

Efua Esaaba Agyire-Tettey, Augustina Naami,
Lars Wissenbach, Johannes Schädler

Challenges of Inclusion

Local Support Systems and Social Service Arrangements for Persons with Disabilities in Suhum, Ghana

Baseline Study Report



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Lars Wissenbach, Johannes Schädler

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Acronyms

CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organisation
DSWC	Department of Social Welfare and Community Development
DACF	District Assembly Common Fund
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GES	Ghana Education Services
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
MMDAs	Metropolis Municipal and District Assembly
NGOs	Non Governmental organisations
NRW	North Rhine Westphalia
OPDs	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities

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1. Background and Purpose

This research report is an output of the project 'Inclusive design of local communities through new forms of social planning – pilot project at Suhum Municipality, Eastern Region, Ghana', supported by Engagement Global Northrhine-Westphalia with funds provided by the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.

The main objective of the project was to facilitate a co-creation process in which public authorities together with relevant civil society stakeholders, such as organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), develop local pathways for the inclusion of persons with disabilities that feed into existing development strategies and processes at the local level. In order to allow an informed planning process, the project started with a baseline study, including a policy review on existing legislation and policies with relevance to disability which was followed by a qualitative field study on the living conditions and support structures for persons with disabilities in Suhum Municipality. A set of recommendations was developed as a guide for policy makers and civil society organisations towards mainstreaming disability in local development and decision-making processes. This research report focuses on the outcomes of the field work.

The overall objective of the qualitative baseline study was to investigate, in applied research, the dynamics of formal and informal support systems and social services for persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality; barriers that limit access to the services; unmet needs of persons with disabilities as well as the way forward regarding harmonising existing resources.

The research was led by a team from the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana, supported by the Centre for Planning and Evaluation of Social Services (ZPE) at University of Siegen, Germany. This report presents and discusses the findings of this field study.

2. Methodology

This qualitative study was carried out in Suhum Municipality in the Eastern region of Ghana. The Municipality was purposefully selected as a pilot for this project based on a fact-finding mission and preliminary exchange with members of the Suhum Municipal Assembly. The field study was conducted in September 2017 through to May 2018.

2.1 Data Collection

The study targeted persons with various forms of disabilities and stakeholders in the disability arena, including government agencies, civil society organisations and traditional authorities, consisting of chiefs, queen mothers and elders (See Appendix 1 for the list of these organisations and their functions). Apart from persons with disabilities, who were selected to share their personal experiences about the issues under study, all other participants were selected based on their experience in the above mentioned organisations which work directly or indirectly with persons with disabilities. A total of 24 women and 36 men with ages ranging

between 21 and 60 upwards were selected. Tables 1 - 4 below provide detailed demographic information about the study participants.

Table 1

Focus Group 1 - Traditional Authorities		Number of Participants	Total
Sex	Male	11	15
	Female	4	
Age	41-50	4	15
	51-60	5	
	61+	6	
Highest Level of Education	BECE	2	15
	Secondary Certificate	1	
	Higher National Diploma	2	
	University Degree	2	
	Master's Degree	1	
	other	7	
Leadership Position	Chief	4	15
	Sub-chief	3	
	Queen Mother	2	
	Community Leader/elder	2	
	Spokesman	1	
	Other	3	
Role within organisation	Director	6	15
	Social Worker	2	
	Community Development	2	
	NHIA officer	1	
	MCE Reps	2	
	Common fund	2	
Services Provided by Organisation	Recommendation for Health Services	3	15
	Advocacy and Training	2	
	Sensitisation, Identification, Enrolment of CWDs in School	4	
	Social Services	4	
	Disbursement of common fund	2	
	Community engagement		
How much contact with PWDs	Very Little Contact	7	15
	Average contact	2	
	A Great Deal of Contact	6	

Table 2

Focus Group 2: Government		Number of Participants	Total	
Sex	Male	8	15	
	Female	7		
Age	21-30	1	15	
	31-40	4		
	41-50	7		
	51+	3		
Highest Level of Education	Secondary	1	15	
	Degree	5		
	Master's Degree	5		
	Other	4		
Organization	S. Welfare	3	15	
	CHRAJ	1		
	SMA	2		
	GES	2		
	MoGCSP	3		
	NHIA	1		15
	Others	3		
Role within organisation	Director	6	15	
	Social Worker	2		
	Community Development Office	2		
	NHIA officer	1		
	MCE Representative	2		
	Common Fund Representative	2		
Services Provided by Organisation	Recommendation for Health Services	3	15	
	Advocacy and Training	2		
	Sensitisation, Identification, Enrolment of CWDs in School	4		
	Social Services	4		
	Disbursement of common fund	2		
	Community engagement	2		
How much contact with PWDs	Very Little Contact	7	15	
	Average contact	2		
	A Great Deal of Contact	6		

Table 3

Focus Group 3		Persons with Disabilities	
		Number of Participants	Total
Sex	Male	8	15
	Female	7	
Age	21-30	4	15
	31-40	2	
	41-50	1	
	51-60	6	
	61+	2	
Type of Impairment	Mobility Impairment	6	15
	Hearing Impairment	4	
	Visual Impairment	5	
Type of Mobility Aid Use	Wheelchair	1	15
	Crutches	2	
	White Cane	5	
	None	5	
	Missing	2	
Highest Level of Education	BECE	3	15
	Secondary Certificate	1	
	Higher National Diploma	4	
	University Degree	2	
Type of Work	Other	5	15
	Trader	6	
	Cornmillers/Marketer/Farming	2	
	Office Assistant	1	
	Shoemaking	1	
	Teaching	1	
	Student	2	
Public Servant	2		
Number of Years in this Work	1-5 years	4	15
	6-10 years	3	
	11-15 years	1	
	16-20 years	2	
	20+ years	1	
	N/A	2	
	Missing	2	
Services Provided by Organisation	Teaching and Learning	3	15
	Health Services	2	
	Advocacy and Training	4	
	Enrolment of CWDs in School	4	
	Social Services		
	Public education	2	
How much contact had with PWDs Not specified	Very Little Contact	3	15
	Average contact	5	
	A Great Deal of Contact	5	
		2	

Table 4

Focus Group 4: Civil Society Organisations

		Number of Participants	Total
Sex	Male	9	15
	Female	6	
Age	21-30	1	15
	31-40	2	
	41-50	7	
	51+	4	
Not specified		1	
Highest Level of Education	Senior Secondary	2	15
	University Degree	6	
	Master's Degree	6	
	Other	1	
Organization	Religious	6	15
	NGOs	3	
	Community Based org.		
	Civic Union		
Not specified		5	
Role within organisation	Director	2	15
	Social Worker	2	
	Opinion Leader	2	
	Health worker	2	
	Teaching	3	
	Officers	4	
Services Provided by Organisation	Teaching and Learning	3	15
	Health Services	2	
	Advocacy and Training	4	
	Enrolment of CWDs in School	4	
	Social Services		
	Public education	2	
How much contact with PWDs	Very Little Contact	3	15
	Average contact	5	
	A Great Deal of Contact	5	
Not specified		2	

Data was gathered through focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were conducted with four stakeholder groups: (1) Persons with disabilities/their organisations, (2) stakeholders from government agencies, (3) stakeholders from Civil Society Organisations, and (4), the traditional authorities in the community. Each focus group discussion was conducted on a separate day and lasted for about 120 to 180 minutes. Data was collected in three phases by two researchers together with three research assistants from the Department of Social Work, University of Ghana. Four separate interview guides were used to collect the data from the four focus groups. The interview guides contained open ended questions and sentences that had been derived from the objectives of the study. These were used by the facilitators during the discussions to maintain focus on the objectives (See Appendixes 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively for the interview guides).

