

Changing attitudes and building inclusion through media in Tanzania

Project timeline: April 2019 – August 2019

Project budget: £150k

Capturing the power of collaboration: BBC Media Action, SHIVYAWATA - Tanzania Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.

People with disabilities often face enormous barriers when they try to get an education, earn a living or access healthcare because of negative stereotypes about to their needs and abilities. Evidence from primary research consistently shows that people with disabilities experience poorer health outcomes, limited access to essential services, and exposure to stigmatising attitudes and discriminatory practices¹. **Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures is working to change negative attitudes and behaviours around disability in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and promote equal rights, opportunities, and inclusion.**



The situation in Tanzania

In Tanzania, people with disabilities – 9.3% of the population² - are often discriminated against, with many exclusionary, or even harmful, practices embedded in or sustained by societal norms. The abilities and rights of people with disabilities are not well understood and women and girls with disabilities, people with albinism, and children with autism

are especially vulnerable to violence³. Although Tanzania's constitution and laws, including the 2010 Persons with Disabilities Act, provide disability rights, awareness and implementation of legislation is low. **There remains much to be done to improve inclusion and tackle negative stereotyping and discrimination.**

How we helped

To address these challenges, we brought together a consortium of experts including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), international non-governmental organisations and research institutes to produce and nationally broadcast a disability-inclusive interactive radio show and social media content.

Research has shown radio is the most widely accessed media platform in Tanzania, with 96% of Tanzanians over 15 years old accessing it within the home or elsewhere⁴. Given this, BBC Media Action's long-running radio show, Niambie (meaning "Tell Me" in Swahili), which has a listenership of 1.4 million people nationwide, was an ideal vehicle to address discrimination against people with disabilities. We also built the capacity of local media practitioners to improve the inclusivity of their content. **Through locally led pillars of action, we:**

- **Produced and broadcast a weekly national radio show to address discrimination against people with disabilities in Tanzania** - BBC Media Action tested three different production models with a focus group, to understand which had the most impact on audiences' knowledge and attitudes towards people with disabilities. They then worked with OPDs to identify and hire two young trainee professionals with disabilities to join the production team. Together, the team produced 12 episodes of Niambie, broadcast weekly on Cloud FM, one of Tanzania's most popular radio stations. OPDs and people with disabilities helped to select topics for shows, such as dating with a disability, and people with disabilities featured prominently as interviewees and contributors.



Miriam and Malick, young journalists with disabilities, were employed by the Niambie radio show to ensure the show was inclusive and reflected the issues young persons with disabilities face in Tanzania. [Listen to an episode of Niambie online here.](#)

They both proved so valuable to the BBC team and integral to driving inclusivity that their contracts were extended beyond this project.

- **Created social media content** to disseminate the show and its key messages, aimed at reducing negative stereotyping and discrimination. Tanzania has 4.9 million social media users⁵ and engaging content related to disability inclusion targeting young people was posted across Niambie accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Content included drama skits, short videos, infographics and question and answer posts.
- **Built capacity of local media practitioners** through training 17 young media professionals to improve the disability inclusiveness of their radio programming and address discrimination, stereotyping and bias in their content. Two young professionals with disabilities in the team were also mentored in all aspects of radio production.

Project impact



Niambie reached almost 1.4 million people across Tanzania, including an estimated 169,000 people with disabilities.

Over 3,600 audience interactions were received on social media platforms and via text messages. The shows were sensitive, inclusive, and – thanks to valuable input from the trainees who shared their lived experience – reflected the issues young people with disabilities face across the country.



The show had a clear impact on listeners' knowledge of disability rights and attitudes towards people with disabilities with an evaluation highlighting increased knowledge of disability issues and shifts in attitudes and beliefs.

“We feel well-supported whenever we hear Niambie discuss issues that touch our lives – it gives us a chance to contribute to the show and even online. This is so cool!”

Blandina Sembu, OPD leader in Tanzania

Discovering what works

The project generated qualitative evidence on effective media approaches to challenge negative stereotyping faced by people with disabilities. It also revealed the extent to which audiences were engaged by media content relating to disability. Focus group and evaluation findings provided vital insights for subsequent Disability Inclusive Development - Inclusive Futures radio projects in Nigeria, and for BBC Media Action's production model for Niambie for the long-term. Read more [in our blog](#).

Breaking barriers for people with disabilities

Disability inclusion is critical for reaching the Global Goals and we have produced the evidence on what works in a range of different areas. We now need the allocation of resources for tackling negative stereotyping to turn evidence into action.

To find out more visit

inclusivefutures.org/stigma-discrimination or contact Claire Walsh at cwalsh@sightsavers.org.

Endnotes

- 1 World Health Organization (2011) World Report on Disability 2011. Geneva: World Health Organization; as referenced in Sightsavers (2021) Disability-related stigma and discrimination in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: a systematic literature review. Haywards Heath, UK: Sightsavers.
- 2 Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics (2012) 2012 Population and Housing Census – Disability Monograph. Available online at: <https://www.nbs.go.tz/index.php/en/census-surveys/population-and-housing-census/179-2012-phc-disability-monograph>
- 3 Inclusive Futures / Institute of Development Studies (2020), Tanzania Situational Analysis - June 2020 Update, p.4.
- 4 BBC Media Action (2017) Strengthening accountability through media in Tanzania Final evaluation. Available online at: <https://dataportal.bbcmmediaaction.org/site/countries/tanzania/>
- 5 We Are Social (2023) Special Report - Digital 2023: Tanzania. Available online at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-tanzania>