



ACCESS TO INFORMATION:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY
IN TANZANIA

NOVEMBER, 2022

This project supported by;



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01

ABBREVIATIONS

AT - Assistive Technology

CCBRT - Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations

NPHC - National Population and Housing Census

PHC - Population and Housing

PWDs - People with Disabilities

TTCL - Tanzania Telecommunication Cooperation Limited

UN - United Nations

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ABOUT ZAINA FOUNDATION

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ZAINA Foundation is a Non-Governmental Organization registered under the Non-Governmental Organizations Act No. 24 of 2002 with the aim of promoting digital rights and inclusion by empowering women (including People with Disability) in technology in Tanzania.

ZAINA Foundation conducts advocacy for policy reform in Tanzania by reviewing policies and laws that affects the rights to freedom of expression and press freedom including digital rights.



RESEARCH OVERVIEW

About the research and the objectives

In ensuring that People with Disability (PWDs) digital rights are promoted and protected, ZAINA foundation conducted a survey in order to learn the inclusion of the PWDs in the use of internet and access to information in their daily life. The research aimed at analyzing the opportunities and challenges that face PWDs in using internet to access information and subsequently provide recommendations to improve PWDs access to information through internet.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

On studying the PWDs internet use and access to information, qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed. Open handed questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion and reviews were done in collecting the required and targeted data. The research involved twelve participants who were purposively chosen based on different criteria's like type of disability one has, working experience, education level, age, gender responsibilities and geographical location. The questionnaire aimed to explore participants' everyday life and experiences with the use of internet to access information and how it affects them socially, economically or relationships among (PWD) work and the meanings they generate about the phenomenon under study.

Number of persons from NGOs, PWDs right groups/organizations and ICT personnel were also interviewed. Several publications and legal instruments were reviewed to establish the status of PWDs, use of internet and access to information in Tanzania. Some of these publications and instruments include; the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 (as amended), the Tanzania National ICT Policies (2003 and 2016); the Access to Information Act, No.6 of 2016; the National Policy on Disability, 2004; the Persons with Disability Act Na. 9 of 2010; and the ICT Policy for Basic Education, 2007.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The PWDs status in Tanzania

Disability is defined as loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical, mental, or social factors. It also defines a person with disability as; any person with physical, intellectual, sensory, or mental impairment and whose functional capacity is limited by encountering attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers .

According to the 2012 Tanzania National Population and Housing Census show that there were 3.6 million persons with disability in Tanzania, representing 8% of the total population , however the new statistics are to be released through the 2022 National Population and Housing Census.

With the 2022 population census statistics its shows that the Tanzania population has increased to 61,741, 120 persons from 12,313,469 that was recorded in 2012, this also implies increase in the number of people with disability.

The literatures suggest that, Persons with Disabilities are among the most exposed groups in Tanzania and the World at large.

In Tanzania, PWDs face many challenges including limited access to transport and information, lack of access to public services and premises, inadequate representation, and negative attitudes of others at home, school and at work . Globally majority of PWDs are mostly under-educated, untrained, unemployed or underemployed, and poor .

Section 3, The Persons with Disability Act, No. 9 of 2010
Tanzania National Population Census, 2012;
<https://www.nbs.go.tz/nbs/takwimu/census2012>
Tanzania National Population Census, 2012;
<https://www.nbs.go.tz/nbs/takwimu/Census2022/>
Inclusion of PWDs in the United Republic of Tanzania, ILO
Fact Sheet; Published on 12 August 2009
Disability Rights in Tanzania, SIDA Tanzania, Published on
December 2014

According to a 2017 study by Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT), illiteracy among Tanzanians with a disability is 48%, compared to the national average of 25%, which is attributed to more than half of children with disabilities not attending school. It is also suggested that persons with disabilities often live in severe poverty due to the challenge of securing a steady income amid widespread exclusion, with only 3.1% receiving income from paid employment .

1.2. PWDs access to internet in Tanzania

There is not enough information covering PWDs access to internet and information in Tanzania. However, the research observation suggests that majority of PWDs compared to other population do not have access to internet hence low access to information. This is caused by number of reasons including; high cost of internet that cannot be afforded by majority of PWDs due to their poor income, poor infrastructure to support PWDs access to internet etc.