In the first phase, a detailed analysis of legislative and policy framework as well as desk study on the existing situation of persons with disabilities with regards to the objectives of the study was done. The policy analysis was followed by a forum at the Suhum Municipal Assembly to provide an overview of the study to the various stakeholders.

In the second phase, focus group discussions were conducted separately with each stakeholder group in the following order, which is also presented in the results section:

1. Traditional Authority (FGD 1), 15 representatives
2. Government Agencies (FGD 2), 15 representatives
3. Persons with Disabilities/their Organisations (FGD 3), 15 representatives
4. Civil Society Organisations (FGD 4), 15 representatives

In phase three, preliminary results were discussed in two workshops with relevant stakeholders from all four stakeholder groups. The stakeholder groupings for the workshops were as follows:

1. Workshop one: 20 representatives from Traditional Authorities (FGD 1) and Government Agencies (FGD 2)
2. Workshop two: 20 representatives from Persons with Disabilities/their Organisations (FGD 3) and Civil Society Organisations (FGD 4)

These discussions lasted between 60 and 120 minutes each.

Phase four brought together 10 representatives of all stakeholders in a workshop to validate their recommendations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community. This workshop lasted for 120 minutes.

Participants were assured of absolute confidentiality which made them to express their candid opinions about the issues discussed. With permission from all participants, the focus group discussions were audio-taped. Field and reflexive notes were taken as well to support data analysis. The recorded data was later transcribed to text format by the research team and trustworthiness was done through member checking.

To protect the confidentiality of focus group participants, names and roles have been edited out in the report. Participants are only identified as participants by focus group discussion (FGD) one to four.

2.2 Data Analysis

Content analysis was conducted by the two lead researchers from University of Ghana. For the purpose of analysis, the major analytical tool employed was Nvivo version 11, a qualitative data management software, which helped to organize, analyse and draw conclusions and insights from the qualitative data which had been transcribed.

Thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was used to analyze and present findings into basic organizing and global themes. The process of transcription, profiling of respondents, coding and thematic networks that summarizes results under each research question are described below for clarity.

Transcription and profiling

All the focus group discussions were recorded and checked for voice file clarity. Recorded audio data was transcribed verbatim into English. Verbatim transcription eliminated the tendency of losing respondent's contribution to interpretation or summary during transcribing. Transcribed interviews were then uploaded into NVivo version 11. Participants were profiled by variables identified to be able to organise their responses into general and detailed profile tables.

Coding, thematic networks

Uploaded transcripts were coded inductively and deductively into level one nodes (basic themes). Deductive coding was guided by early findings in the literature review that precedes the data collection for the study. Inductive coding allowed objective relevant contribution from the participants to emerge. Similar quotes to research questions in two or more grandchild nodes (basic themes) were grouped into child nodes (organizing themes). Parent nodes (Global themes) summarized all emerging inductive and deductive themes under each research question. NVivo concept maps were used to construct thematic networks that presented a visual summary of how themes spread out and connect in revealing results under each research question.

The two researchers analysed the data separately, then compared their findings to arrive at the outcomes of this study. The demographic information of the participants is attached as appendix to this document.

3. Findings

3.1 Existing Support Structures and Services

The kinds of support structures and services available to persons with disabilities in this study have been categorized into formal and informal support structures and services.

3.1.1 Formal Support Structures

The formal support structures identified were institutional arrangements that facilitated the support for persons with disabilities. These include the Suhum Municipal Assembly, Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (DSWC) as well as various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Religious groups.

Municipal Assembly and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development

The Municipal Assembly and the DSWC are both institutions of government responsible for the welfare of all individuals, including persons with disabilities, and the management of the disability common fund (it is a fund that is taken from the District Assemblies' Common Fund (DACF) to assist persons with disabilities to improve on their wellbeing. The DACF is a pool of resources created under Article 252 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. It is a minimum of 5.0% of the national revenue set aside to be shared among all District Assemblies in Ghana with a formula approved by Parliament. The fund is a Development Fund which enables the use of the nation's wealth throughout Ghana to the benefit of all citizens).

The Social Welfare and Community Department unit in Suhum houses the frontline workers who usually have first contact with the persons with disabilities. Their duty is to determine eligibility and pass the information on to the Municipal Assembly for decisions to be made regarding request and onward provision of services. Besides, the department plays a supervisory role and monitors the activities of persons with disabilities, identify and register them, and facilitate their mobilisation to help them form associations. Again, the department renders counselling services and operate rehabilitation centres. These roles are performed by the professional social workers who operate within the mandate of the department. Persons with disabilities recognise the department as the first point of call for issues related to disabilities. Here are some of the comments from participants:

The department of social welfare unit is the focal point or the first point of call for the assembly upon which persons with disability may call. So, it is like the department works through the assembly for persons with disability. So whatever service structures exist will pass through the department and we relay it to the assembly and the feedback is given. Sometimes, it is directly given to the assembly... It includes support for education, income generating activities, health care support and so on- whatever their concerns are (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)

There are a couple of local NGOs operating in the Suhum Municipality but they neither seem to focus on disability issues nor have had much contact with OPDs (these are the various groups of persons with disabilities who have come together with the aim of creating awareness about the capabilities of persons with disabilities and also to promote the equal opportunities through advocacy, lobbying, and collaborating with other relevant stakeholders to improve on their wellbeing). Thus, representatives of organisations of persons with disabilities indicate that they do not know of any NGOs that provide services for them. However, they indicated that they have received support from NGOs out of the Suhum Municipal area.

Like my sister said, we received some support from the Asamoah Gyan Foundation in Accra. They gave us some items such as talking watches and others. There is an upcoming programme that will cause us to receive 3 bags of rice which will be helpful (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD, PWDs).

