Children with Disabilities: Looking back to look forward

Summary

March 2014

Children with Disabilities: Looking back to look forward

PAN: Children hosted a dialogue series focusing on children with disabilities on 10 March 2014. This dialogue was a launch of Situational Analysis report dating from year 2001 to 2011. The report highlighted the significant progress made, but also the challenges that still exist for children with disabilities in South Africa.

The Situational Analysis report was undertaken by the Department of Social Development, Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities and UNICEF. This report seeks to fill knowledge gaps that exist regarding the situation of children with disabilities, their family and community environment, the underlying causes of their situations and the adequacy of efforts by government and non-government actors to fulfil their rights.

The study address the following questions:
- What is the extent of disability among children in South Africa?

- What is the extent of inequalities and unfulfilled rights of children with disabilities?

- What factors have contributed to the adequacy (or inadequacy) of actions by the state and society at large?

In depth reports are found in the following attachments:
-*SITAN Disability Exec Summary low res.pdf*
-*Childrens Voices final low res.pdf*
-*SITAN Disability final low res.pdf*

Presentation	Key Highlights from the dialogue
Children with Disabilities in South Africa *A Situation Analysis 2001-2011* *Author:* Dr George Laryea-Adjei (UNICEF's Deputy Representative in South Africa)	South Africa has made significant improvements in protecting and empowering children with disabilities through legislation. However, legislation can undermine inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream. Particular groups of children in South Africa suffer multiple deprivations. Compared to their non-disabled peers, children with disabilities are less likely to attend school; less likely to have access to adequate housing, water and sanitation; more likely to suffer from illnesses and poor health and more likely to be deprived of parental care and to experience abuse.
Children with Disabilities: Looking back to look forward Author: Manthipi Molamu (Department of Social Development's Director responsible for policy, strategies and programmes on disability)	Risk factors affecting children with disability are: factors occurring before birth; factors at birth (neonatal), after birth and infancy; early childhood; child injury; malnutrition and the environment. Adequate measures to prevent impairments and activity limitations should be taken. The solutions are early detection and intervention measures in the health system. Detection of disability in the education system. Conditional grants provide programs to fulfil the rights of the children. However, amendments are needed so that all the needs of the children are

	not partially met.
	The report suggests that this shortage of skills can be addressed through collaboration among government, institutions, stakeholders and professionals from the grass root functional areas to top level.
	There is a lack of information and data for the development of services. For example there is a focus on the diagnosis and not the functioning of the child. This contributes to poor service delivery.
	In the field of children with disabilities, it is found that parents and caregivers are more involved in the field and are dedicated in development of their children.
	Findings revealed scalable projects that could be replicated improve the quality of life for children with disabilities. This includes children in any intervention arena.

Key issues: discussion and ideas for further research

Financial support is needed to reach all the parents of children with disabilities through NGOs and public institutions.

A shortage of therapists and a lack of awareness of the different kinds of services that children with disabilities need is evident in the poor service they receive. Early childhood intervention and rehabilitation should start in primary school. Introducing therapy in clinics will improve the service provided in the public sector.

The inclusion of foreign children with disabilities in the policy is questioned. Abandoned children with disabilities are more at risk of not receiving the help they need. A possible solution is realignment in the policy and integration to support these children.

A new costing model to fund NGOs must be developed. As there is no guidance on how to acquire funding this organisation lack administrative capacity. NGOs will assist in early detection in early development for children with disabilities. The twin approach for disability needs to be looked into as it covers certain provisions for the sector. There must be a holistic approach in creating a funding model.

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) services are needed at special schools because the children are left with no attendance.

The right use of terminology in the study is requested which is in line with the UN terminology.

Educational system excludes children with disability and this causes a lot of dropouts.
The Situational Analysis report does highlight a number of full service schools for children with disabilities. Government has a plan to ensure that children with disabilities are included in the education system. Though it will take some time to include full-service in the mainstream schools to support the children. Due to limited resources and schools for special needs children, there is a long waiting list.

Monitoring the voice of the children and parents is important to the development of the children. Department of Social Development plays a big role and is a sole funder for programmes that empower parents and organisations. It is important to support parents so that they can give more support to their children. When parents are empowered this allows more services to be given to the children as the government and parents work together.

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Coming up

Policy dialogue on children and the media. Check the PAN: Children portal for dates and details of the event.