As of December, 2019 there were 25.7 million internet users in Tanzania, representing a penetration of 46%. Seven registered telecommunication companies operate in Tanzania which are; Airtel, Halotel, Vodacom, Tigo and Zantel (merged), TTCL and Smart (rebranded from Benson). Of the 47.7 million voice telecom subscriptions, Vodacom had the largest number of mobile subscribers at 15.6 million, followed by Airtel (12.7 million), and Tigo (12.5 million).

Regarding the price of internet, one (1) Gigabyte of mobile internet in Tanzania cost on average 0.71 U.S. dollars in 2022. Out of 60 plans measured in the country, the lowest price observed was 0.36 U.S. dollars per 1GB for a 30 days plan . Though Tanzania is ranked among the 10 cheapest for mobile data in

Access for all, CCBRT;

<http://www.ccbrt.or.tz/programmes/disability/disability-in-tanzania/>

Quarterly Statistics Report of
December 2019, TCRA;

<https://www.tcra.go.tz/statistic/2019%20Quarterly%20Statistics%20Reports/december>

STATISTA; 2022 survey records;

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1181047/price-for-mobile-data-in-tanzania/>

Africa, majority of its poor population cannot afford the high cost of internet, this is worse to PWDs group which is more vulnerable due to low purchasing power (poor income), less knowledge of internet use and other related factors affecting PWDs such as unsupportive internet infrastructures for PWDs.



02



LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE REALITY

2.1. International and Regional Legal Framework

Tanzania has ratified several international and regional legal instruments /treaties providing for PWDs including access to information and digital/internet rights. Summarily, these instruments (both international and regional) require member states to ensure promotion of the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all PWDs without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability[☒] and to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against PWDs.

2.1.1. International instruments ratified by Tanzania,[☒]

Some of the key international instruments in relation to PWDs rights including the right to information and access to internet ratified by the United Republic of Tanzania include[☒]

- (a) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and its Optional Protocol, adopted by the General Assembly on 24th January 2007 (A/RES/61/106)
- (b) UN Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly as Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 .
- (c) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18 December 1979 .

UN General Assembly, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f973632.html>

UN General Assembly, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>

UN General Assembly, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/>

2.1.2. The regional instruments ratified by Tanzania includes;

The key international instruments in relation to PWDs' rights including the right to information and access to internet ratified by the United Republic of Tanzania include;

- (a) The East African Treaty, 1999
- (b) The EAC Policy on Persons with Disabilities, Adopted in March 2012

However, Tanzania is also yet to ratify some of the key regional instruments such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa as Adopted on 29th January 2018 . The protocol is very clear on the rights of PWDs to internet and information access, For Example; Article 13 (1) of the Protocol, states inter alia that; Every person with a disability has the right to barrier free access to ...information, including communications technologies and system, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public.

2.2. National Legal Frameworks

The United republic of Tanzania has number of legislations and policies that directly and indirectly provides for the promotion and protection of the rights and needs of the PWDs and communities. The legal framework extensively covers different issues including specific laws that provides for the rights of the PWDs .

- (i) National Policy on Disability, 2004

The National Policy on Disability sets guidelines and directives for services delivery to people with special needs by focusing on their development, rights, and dignity. The policy encourages the development and empowerment of PWDs and their families through passing laws that are inclusive and sensitive to PWDs rights and needs including; equal participation in political, social and economic activities.

To ensure that the PWDs are able to access information, the policy encourages the provision of user-friendly technical aids, including assistive technologies, to PWDs to enhance their lives and effective participation in their communities.

(ii) National ICT Policy, 2016

In keeping abreast with the 2025 Tanzania Development Vision and appreciating fact development of technology and its integration to socio-economic transformations, Tanzania installed the 2016 ICT National Policy replacing the 2003 ICT National Policy.

Unfortunately, the 2016 policy does not make reference to PWDs unlike the 2003 National ICT Policy which specifically makes reference to PWDs, stating that the policy would “give special attention to providing new learning and ICT access opportunities for women and youth, the disabled and disadvantaged, particularly disenfranchised and illiterate people, in order to address social inequities” as one of its main objectives under human capital development .