More often than not, we mostly testify to things we have heard. This is because there is no letter to indicate that Suhum Federation has been invited for a programme at a particular place. When the news of such donations by organisations to some persons is heard on the radio and on the television, that is when we also send our request to them. We once had support from World Vision, but that was all (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3).

Religious/Faith-based Organizations

In terms of support from religious organisations, some participants with disabilities indicated that they received help from churches and mosques within and outside of Suhum Municipality.

Apart from our friends, we receive support from churches in the form of clothing, food, to mention but a few. They have been helpful (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 3).

Some churches help too. Last Easter, in Asamankese, we went to a church and we were supported. Just this September, we went to a church in Accra called Light House Chapel where they donated relief items to us, but we do not have a church from this town donating to disabled persons (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Some of the participants representing faith-based organizations confirmed the assertion that persons with disabilities received support from them.

I am representing a church because churches have some arrangement in line with helping persons with disabilities. For example, recently in Assemblies of God Church, a person with disability has been given funds to trade... When it is getting to the end of the year, we give them a sizeable amount of money to use for their upkeep. Before we do that, we will inform the family members so that they will be aware that the person belongs to an organization. We have disabled children that have been neglected by their parents because they think nothing good can

come out from them. I can say categorically that we have supported one student who is now in SHS. So, we discussed it first with the family that we wanted to support their ward and they accepted the idea. There are times we donate items and money and then we inform the parent that this is coming from the Assemblies of God church (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

We also provide support to our moslem brothers and sisters who have disability in ways that include allowing those with visual impairments to beg for alms around the holy mosque (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

3.1.2 Kinds of Formal Support: Services Provides to Persons with Disabilities

Access to healthcare

The right to healthcare is fundamental to all persons including persons with disabilities. Consequently, access to free healthcare is of utmost importance to persons with disabilities. Participants noted that even though it has been stated in the Disability Act (Act 75) that provision of healthcare (general and specialist care) should be free for persons with disabilities, it is challenging for them to access healthcare. This is due to the fact that the NHIS is not clear on the procedure in identifying persons with disability with regards to eligibility, to help ensure persons with disability access free healthcare.

I think that the social welfare also by looking at the level of the disability declare some of them also as “indigenes” where the Health Insurance comes in to provide them with free NHIS card so that anytime they are sick they can easily have access to healthcare (Respondent 9, Discussant in FGD 2, CSOs).

Educational assistance and training

These services were provided to both children and adults with disabilities who could not enrol in basic schools. The results of this study showed that, children with disabilities were assisted by churches and NGOs to enrol in school. Most of these children usually come from poor families and as a result, are unable to access education due to rigid curriculum, architectural barriers such as inaccessible school buildings, inaccessible transportation and distance to school, inadequate special educators and many more which need the assistance of others.

The church sometimes takes charge of the school fees, feeding, clothing, and all. The church takes responsibility of such things (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Additionally, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development organised training sessions for persons with disabilities who were older to enable them acquire skills to help them earn some income. However, the persons with disabilities stated that the training sessions had not taken place in a while.

Some years back, persons with disability were given training and after the training, they were employed and sent to some of the schools to teach handicraft. So they were able to at least earn a living (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Apart from the little money that comes from the assembly, my office also has a programme that provides skill training programmes in terms of soap making, batik, batik tie & dye. So, we go to the community and identify physically challenged persons and find out which of the programmes they are interested in. Then we welcome and register them and take them through the training session for 3 days (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Economic assistance

Persons with Disabilities are being assisted economically by the Municipal Assembly through the allocation of three percent (3%) from the District Assembly common fund.

With regards to economic assistance, it was noted that, monies persons with disabilities received from the common fund were used as start-up capital for petty trading. Notwithstanding, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development were ready to assist them with money to help them start businesses to earn income and become independent.

...the monies are not enough but the Municipal Assembly will assist anyone who wants to start a business with the available resources which are limited ... (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

3.1.3 Informal Support Structures

The informal services, which were in the form of support from the family and other social relations outside the family, were means through which persons living with disabilities received support. Thus family and friends amongst others were the first point of call for persons with disabilities.

The Family

There was consensus in all FGDs that, the family is the backbone for persons with disabilities since they are the first point of contact for persons with disabilities with regards to assistance in everyday challenges.

I agree that when they are comparing the persons with the disability with respect to families, government, NGOs and so on, then, I will say it is the family that gives them the highest support because it is more difficult coping with a disabled person in the house. For example, seeing to it that they eat, put on clothes, sleep and wash. Some of them even manage to go to church but who will lead them to the church? If they want to move around who will lead them? In terms of that, it is the family that in my opinion provides the best support (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Although the family in general has been identified as a strong support system, persons with disabilities themselves indicated that it was the nuclear family that provided with most of the support as compared to the extended family. They noted that in spite of their ability to help, some extended family members fail to help them due to their perceptions about disability.

When we talk about the family, then we are referring to the nuclear family. The extended family has nothing to offer you. From where I come, no one in my extended family will even buy a cloth for you to wear even if they have the money. So, my husband is the only family that I have. He does everything for me including clothing me and any other thing that comes to mind (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Social relations outside the family

Support from social relations outside family such as classmates, friends, and community members were also acknowledged in this study.

When they (persons with disabilities) are in school, friends support them in terms of their movements. Some do carry them along when they all attend the same school or help in carrying their books and all other things. So, they receive some support when they are in school (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisation).

When we talk about support, I will say we receive such help from our individual homes and friends. That is what has helped most of us to survive because friends give us money sometimes to eat and do other things (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

3.2. Organisation and Financing of Existing Support Structures

This objective sought to explore and discuss the organization of existing support structures in the Suhum Municipal Area and their sources of funding. The study found that persons with disabilities received funding from the District Assembly's Common Fund (DACF), internally generated funds from the Municipality, donations from religious organizations and support from the family as well as friends.

3.2.1 Sources of Funding and Support for Persons with Disabilities

District Assembly Common Fund

The fund is generated from government subventions which the government transfers to all Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) every quarter. Three percent (3%) of District Assembly Common Fund by regulation, is reserved for the development of *persons with disabilities*.

Here in Suhum, we are following the government regulations pertaining to the Common Fund Administration. When the assembly receives its Common Fund, a percentage is allocated for persons with disability. So we do it in line with government regulations (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Although the Common fund exists, not everyone benefits, neither is the disbursement of the money regular, as persons with disabilities recounted.

It is the social welfare that sees to our welfare occasionally by helping us with some small contribution from the common fund. Even with that, it is not all of us who receive something (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

We are many here and the funds that come are too small that it will not be enough for us all (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Internally generated funds from District Assembly

Due to the delays that occur with the common fund, the Municipal Assembly has made provisions for the activities of persons with disabilities through their internally generated funds.

