

# Lema, E. 2017. Voices of Children with Impairments in Tanzania

Source: Lema, E. (2017). Voices of Children with Impairments in Tanzania: Understanding the Barriers Hindering Participation in Decision Making in School.

Category: Report

#disabilities

#child\_participation

## Summary

This was a study conducted in Jangwani Secondary School and the Salvation Army School for understanding barriers hindering participation in decision-making in schools for Children with Impairments (CWPI). The study took place in the Ilala and Temeke districts of the Dar es Salaam City of Tanzania.

Participation of children of all abilities including disabled ones has been impeded or promoted by the social- environment and not one's impairments/ability because it is evidenced that the culture, structures, and systems of institutions have an impact on children's participation

The findings of the study were broad beyond the CWPI and thus brought perspective for children with both CWPI and CWNPI (Children with no Impairments). The study was guided by three research questions as follows

How are children with impairments perceived by teachers, and other children concerning participating in decision-making in school?

The majority of the respondents perceived CWPI as persons who can participate and make decisions like other children without impairments.

Children see CWPI as normal children and can participate in decision-making in schools if given a chance.

CWPI are doing well in class, it is not as if they cannot speak, they can, just like everyone else.

Teachers felt that CWPI and other CWNPI can be involved in making decisions on the teaching methods including how lectures should be conducted, lecture hours, and class activities because they are the end users.

Children in general can be involved in decision-making but under the supervision of a matron or patron

What are the challenges hindering participation in the decision-making of children with impairments in school?

Society is adult-centric, it is the views of the adults that are given weight, and children are guided by the adult members of the society.

Children have been conceptualized as immature and passive persons who should follow instructions.

When children at least have an opportunity of contributing to decision-making, would feel uncomfortable giving views that are counter to those of their teachers/adults

Teachers expressed that they would not appreciate having their ideas challenged by children.

Lack of policies addressing participation

Lack of experience and training in involving children in decision-making

Time and limited funds are barriers to the participation of CWPIs in decision-making in school.

What should be done to promote participation in decision-making for children with impairments in school?

Introducing guidelines or policies that guide the participants in the decision of children in schools

A practical guide to translating the Law of the child Act no.21 (2009), the child Development Policy (2008), and Education policy in action

Having a clear guide that gives directives on how and what children of each age and class can

participate

The involvement of children in decision-making through the existing national children's council.

Giving children agency and seeing them as active persons who can make responsible decisions.

Channeling children's opinions through their guardians during school meetings was revealed