solving and support.

"Encouragement! Let me just say encouragement. There you meet friends who are disabled who know challenges that we face, we share our challenges, we encourage each other. And if you are having issues with your department which you cannot solve you talk with our head who will talk to them and make it easier. (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)



Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO

Intersectionality

How, where, and in what ways young people with disabilities are included or can participate in education and employment varies greatly based on factors like gender, location, severity and type of impairment, and other aspects of identity. It is important to examine this intersectionality, to better support their inclusion.

Type of impairment

The type and severity of impairment can impact a young person's experiences. Those with more severe impairments likely experience disproportionate discrimination, and more barriers to participation in education and work. Moreover, the visibility of a person's impairment can influence how they are perceived and treated by the community. For those with invisible or less obvious impairments, the young people reported stigma and accusations around not having a real disability.

"...before, when I got into that day school, learning wasn't easy. I had so many challenges. Because you know people will always say that I am pretending, that I'm not a deaf child, but you know, for that, you just had to cope up with that." (Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

This experience was echoed by participants with intellectual impairments and invisible mental health challenges:

"Sometimes I got stigmatised, 'That girl that always cries for nothing.' And again, I could get stigmatised because they were saying that sometimes I behave like a crazy person. The things I do and feel. Like this is not a normal person." (Female, 18-24 years old, has a psychosocial impairment)

Gender

People with disabilities often experience compounded discrimination as both disability and gender carry forms of marginalisation and stigma. The data highlighted that young people with disabilities face unique challenges such as socio-cultural expectations that differ based on gender. For example, young men reported experiencing a lack of financial support from family members based on their gender:

"I don't get any support. When I finished Class Eight, I always just look after myself and my family... All my family members are just there, they are not rich they are just there, and they don't support me. So, I just find [work] for myself since I'm a man." (Male, 25-35 years, has a hearing impairment)

They also reported gendered expectations and pressure around being the main earner in the family, which is challenging when their disability influences opportunities and inclusion in employment:

"Sometimes I may get a job, but it becomes too hard for me to cope, and my family starts worrying since I'm not getting any money. My wife is a housewife making me the sole breadwinner. My colleagues sometimes don't want me to work with them since I may slow them down." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

For young women with disabilities, participants reported challenges around gender-based violence, pregnancy, parenting, and marriage. As this young woman with albinism illustrates, disability and gender can interact in complex and harmful ways:

“They don’t see you at all. If it’s relationship-wise, that’s why I said it’s complicated. Most men believe that if they have [sex with] someone living with albinism and maybe they are HIV positive, they will get healed. Another thing, 98% of ladies living with albinism don’t have a marriage, because most men maybe are discouraged by their peers from dating women with albinism. Most women living with albinism are single mothers since the men leave after impregnating them. With men, I don’t know because I have not been a man in order to understand what they go through. But I have passed through that because right now I take care of my own children. Maybe the man was discouraged by the people who ask why he went for an albino, so he leaves you to take care of the children alone.” (Female, 18-24 years, has a visual impairment and albinism)

Voice and agency

The extent of voice and agency among the youth varied with the type and severity of impairment, household factors, and family dynamics. Several young people reported having a say in households’ decision making, as well as making financial contributions:

“When we are in the family, maybe my parents are there, we have other kids [in the family]. When the children go to school, I chip in and help pay their school fees. Sometimes when I get the money, I can’t just use that money all alone. We have to share with the parents to support my sister. My sister is in university. I support her in terms of school fees, and we support our friends who are poor” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a hearing impairment)

Being financially independent and being able to contribute to the household financially had a very positive impact on young people and improved their relationship and standing with their family and friends.

I think it has given them hope that I am no longer dependent on them as I used to [be] when I lost my sight. And [it] also encourages them in the sense that one day when I get a job, I could actually live a normal life, even have my own family and support them. I mean, whenever I get a good gig, I am even able to support my mum, send my mum some money to her at home. I support my big brother. Even my friends, when they are stuck, they usually call me, ‘what do you have? MPesa me, I’m stuck’ and I come through for them and they appreciate [it]. (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

For some, their agency was limited by overprotection from family members. A 30-year-old young man with physical impairment and living with epilepsy said he hardly went out without the knowledge of his sister with whom he lived.