Sometimes, when the common fund has not been disbursed, the assembly relies on its income generating fund to support and not necessarily the common fund (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Religious/Faith-based Organizations

Some religious organizations such as Assemblies of God Church and Jehovah's Witnesses also provided services for persons with disabilities in the form of assisting children with disabilities access education by meeting their educational needs. Also, they support by giving individuals money to start up business etc. They do so from their internally generated funds.

NGOs as support organizations

The NGOs indicated that they receive their funding from membership dues, grants, and donations. Study results indicate that community-based NGOs relevant for persons with disabilities are mainly funded through individual contributions with rather limited access to external funding.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are largely individually supported. Most of us are government workers so, at the end of the month, we all contribute towards it. We have employed someone who organizes all these funds so at the end of the day when we are going out, we look into our coffers. At times, we write out proposals for sponsorship. Some have received such support but for now, you will have the chance to send out proposals, but it is difficult to get persons supporting you with the money (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

3.2.2 Persons with Disabilities Receiveing Support

The findings under this objective have been categorized into two dimensions: Support beneficiaries by type of impairment and support beneficiary by association.

Support beneficiaries by type of impairment

Despite the fact that all persons with disabilities receive some kind of support, as earlier stated, the specific type of support that is received differs among the types of impairment such as visual, hearing, or mobility impairment.

Those with visual impairments seem to receive more support than people with other types of impairments.

There are times when the school receives special items solely meant for them [people with visual impairments]. At times, the GES can send a team from the Human Resources to visit the visually impaired students to see if there is any special need (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, PWDs).

I stay in the Zongo community, [and what I see is that they mostly help those with visual impairment]. If you are not blind, you do not get any help. For instance, today being a Friday, after their 'Jumah' prayers, they line up in front of the mosque with their bowls and they recite some words so that when you exit the mosque, you drop some coins into their bowls. Apart from that, they do not help anyone with other forms of disability (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

The study results indicated a certain level of importance of and a difference in perceived approachability of people with different types of impairments by potential service providers.

Most of our support is targeted at the blind because they are approachable and look more vulnerable (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Those with physical impairments (mobility impairments) also tend to attract some form of support but not as much as those with visual impairments.

Sometimes, organisations provide training programmes for persons with disabilities in this area. The beneficiaries of these are usually physically impaired, because at least they can see and also be able to use their arms and/or legs to sew, draw, or weave (Respondent 12, FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Some of the churches, like the Latter-Day Saints provide wheelchairs for the physically challenged. Sometime back, they made a presentation to them. They are based in Tema (another city in Accra) and they are requesting that we submit a list of whoever needs a wheelchair. But the churches provide support in different forms (Respondent 14, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Despite the fact that all persons with disabilities were believed to receive some form of support from the various informal and formal mechanisms aforementioned, participants stated that persons with hearing impairments received the least resources, support and attention due to communication challenges.

Those who do not receive support at all, I think, are the deaf because for them at social welfare, we do not have an interpreter in my office communicating with them. Sometimes, those who can read and write we communicate with them, but when the deaf person comes, you might probably ask him to go and bring his son

or a relative to be the interpreter and the stress begins (Respondent 8, FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Based on the experience I have had, the deaf are the least persons that we have helped because their disability is not obvious and communication is a challenge (Respondent 5, FGD 4, CSOs).

Being deaf myself, my colleagues and I are left out of activities because we don't even have strong associations with leaders to represent us. The organisations usually deal with the other groups and don't think of our plight. They don't invite us to meetings or programmes for persons with disabilities (Respondent 10, FGD 3, PWDs).

Representatives of OPDs confirmed that persons with hearing impairments do not receive much support and attributed it to inadequate information flow resulting from their inability to interact with them.

Sometimes, it is an information barrier. Mostly, people who are deaf do not get to know what is going on early. By the time you are aware, they have taken a decision already (Respondent 4, FGD 3, PWDs).

They have executive members, but they said sometimes they do not get information until they have finished with their meeting and he will be briefed. So, for such things, it will be good if they can call in to report because, by the time I am aware, the common fund has already been shared...What you said is true. Information barrier is our biggest challenge but as you have said, henceforth, we will interact with them [Clap] (Respondent 3, FGD 3, PWDs).

However, recently, some churches have started training people in sign language to assist with communicating with persons using sign language only.

Now the Church of Christ is concentrating on persons who have difficulty in hearing. Jehovah's Witnesses are also focusing on persons who have a hearing difficulty. But generally, JW and SDA are identifying them and socializing with them (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Support beneficiary by institutional affiliation

Findings from the study also revealed that some form of support was mainly received by persons with disabilities based on group membership and institutional affiliation. Persons with disabilities who belonged to groups were more likely to receive some form of support as compared to those who did not belong to any group at all.

The institutional affiliations include the following: persons with disabilities who are registered at the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development for being eligible to receive financial support through the District Assembly Common Fund. Others with religious affiliations and those registered with the associations of persons with disabilities and in-school children with disabilities also received some form of support. Association and institutional affiliation make it easier to facilitate the process of advocating and lobbying and seeking for help.

We asked every member to register at the social welfare. So when it [referring to the common fund] comes, they will apportion it to the groups; So, if your application does not get there on time and the money arrives, then it will be difficult to receive anything (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Persons with Disabilities with religious affiliations

I stay in the Zongo [Mosque in Suhum] and what I see is that they mostly help those with visual impairment. If you are not blind you do not get anything but if you are blind, for instance, today being a Friday, after their 'Jumah' prayers, they will line up in front of the mosque with their bowls and they [people with visual impairments] recite some words so that when you exit the mosque, you drop some coins into their bowls. Apart from that, they do not help anyone (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

The church sometimes takes charge of the school fees, feeding, clothing and all of the children with disability who are in school within the church and those who are not in the church. The church takes responsibility of such things (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

3.2.3 Kinds of Support Persons with Disabilities Received

The kind of support received by persons with disabilities have been generally categorized into three categories: Material support in the form of food, clothing and cash remittances; Informal support which comprises social support networks and task completion support; and personal and economic activities involving activities which help persons with disabilities to earn some income.

MATERIAL SUPPORT

Food, clothing, and Cash remittances

Persons with disabilities received food and clothing from family, friends, and donations from other benevolent institutions such as churches.

Aside friends, we do receive support from churches, be it clothing, food items, and other forms of help. They have been helpful (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Most of us stay with our families so they feed and clothe us (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Anytime there is a general meeting, Civic Union (an NGO) provides them with free chairs for the meeting even if they are about 100 members. There are times when we go and prepare the meeting grounds (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Cash remittances

Some organizations also gave support to organisations of persons with disabilities in the form of cash donations.