(iii) Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Policy for Basic Education, 2007 This policy was formulated by the Education and Vocational Training Ministry to guide integration of ICT into basic education.

It emphasizes the importance of ICT for improved access, equity, quality and relevance of education, and states that appropriate education should be given to persons with disabilities to access and use ICT .

The policy mentions support to ICT facilities for teachers and learners with disabilities, which was provided to the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) and University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). The UDSM has initiatives for the use of ICT in teaching, learning and teacher education, and the OUT has an e-learning program.

Additionally, because of the policy, the Agency for the Development of Educational Management (ADEM) has developed online training program and training videos, which also help learners with disabilities .

Nevertheless, the policy has not attained that much since it was introduced. Some 12 years since its establishment, little has been done to reach the target general outcome of “strategic integration of ICT is expected to improve access and equity to, and quality and relevance of basic education”. In most cases government officials still discuss the matter of ICT access to persons with disabilities as future plans and not as existing actions. For instance, a 2017 study shows that the Tanzanian government had not committed resources to educate children with disabilities .

(iv) The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977

The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania guarantees the rights of PWDs by prohibiting all forms of discrimination . Among other things Article 11 states that the government shall make appropriate provisions for the realization of people's right to work, to self-education and social welfare at times of old age, sickness or disability, and in other cases of incapacity.

The constitution also guarantees every person in Tanzania, the right to information .

This right covers all people including PWDs, elaborately giving all persons the right to be informed at all times of various important events of life and activities of the society. This is very critical to PWDs as they require more assistance in order to realize this right due to the physical, social and economic challenges they face unlike other people. It can be observed that, contrary to the demand of the constitution, most of PWDs fails to participate in issues of national importance such as political elections due to non-implementation of this article.

(v)The Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 9 of 2010

The Person with Disabilities Act, No. 9 of 2010 is the main law, specifically enacted to provide for the promotion and protection of the PWDs rights. Among other things, the law provides for the right to information to PWDs by mandating all heads of public institutions to ensure that information from their institutions is communicated in formats which accommodates PWDs with specific impairment such as visual and hearing impairment with consideration of adaptive technologies, use of language that is clear, legible and easily understood by such persons .

The Act also provides other key requirements to service providers and general public in favor of PWDs, some of the provisions are;

(a) All television stations to provide sign language insets or subtitles in all newscasts, educational programs and other programs covering national events .

(b) All public telephone services providers to install and maintain telephone devices or units for persons with hearing disabilities and tactile marks on telephone sets to enable persons with visual disabilities to communicate through telephone systems .

(c) The Act, through criminalizes denial of access to information and other ICT to persons with disabilities, stating that it shall be an offence for a person with a disability by reason of their disability to be denied "access to public facilities, services, information and communication including new information and communication technologies, and systems open or provided to the public both in urban and rural areas."

(vi) The Access to Information Act No. 6 of 2016

The Access to Information Act, 2016 clearly provides for access to information for PWDs. For example; S.10(4) provides that any person unable to request information in writing from the authority may request the same orally, and the Authority shall give such information by reducing such oral request in writing/prescribed form in order to facilitate such information to the person requesting such information.

The Act also requires the information giving authority to provide the information requested in the format that is friendly to a requester with disability . Specifically, it requires as person with sensory disability to be provided with the requested information in the format that allows the person to read or listen to the record of the information .

(vii) The Electronic and Postal Communications Act 2010

The Act is in place to regulate electronic and postal communications and related services provision.

It mandates the responsible Minister to enact regulations relating to the provision of content to cater for the needs and interests of persons with sight or hearing impairments.

However, 10 years after the enactment of this law, the regulations have not been made

(viii) The Universal Communications Services Access Act No. 11 of 2006

The Act mentions PWDs and sets conditions for universal service providers to provide customers with disabilities with equal services as all other customers so as to have access to the same level of universal services.

Article 120 (c) Social Welfare of the people of EAC, mandate member states to provide PWDs with inter alia education and training (this includes ICT education).