“I have to seek permission first; I can’t just go and get out of the compound. If I get [into a] problem here and start calling her [saying] that I have got into a problem, she will be like, ‘I left you at home, why are you here?’ I must seek permission. It also maintains respect” (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)



Source: Marcel Crozet/ILO

Beatrice

Beatrice is a 29-years-old female with albinism. As a result of her condition, Beatrice also has a visual impairment.

Despite the stigma and vulnerability faced by young people with albinism, Beatrice has overcome significant barriers to successfully pursue education and employment. She holds a college diploma in Supply Chain Management and currently works as a village administrator under the County government.

She attributes her success in obtaining the position, to her efforts championing the rights of young people with disabilities in her community. Beatrice's work has provided her with financial independence, allowing her to send her child to school and rent land to expand her agricultural activities.

Beyond families, it was evident that young people with disabilities were active at the community level, with several taking leadership roles.

"We had formed a youth group called [detail removed], although it includes both non-disabled and disabled people. I am the project coordinator. We got another community [group] known as [detail removed] which deals with agriculture, and they funded us with agricultural input. In our group, we have 30 members and each of our members were given chicken. It is a non-refundable fund, so we were given in terms of materials." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

They also played key roles in advocating for their peers.

"As I told you earlier, I'm the chairman of [detail removed] here in [detail removed]. I stand in as a chairman. Maybe if there is no employment, some deaf people might be there who look for employment, we look for them. [Then we go to] different offices, we communicate with them, we ask for a hand to employ some people. We do fight for them because a lot of hearing-impaired people are just at home with no job. We search for better places for them, maybe in hotels and salons, for those who have gained some experience. We help them out." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a hearing impairment)

While it was encouraging to see positive examples of young people with disabilities exercising their voice and agency, it seems closely linked to their ability to earn and work. This indicates that a focus on their economic empowerment is key to promoting their agency, voice, and participation in society.

Aspirations and opportunities

Even though there was information available that allowed youth with disabilities to dream about possible education and work prospects, there was a discrepancy between what they aspired for, are confident doing, and the opportunities available to them. Several participants described how opportunities were limited or denied to them because of their disabilities.

"I wanted to be a nurse or a medic, but they told me due to my condition, it will be too strenuous for me. I have to think otherwise and get a course that won't strain [me] so much. That is how I settled on business management." (Female, 25-35 years old, has a physical impairment)

Societal attitudes about what people with disabilities can and cannot do, remain a major barrier for youth with disabilities. For example, in one educational institute, it was noted that despite several career opportunities, there was a tendency to push people with disabilities to education or legal studies where most of the learning materials is already in braille.

"Because they feel like it is much easier for visually impaired [people] to become a teacher or a lawyer than any other career. And they feel like these are the two careers that fortunately have braille materials. And, 'You being a blind person, you need braille'. That's what they believe." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)

The data showed that most young people with disabilities were just seeking an opportunity to prove their skills and realise their passions.

"Give me a job in the radio station in voiceover and everything will just fall into place on its own. I just need a chance. A chance, just a chance because I have the skills. I have the will, I have the passion, I have the things that I need to have for me to get to work in a radio station. All I need now is an opportunity to do and to apply all that." (Male, 25-35 years old, has a visual impairment)



Recommendations

This study, building on findings from earlier phases of this research, highlights several areas for change to promote inclusive education and employment for young people with disabilities in Kenya. These include:

Improving access to education and vocational training

- Build the institutional capacity of schools to foster better inclusion for diverse impairment types by investing in human resources and training, inclusive learning materials, assistive technology, and structural accessibility.
- Strengthen links between medical assessment and the Education Assessment and Research Centres (EARCS) to improve the referral process following identification of a disability.
- Improve advocacy and awareness of government support and programmes for young people with disabilities to ensure funding reaches and benefits those who need it.