Honestly, to tell you the truth, we do not normally give out cash. But some persons with disabilities go around the communities with some cards to ask for donations. I do give them Ghc50 or Ghc20 in such cases. It is out of sympathy that I give them. They are mostly hearing impaired, but my fear is that I do not know where they send the funds; whether to their office or what (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional leader).

When it is getting to the end of the year we (religious organizations) give them a sizeable amount of money to use for their upkeep. Before we do that, we will inform the family members so that they will be aware that the person is part of an organization (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Any conferences that persons with disabilities initiate, we organize the meeting place for them. There are times when we donate monies to them as well. Ask them if they are aware of the Civic Union (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Assistance services

Assistance services involved friends and family, but church organizations also periodically visit persons with disabilities to give them assistance and show solidarity.

When your friends come to visit you, then they will support you (Respondent 5, Discussant FGD 3, PWDs).

We have home visitors that we assign to specific children. We have also had specific teachers that cater for such children in their respective schools. So as Civic Union, we visit each child every fortnight. Sometimes they can inform us to give training to the parents of persons with disability in soap making (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Now the Jehovah's Witnesses and the SDA Church follow up on them by visiting them. Whenever the church is meeting, they take them along. Sometimes, they provide personal support to them as and when it is necessary. So, for these 2 churches, I am aware of their support (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

For Civic Union, we have decided to do our best to provide their needs through our little efforts if they get us informed. (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

While the focus of this study was on external support, it is important to note that persons with disabilities do not necessarily rely on external support when it comes to income generation. Persons with disabilities interviewed within the framework of this study were also engaged in petty trading and farming to earn a living.

[...] He wanted to retail so that he can get some form of livelihood. He negotiated with some herbal medicine agent, so they have given him some things to sell (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional leader).

...it is the farming that I have been surviving on till now (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

3.3 Challenges and Limitations of Existing Support Structures

The results of the study showed that support available to persons with disabilities in Suhum is composed of a mix of formal and informal support services with some stakeholders supporting voluntarily. Study participants emphasized the importance and potential impact on the living conditions of persons with disabilities associated with the general availability of this blended support system in Suhum.

One of the advantages is that, if the person has gained admission to a tertiary institution, he receives the support to pay his/her school fees. That could be an advantage because the person will gain knowledge and can contribute his quota after school. More so, if the person with disability is engaged and is requesting an income generating activity and the person is given that fund, at least the person will not go and stand by the roadside begging for alms and putting his/her own life at risk. He/she will get something doing and at the end of the day, he/she is empowered. So, for the advantages, a person needs an immediate surgery and the person needs support, at least he/she accesses and receives healthcare (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

The advantage attached to friends' support is also great. They share views and receive care and affection from friends and so they do not feel lonely. The issue of loneliness is minimized when friends are around you (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Results of the study confirmed that the current support available to persons with disabilities in Suhum is perceived as inadequate. Study participants lamented that the support persons with disabilities received in the past did not meet an average standard of living.

For the disadvantages, I will say sometimes what they give to persons with disabilities is not enough. For instance, the person requested for Gh¢1000 to farm and only Gh¢400 is approved, since it is not enough, the money will be wasted. So in a way, it is not helping them. They just take the money and some misuse it (Respondent 1, Discussant FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Furthermore, study participants underpinned the importance of support structures to empower persons with disabilities and to enhance independence and self-determination. It was criticized, that current support services are neither adequate nor sustainable.

What I will also say is that for how long will these people be receiving assistance? If you want to help somebody, teach them how to fish rather than always giving the fish to them. In other words, I think it will be appropriate that persons with disabilities be assisted to learn some skill so that they will trade, rather than relying on friends and family members all the time (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

So that could be a disadvantage because they should be taught how to fend for themselves. That is, identifying their needs and meeting them. That will help to develop them rather than they remaining dependent on others... It may get to a point in time when they become acquainted with the constant flow of support from people. So it will be better if we develop them to become independent (Respondent 9, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

The study identified obstacles to accessing both formal and informal support as being at the levels of information/communication, transportation, infrastructural, and institutional barriers as well as stigmatisation.

Information/communication barrier

Inadequate information flow from service providers to the disability groups was identified as a barrier that persons with disabilities encounter in accessing formal services in the Suhum Municipality.

The thing is that they [persons with disabilities] are not strongly organized so they cannot advocate for themselves and they do not have the needed information to be able to know that there exist such benefits (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Sometimes, it is an information barrier. Mostly, people do not get to know what is going on early enough. By the time you are aware, they [Organisations of Persons with disabilities] have taken a decision already (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

What I have noticed is that those in the villages do not have any idea about the existence of the groups [organisation of person with disabilities], so they really need information to be aware of the group's existence. I know a lot of them who are not privy to the group's existence. But because they are disabled, they always keep a low-profile life [referring to internalising oppression] (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authority).

Information flow from self-representing organisations to persons with disabilities also seems to be problematic. Participants, especially those from the deaf community, seem to have little access to information and the problem is attributed to the difficulty in communication as not many people are able to communicate in sign language. Lack of information and communication can result in missing opportunities for support.

We are executive members of GNAD [Ghana National Association of the Deaf], but sometimes we do not receive information until they [GNAD] have finished with their meeting and we will be briefed. So for such things, it will be good if they can call in to report because by the time we get to know, the common fund has already been shared (Respondent 3, FGD 3, PWDs).

Communicating with the deaf is an issue. Sometimes, we communicate with those who can read and write, but when it has to do with the person who is deaf,

you might probably ask him to go and bring his son to be the interpreter and that is where the stress begins (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Transportation barriers

Another barrier to accessing formal support is transportation. Transportation systems in Ghana are not accessible to persons with disabilities. In order to commute from their homes to the various offices to access formal support services, they have to find alternative means of transportation which in most cases are expensive.

Transportation is the first problem. Let me put it this way. It is difficult carrying them to the transport station. On our way here, they did not have any problem but when they have to come to my office, they must use a taxi. So, we talk about mobility as in transportation and the cost involved (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Additionally, drivers and passengers' attitudes towards people with disabilities impedes their access to services as noted by one of the participants with a disability.

"There are times when you sit in a public transport and you notice that people do not want to sit close to you" (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

For those living in the rural areas, mobility becomes more complicated because not only is the transportation system inaccessible, but they also have to travel on roads that are not motorable from their villages to the bigger villages before they can have access to transportation to the capital city to access services.

Another barrier is about how they commute from their various communities to the district capitals (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD, 2, Government Organisations).

Most of them are from rural communities where access to vehicles is very poor. You must walk for about an hour or 1- 2 kilometres before you can access a car. So, if you are a field representative and you ask them to come to the office to register or write their names, they will not come. So, anytime we are going to the field, we go fully prepared so that we register them along the way (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

The thing is that, if we have a visually impaired person living in "Doketewa"(a community that is far removed from Suhum) and you want him to come to the office to come and collect the funds and does not have money for transport- how will he be able to access the funds? That will be difficult for him. So in my opinion, when the money is made available by government, it should be made in such a way that, everyone can have access to it. The question is, Why should only a section of them be able to access it? (Respondent 13, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authority).