EAC Policy on PWDs, 2012;

https://www.eac.int/environment/index.php?option=com_content&id=151&Itemid=98

AU Summit; Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa | African Union (au.int)

The Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 9 of 2010

Assessing the Barriers to Accessing ICT by People with Disabilities in Tanzania, CIPESA, 2021

Ibid

ibid

ibid

Article 13; The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977 (as amended)

Article 18 (c); The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977 (as amended)

Section 38; The Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 9 of 2010

Section 55; ibid

Section 56, ibid

Section 50(d), Ibid

Section 17(2) The Access to Information Act No. 6 of 2016

Section 17(1), (e); Ibid

Assessing the Barriers to Accessing ICT by People with Disabilities in Tanzania, CIPESA, 2021

Section 13(1)(b)(v); The Universal Communications Services Access Act, No. 11 of 2006

03



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PWDs ACCESS TO INTERNET AND INFORMATION

3.1. Challenges PWDs Access to Internet and Information

(a) Access to Information barrier

People with Disability in Tanzania are susceptible to information access barriers and they vary according to the type of disability. For one to access information has to have digital device, internet and accommodative source of the information. Findings reveal that PWDs miss one or more of the three due to the type of disability one have for them to proper access the information. Example people with albinism may have digital device, internet access but source of information when written with small font size, cannot access that information. The same applies to deaf when accessing social media platforms audio visual contents they miss sign language for them to access particular information. This is due to lack of awareness of the special needs different groups of PWDs have. Now both parties referring internet service providers, informers and device makers must have the knowledge of inclusion so that they can consider all groups of consumers of their services and products.

(b) Unimplemented Laws and Policies

Tanzania has extensive legal and policy framework providing for PWDs rights including access to information and internet access . These legal and policy frameworks are not well known by both parties' beneficiaries and stakeholders. Findings show that, people with disability are not aware about the availability of these legal frameworks and policies that are made to enhance assistive environment for PWDs access to internet and information.

Due to lack of awareness concerning these legal frameworks and policies it is impossible for them to be implemented. Then there should be purposively initiatives to promote awareness of the countries legal framework and policies that enhance assistive environment for people with disability to access internet and information.

(c) Low Spread and High Cost of Assistive Technology

Regardless of the global technological revolution, PWDs in Tanzania have not benefited much. It is estimated that 50% of the world's population has been reached with internet technology . Technology has been deeply integrated with our daily life to the extent that human race can not ignore technology. PWDs in Tanzania faces law access to assistive technologies due to low availability of these assistive technologies. Low availability is due to lack of inclusion knowledge to producers while producing their products which are digital devices. Also low accessibility of assistive technology is caused by consumer ignorance to digital devices services and packages.

(d) Lack of research and disaggregated data

The true extent of the status of ICT access and usage among persons with disabilities is not known. This is partly because there is no specific and reliable published research on the patterns and gaps in access and usage of ICT for persons with disabilities. Tanzania, like many African countries, does not collect disaggregated data relating to access to information and ICT. This is because the communications regulator, TCRA, does not issue statistics that are disaggregated by disability, and there have been no specific published studies by either government or non-government actors, on usage patterns and statistics for persons with disabilities. The absence of disaggregated data makes appreciation of the magnitude of the problem difficult. The lack of reliable data in turn hinders the development of disability-inclusive approaches to service provision, including in the internet domain .

(e) Insufficient Government Support to Disability Rights Programs

The protection, promotion, and realization of rights by citizens is usually hinged on the government. The government of Tanzania has been promoting ICT development schemes in primary schools to enable access to information. This has, however, partly failed due to inadequate, poorly applied and poorly enforced laws. People with disability fail to have adequate supportive environment and support due to lack of awareness on inclusive environment to PWDs. Promotion of Digital Rights and Inclusion movements should be to all stakeholders especially government who is the great decision maker and beneficiaries for them to be aware and stand for self-advocacy. Moreover, the failure to specifically address the needs of persons with disabilities in education centers has greatly affected the sector. As a result, many persons with disabilities have been left out .