Improving access to employment

- Provide opportunities to gain post-secondary skills for the labour market by strengthening the capacity of vocational and technical training institutions.
- Strengthen policy implementation by developing monitoring frameworks to inform and enforce inclusive employment policies.
- Implement policies and programmes to support young people with disabilities specifically in the agriculture economy and ensure they are inclusive.
- Increase access to digital skills for young people with disabilities to improve their opportunities in formal and self-employment.
- Improve stakeholder engagement to address employment needs of young people with disabilities and provide avenues for experiential learning.

For general programmes and policies

- Advocate for disability inclusion to be mainstreamed in all programmes targeting the education and employment of young people.
- Develop tools and enforcement mechanisms to assess, measure, and improve disability inclusion in policy and programmes.
- Document and showcase successful initiatives for and by persons with disabilities to instill societal confidence, combat stigma, and incentivise further action.

For researchers

- Investigate underlying factors related to health and quality of life for young people with disabilities that may hinder their access and utilisation of education and employment opportunities.
- Improve up-to-date disaggregated data on young people with disabilities, including educational attainment, skills, and needs to inform policy, programmes, and budget allocation.
- Generate evidence on 'what works' for strengthening inclusion in education and work and reducing disability related stigma. Rigorous evaluations of programmes and interventions in these areas are needed.

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Appendix: Methodology

This report is based on in-depth qualitative interviews with 32 young men and women with disabilities in Kenya to explore lived experiences around education and employment. For education, we collected data from youth currently in education (secondary, tertiary, vocational), those who were educated but not working, and those without education and not working. For employment, the research focus for Kenya was the agriculture sector and digital sector, selected in discussion with the Mastercard Foundation.

Qualitative data collection

In Kenya, the interviews were conducted by 3 research assistants (Adrian Sakwa, Jamin Orege Avugwi, and Paul Mugambi), among whom 2 were young people with disabilities. They were led by Emily Nyariki from University of Nairobi, Department of Public and Global Health, who monitored data quality and progress. Prior to data collection, the research team participated in training workshops (jointly with other country teams) facilitated by LSHTM that covered ethical protocols, interview techniques, maintaining data quality, and in-depth discussion of topic guides. Draft topic guides were pilot-tested, and research teams participated in feedback workshops after conducting at least one pilot interview.

Topic guides for the interviews were developed in discussion with the broader project team, Mastercard Foundation and Youth Advisory Groups comprising youth with disabilities based in Uganda and Ghana. Interviews were conducted in Kiswahili or English languages between September to December 2022.

Ethical approvals for the study were obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the KNH/UoN Research Ethics Committee. All participants were provided with information about the study and written informed consent was obtained before the interview. Interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio-recorded after informed consent was given by the participant. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English for analysis.

After data collection and transcription, the researchers participated in a data analysis workshop held in Uganda with other East African country teams to discuss approaches to coding and analysis. A coding scheme and codebook were developed based on the study objectives and emerging themes. Transcripts were coded using the NVIVO Version 20 software and analysed thematically.

Participants were identified in collaboration with local organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) in Nakuru and Bungoma counties and through snowball sampling.

Table 1. Breakdown of participant characteristics

		Male	Female
Age	15-17 years	1	0
	18-24 years	1	7
	25-35 years	16	7
Impairment type (Note: Some participants had multiple impairments, therefore these totals are different from actual total)	Physical	4	3
	Visual	3	4
	Hearing	6	1
	Psychosocial	3	1
	Intellectual	2	5
Education	Currently in education	3	2
	Educated but not working	4	4
	Not in education, not working	2	1
Employment	Working in Agriculture	5	3
	Working in Digital	2	0
	Working in other sectors	2	1
Location	Urban	9	4
	Rural	9	10
Total		18	14

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