Infrastructural barriers

Infrastructural barriers include inaccessible buildings, open gutters and drainage systems.

Assuming that persons with disabilities have access to information and transportation to government and CSO offices, another challenge they encounter is independent access to the buildings. Majority of these buildings are not accessible. Regardless of recent improvements in public infrastructure, people with disabilities are mostly not able to go into the buildings to get services.

Our structures are not encouraging them to visit the institutions in order to present their petition for support. Most of the buildings are not disability-friendly. They cannot climb the stairs to enter the office (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

There are some government structures that are inaccessible to persons with disabilities. So if they decide to go there for support, that means they cannot enter the assembly hall because of the way it is built. It was only recently that they started changing some buildings in town (Respondent 15, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authority).

The participants with disabilities noted that the open drainage systems also posed a threat to their movement to and from the offices because the gutters are a danger to their safety due to the presence of reckless drivers.

Institutional barriers

Another major barrier to accessing government support is institutional barriers. They relate to the procedures persons with disabilities have to follow in order to receive formal support.

What I have noticed is that for any support they need, they must write a letter maybe to an NGO or FBO and that is a challenge. The fact is that the person does not know how to write that proposal and even getting a person to assist him or lead him to do that is also a challenge (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Participants noted that these procedures were cumbersome and this has compelled some persons with disabilities to give up on accessing support. Moreover, the availability of adequate funding was emphasized to be crucial.

First, we have already indicated that it is the government that should render whatever support. As and when the assembly itself has not got any internally generated funds and the common fund is not available, then they do not receive anything. For example, this year we have not received funds from the common fund. Even though they have been able to attend their conferences, the special education and the rest have all not received anything (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Another issue relating to institutional barriers is delays and irregular provision of government subvention in reaching the Municipal Assembly. The respondents with disabilities noted that such delays negatively impact their livelihoods.

If the common fund was to be coming on a timely basis, I think that will transform the lives of most of our members, but that is not happening. If it can be Gh¢ 400, Gh¢500, or Gh¢ 1000, that will be good but nothing came throughout the whole of last year (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Also, if it will be frequent, that will be welcomed. Some people have not received their support since 2009. So, assuming you had Ghc400 since 2009 till 2017, how can you survive? Now, our population is also increasing, so the quantum of money to be received is affected. (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Stigmatization

In accessing existing services from both formal and informal information sectors, persons with disabilities were constrained by the negative perceptions people had about persons with disabilities and their capabilities in any endeavour or work.

The stigma is high. The perceptions and attitudes are still negative. So, there is the urgent need for intensive social and public education. If the stigma is reduced or avoided, everybody will be prepared to treat them as any of us (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

People's attitude towards persons with disability is very bad. Just because you are disabled, your ideas are relegated (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

It is all about attitude. I think there is the uegent need for intensive sensitization and attitudinal change. So, if every one of us understands the issues of persons with disabilities and we accept them as they are and render support as in family, friend, churches, and institutions, we will all be at the same level (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD, 2, Government Organisations).

Participants with disabilities bemoaned how they are sometimes perceived as beggars in some settings regardless of how well they had dressed or whatever business they were there to transact, which they deem as very offensive.

When they look at your living condition, they do not care about you. I was in an office in Tema and the receptionist disrespected me thinking I was only there to beg for money when they allowed me into the office, and these are some of the misconceptions. That is why we also want to be independent and neatly dressed (Respondent 14, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Participants with disabilities noted further that the stigma against them is such that sometimes they are treated in an inhumane manner and experience direct discrimination which affects not only their ability to access support, but also to mingle with other people and to actively participate in community activities and cultural events.

There are times when you sit in a public transport and you notice that people do not want to sit close to you. In August, there was a function at the chief's house and they decided to organize refreshments, immediately we got there, people started excusing themselves from us because they felt we have a deformity. People tend to look at you when you have a particular deformity and they do not rather look at the ideas you might assist with (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

For instance, there is a communal labour (days that community members are required to work together for the benefit of the town) or a naming ceremony immediately you get there, you hear people make comments like, "oh why did you not stay in the house?" "What exactly are you coming to do here?" Then, they will start discouraging you. Some could make comments like, "oh the food is finished". Meanwhile, you are not at the occasion because of food, but just that in case you also have an occasion someday, then you will have sympathizers around. These are some of the reasons why we do not engage ourselves in public gatherings (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

As a result of such attitudinal barriers, some persons with disabilities have internalized oppression and prefer not to seek any services. Some persons with disabilities also capitalize on societal attitudes towards them and the difficulty in accessing both formal and informal support to beg on the streets for alms.

They end up feeling inferior. They are confronted with the challenge of how people feel about them and what will people say about them especially when they go out to seek for support. So, we need to have a change of attitude and a positive mindset (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Like my brother is saying, they will know about it but if they absent themselves from a meeting there is no way they will know. They have isolated themselves, so it difficult is to know, especially those at the villages (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Some persons with disabilities take to the streets to beg on the streets for alms since they claim they could not access both formal and informal support.

The reason they will go begging for alms is that some of us who are able-bodied have refused to support them. That is why they have taken that turn. The other day, I had a discussion with one of them who has opened an information centre at "Puyaro". He mentioned that nobody cared about him even the community that he stays in. At times, excuse my language, but they are sometimes regarded as animals. Respect is not reciprocated in equal measure as they show respect to others. (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Friends who were constantly in the company of persons with disabilities also experienced some form of challenge. They were sometimes also called derogatory names which could negatively affect their willingness to help persons with disabilities.

The disadvantage is that when the friend starts getting closer to the person with disability, they tend to use derogatory names for them and make some distasteful statements about them (Respondent 8, FGD 2, Government Organisations).

3.4 Unmet Needs

Several areas were identified in this study as unmet needs of persons with disabilities. These included the need for education, awareness raising about capabilities of persons with disabilities, government funding for education, skills development, employment, healthcare, physical access, data on persons with disabilities, and the involvement of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

3.4.1 Education of Persons with Disabilities

One major unmet need from the study is the education of persons with disabilities. Participants said that the low educational attainment of persons with disabilities impacted their inclusion, especially with regards to their employment. They suggested the need for campaigns for the implementation of inclusive education and other policies to enhance the educational attainment of persons with disabilities.