3.2. Opportunities and Recommendations for Change

(a) 2022 population census as a tool for re-planning

The government of the United Republic of Tanzania conducted the National Population and Housing Census from August 23, 2022 to end of October 2022. On 31st November 2022, the government through the Her Excellency President Samia Suluhu Hassan, inaugurated and issued the initial summary report to the public. The report shows increase in the number of populations in Tanzania to 61,741, 120 persons from 12,313,469 that was recorded in 2012. This also implies increase in the number of people with disability populations the statistics which unfortunately was not issued in the initial report.

With the PWDs increase and new statistics in Tanzania, it is an opportunity to reform, replan and improve PWDs priorities considering the increased number, PWDs diversity and specific demands, technology revolutions. Any improvements should consider setting up inclusive, friendly and suitable conditions for the PWDs that will facilitate access to information and internet use in their daily routine like other persons.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006), the Governments have responsibility to support people with disabilities and provide opportunities to remove the barriers related with their disabilities.

(b) Wider Mobile phone network in Tanzania

Available data on the number of internet users and the wider mobile phone network penetration in Tanzania, gives an opportunity for the government, mobile/internet service providers and other associated stakeholders, to utilize the data and infrastructure networks available to reform legal and policy for the improvement of PWDs access to internet and information. As of December, 2019 there were 25.7 million internet users in Tanzania, representing a penetration of 46%. Seven registered telecommunication companies operate in Tanzania which are Airtel, Halotel, Vodacom, Tigo and Zantel (merged), TTCL and Smart (rebranded from Benson).

(c) Small number of PWDs and its accessibility

The 2012 NHPC denotes that only 3.6 million PWDs existed in Tanzania. This is very small number against the general population to be provided with PWDs specific needs. With this small number and easy accessibility, there is an opportunity for the government and other stakeholders to proactively take deliberate actions including policy reforms to improve PWDs conditions including access to internet and information.

(d) Fast Growing technology benefits to PWDs

With the fast-growing technology including internet and gadgets (Eg. 5G internet technology), it becomes much easier to adopt different assistive technologies to benefit the PWDs community in terms of internet and information access to benefit different aspects of their life's such as eLearning, online purchases, working etc. The government and other service providers therefore, are required to consider quick reforms that embraces fast growing technology to benefit the group.

(e) Legal and Policy Framework Implementation

Literatures review suggests that, Tanzania has extensive legal and policy framework supporting PWDs rights including access to internet and information. It is therefore important that the available framework be fully implemented to address PWDs inclusion on access to internet and information access.

In order to improve PWDs access to internet and information, Tanzania should ratify and domesticate the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa as Adopted by the summit on 29th January 2018. To date Tanzania is yet to ratify this important protocol, which among other things provides for the PWDs rights to information and specifically, communication technologies.

In addition, it is suggested that, the government enact a new law to cater for PWDs assistive technologies due to the pressing need to this social sect. By adopting the specific law (Assistive Technologies Bill/Act), the government will be able to allocate resources for AT accessibility, make subsidization and grants on AT and PWDs, install guidelines to facilitate PWDs access to AT through learning institutions, facilitate and encourage local innovations on AT and ease importation of the same by both public and private arrangements.

(f) Wide Educational Network

Tanzania is among the countries with a wide network of educational system. There is at least one public secondary school established in each ward, throughout Tanzania. This makes a potential infrastructure to easily access PWDs at grass root to facilitate them with required assistive knowledge and technologies, internet and information access.

4. CONCLUSION

People with disabilities are a part of the community and they should not be excluded. Inclusive and accommodative environment for people with disabilities is vital for their wellbeing and sustainable development. The knowledge of inclusivity especially digital rights and inclusion should be well promoted and well known to the community. Everyone must be aware and responsible in making into consideration needs of people with disability in planning and provision of services.

For the enhancing and promotion of effective accessibility to internet services and information to the people with disability, all key actors of the value chain should consider inclusivity. Actors are referred internet service providers, digital devices producers, and information providers, different stakeholders including government and non-government sectors.

So, there must be effective and purposively initiatives to promote and build awareness to those actors on Digital Rights and Inclusion in order to promote and enhance PWDs access to information and internet. For example digital devices producers will consider inclusivity by making sure they include assistive technologies that will enable PWDs based to their special needs.



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