When you look around, you realize that persons with disability do not have enough jobs available to them. So the government should endeavour to educate them from infancy and also create jobs for them after school. For example, art and craft, tailoring or any artisan work because these kinds of work do not require them to move about. It is at one place. We do not have a section of work assigned for them alone. If they are given the chance to receive higher education, then they can gain well-meaning jobs to fend for themselves. We can do something about it (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 4).

The policy is now effective so it should be implemented. I must take my child to the school but what if I refuse to do that? One of the participants mentioned that a teacher repeated a disabled person 3 times. I think it is either that teacher is not updated or is just refusing to do the right thing. I think we should encourage the education of the rights and needs of the disabled person (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

We need a sustained government campaign. There should be a conscious government effort and campaign for them to go to school (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Awareness about the educational needs of persons with disabilities

As part of efforts to meet the educational needs of persons with disabilities, participants suggested creating awareness about their capabilities and to encourage parents and family members to ensure the education of their children with disabilities.

All that he said is true, but the education is most important. So, I think we should create the much-needed awareness for people to change their perception about the stigma associated with a person with disability. There was an old friend who was staying at ATTC. He travelled and became visually impaired because of an earthquake that happened. So, he came back, and it was the support of the family that gave him encouragement. He could have been a regional director by now. I have been to the resource centre at the education unit and close to these physically challenged persons, so I understand their situation. If we all understand them very well, then we will have a better place to live (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

They emphasized that awareness raising is very important given that some parents and relatives overprotect their children or simply conceal them from public view due to the stigma attached to persons with disabilities and hence deprive them of education.

What I have observed is that most of them are kept indoors or stuck to their mothers. They are not permitted to go outside as their other siblings who are not disabled. They are always close to the home (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Additionally, representatives of the OPDs think that their parents and families did not enrol them in school because they regarded them as non-beneficial; not worth their parents' investment.

Some of our family members think that we are not useful, so they do not see the need to send us to school, that is why most of us are not educated (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Government funding for education

Participants claimed that without some form of government funding to support the educational needs of persons with disabilities, they would always encounter educational challenges. They alleged that persons with disabilities have many needs arising from their impairments which is compounded by poverty.

There was a time a parent had to buy hearing aids for the ward. They got the money for only one and could not buy the second one. Please, educational support is also an urgent need for all the categories; that is secondary and tertiary (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Right now, they said it is free education for them from the primary level, but their feeding is the major problem. They are being used on a pilot basis and that is misleading. When they go to school they are not provided with free meals. How

can you expect a disabled child of school going age to go to school without providing food? I think if the government will take statistics of all the disabled persons and assist them, it will be very good (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

3.4.2 Skills Development / Vocational Training

Another unmet need identified by participants, mostly those from CSOs was the need for the development of the skills of persons with disabilities. They were of the view that, persons with disabilities who for one reasons or the other cannot go through the formal education system, should not be left out or continuously depend on social support. They argued for the skills development to equip them for a livelihood.

If some of them are supported, they will become great persons. So, if you teach them how to earn income, they will become empowered rather than giving them monthly contributions. Today, it is the people with disabilities but tomorrow it could be other people because they are all Ghanaians (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Some of them have enough strength to work, so the best to do for them is to train and equip them to care for themselves. If we are not careful, we will go back to the age when people with disabilities were confined to a room and that cannot be reversed. That will be difficult to draw the society's attention to the fact that a person with disability must go to school and be supported so that they can rise to live in dignity (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Employment

Representatives of persons with disabilities stated emphatically that, what they needed most was employment and not necessarily support from the DACF.

I will like to say something about the help we receive from the common fund. The issue is the lack of employment. If I am gainfully employed, I will not rely on the common fund. So it is lack of employment in the government sector (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

They were of the view that there is the need to design and implement measures to ensure their employment after education and vocational training.

If we have enough government work placements, that will reduce our membership on the dependence on the common fund. "So, I will not be worried because I will receive my monthly pay. I am an HND holder, but if you go out there to look for a job after a long stress, I will be refused the job because of my disability. I think during the employment process at the district assembly, at least 2 disabled people can be employed to join the team. Even if you are working as a person with disabilities, you may even perform better than the able-bodied person (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

3.4.3 Health Care

Participants acknowledged that some persons with disabilities automatically qualify to be on the National Health Insurance Scheme. These are those who have qualified for the social cash transfer scheme 'Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty' (LEAP) and children with disabilities under 18 years of age. Even for them, however, the health insurance does not cover every cost.

In terms of healthcare acquisition, sometimes it is costly. When the funds is received, you cannot pay all and they also do not have the money to add up to what the Assembly gives. So, at the end of the day, they are not able to get the assistive devices (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

With the health sector, I will like to also suggest that we try to link the "LEAP" for persons with disability in terms of health insurance registration. Monthly contributions are given to beneficiaries for their social needs. Persons with disabilities' money can also be sent on their behalf through the social welfare so that at least you register them for NHIS, then when they get the card at the rate of Ghc 5 under 18years or Ghc 25 above 18 years. With these, they can have a package at the health centres and these will take off some necessities off the back of the family and the government as well. So, their funds and NHIS needs must be catered for (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

My problem is that, anytime you visit the healthcare centre, you are told that the NHIS does not cater for some drugs. So you pay for those drugs (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Other unmet healthcare needs relate to communications at health centres, physical access, and the waiting time.

Some of us cannot tell the doctor our problem unless we have someone who understands sign language (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

When you go to the hospital, you have to join a long queue and we are not strong enough like those able-bodied men to survive that stress. If some of the nurses employed would understand sign language that would be helpful to us (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

The women with disabilities were concerned about the pre- and post-natal services they received. They noted that their healthcare service experiences compounded their condition.

I think special care should be given to disabled women who are pregnant. During their delivery time, it is very difficult, so they need to be treated with care with respect to the attitude of healthcare attendants. So, we are pleading with them to be gentle on us (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

It is painful to be in labour, so when you have some other health care attendants to add more woes to your plight it becomes very difficult (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

3.4.4 Physical Accessibility

Physical access was identified as an unmet need. Participants asserted that in order to fully promote the education of persons with disabilities and to integrate them into mainstream society, there is also the need to make provision for accessible environment. They stated the need for easy and practical access to and within every area including schools, hospitals, police stations, marketplaces, buses, and so on.

Access to school buildings like the classrooms, urinal, dressing rooms, and other amenities should be easy for these people (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authority).

It should be manifold {I: examples}. Access to hospitals, police stations, buses. If a person with disability fault the law and cannot walk, how do they carry him/her to the police station (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authority)?

Access to market places is a very big challenge. If you are not careful, something might happen to you when you visit the market. So, I decided never to go to the market square again. All our gutters are not covered and if you can plead with the Municipal Assembly to get it done, it will be beneficial to us (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

I will plead that when high-rising buildings are being constructed for public services, they should consider in the architectural work by making it accessible to us, or if not, they should put such offices at the ground floor (Respondent 15, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

I think my brother has said it all. There used to be a girl of about 13 years in Accra and she was disabled. If she is about to go to school, about 4 people must come together to lift her up into a taxi and it looked very painful. So those at the educational unit should find a way that such children will be given little effort and provide modern wheelchair instead of lifting her to be able to go to school and then it is the same school friend who must do the same to bring her home (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authority).

3.4.5 Data on Persons with Disabilities

Participants acknowledged that the government has started collecting data about persons with disabilities. They noted that the process which ended around the time of the study basically aimed at gathering information for the DACF.

Previously, government did not have data on persons with disability that was why we brought the idea that all the Municipal and District Assembly should collate the list of people with disability. Previously, they needed to apply before

they have access to the disability fund. So, it is now that government can use the data in assisting them in sections. So in the end, everyone will have his or her share of the national cake, unlike those times when only persons who are aware of the fund do apply. So, I think the new intervention will also help in correcting a lot of issues (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

The Assembly just completed a population census and on the questionnaire, they have a form for persons living with disability. If we can get that data, we will know the number of households with persons with disabilities (Respondent 11, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Participants however suggested the need for more effective measures to compile comprehensive and accurate data on persons with disabilities.

If you are approaching such a person then you must be very strategic. How are you going to present yourself to the person who will come out? If you are going to meet the chief, you need to be well prepared because you do not know if he will listen to you and will not make it seem like an interference. You must make sure you have been given credible information. So, if such a child is being hidden then your approach will let them release the person with disability. In the end, you want to help them, but you must do it with care (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

3.4.6 Involvement in Decision-Making

Another unmet need stressed by the participants is the involvement of persons with disabilities in planning and decision-making, especially those that directly concern them. Some of the participants, especially those from CSOs, believe that this is the major unmet need. Because the OPDs have been operating in the Suhum Municipal area for over two decades, so they and their operations are known in the area. And yet, they are not included in decisions concerning them.

Suhum Kraboa Coaltar is one of the few Assemblies that our organizations have offices as far back as 1995. We have contributed to civic advocacy for a very long time. Those who might have said they do not know any organization around, could be of a younger generation. I think the issue is that, when you are planning for persons with disability, they must be involved. This is because the advocacy is being done on their behalf just like drivers are told to reserve a seat for a disabled person. Are we going with them to the transport stations? Who knows that such an opportunity has been created for them? So that when they get to the station, they can talk to the bus conductor and have their seat immediately. So that they will know that this is because of the discussion they had some time ago and they will be able to measure the impact of the result. So, when we do these things for them and exclude them, then there is a gap (Respondent 12, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs)

3.5 Required Support Arrangements

Types of support arrangements participants perceived as needed to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities (formal, informal, blended)

Two major kinds of support arrangements were identified in this study: Shared responsibility to mainstream persons with disabilities and the disability development fund. Participants suggested a shared responsibility among government agencies, CSOs, and the traditional authority in order to fully include persons with disabilities in mainstream society. They laid emphasis on the need for all stakeholders to complement the government's efforts to achieve inclusion of disability issues and persons with disabilities in the society. The CSOs should continue to provide services to complement government services, play an oversight role to ensure that government commits to disability issues and persons with disabilities as well as help raising awareness about disability issues. Participants stressed the need for the traditional authority to provide land free of charge to organisations which focus on disability issues as well as persons with disabilities to establish their businesses. As custodians of the land, the traditional authority could also help to raise awareness about disability issues as well as disseminate information to their constituents.

Mainstreaming disability inclusion should be a shared responsibility

The CSOs believe mainstreaming of disability inclusion should be a shared responsibility where each one of their organisations including churches, NGOs, Mosques, governmental organisations, traditional authorities and every individual should play a part to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully included into society. The CSO representatives said there is a need for these entities to be familiar with legal provisions concerning disability so that they can integrate them into their daily routine work.

I think each one of us here at one point or the other interacts with people including persons with disabilities. So we have a responsibility of mainstreaming disability issues in whatever we do. Maybe in the administration of our duty, be it work, church, or wherever we find ourselves. Disability should be mainstream in the administration of our work...CHRAJ does social and public education. They also mediate cases which sometimes includes persons with disability. So if they are doing public education in schools and communities, they will mention persons with disability. After they are done with the core function, they should touch on disability. That is what I mean by mainstreaming. When health programmes are held, disability should be touched on (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

As we are here, let us assume that we want to know how to make the places to become accessible to persons with disabilities. Policymakers should make sure that modern structures will have those facilities that will make them move about freely. So those things keep them away from us. Let us assume they want to come here and they cannot get here just as we are fortunate to be here, then they must wait till we tell them what happened. So, we have intimidated them

rather than bringing all of us on board. You said you had to travel long distance to get here, so even that is discriminating. When a road is being constructed, they should be taken into consideration (Respondent 15, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Lady, the Assembly members should not be left out of the capacity building programmes because they are also the mouthpiece of the people within the community...The role that you want the Chief to play, the Assembly members can do same by even sensitizing others (Respondent 9, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

I think the Pastors in the churches can also play that role if the education goes down well with all these people, that is the Chief, Assemblymen, and Pastors, they can effect change (Respondent 9, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

They also believed that the custodians of the land such as member of the traditional authority can contribute free land for projects that aim at incorporating persons with disabilities in mainstream society. The traditional authorities could also give small pieces of land to persons with disabilities who have the skills and resources to establish their shops. They pointed out that this endeavour could go a long way to minimise some of the land issues persons with disabilities encounter when they try to set up businesses for themselves.

We are aware that the problem is all about the land acquisition systems. For some places, the land belongs to the Chief and Community. Elsewhere, it belongs to the government so I cannot say much about it. The conditions attached are too much for us to meet (Respondent 12, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Sometimes, the issues about land has to do with chieftancy. The problem comes up when the person with disability is told to evacuate the land because the whole place has been acquired by someone. When it happens like this, it is the physically-challenged person who is supposed to relocate his business. I suggest that, the chiefs should allocate better places for them when they want to establish their businesses (Respondent 10, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

The CSO representatives stressed that the traditional authorities could help create awareness about disability issues and ensure that disability policies are implemented effectively since they have the structures to institute and maintain discipline in the community.

People are of the view that when a person is confined, it suggest royalty, but in the case of children with disabilities it is not royalty. The Chiefs should enact laws that summon people to the chief's palace if they deny their wards education. Those are the things that will show leadership and help bring these children out to be part of the society. The Chiefs have a stake in this. (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Special funding for disability issues / development fund for persons with disabilities / disability development funding

Study participants stated the need to “teach persons with disabilities to fish rather than fishing for them.” That is to say that persons with disabilities should be economically empowered to provide for themselves in a sustainable manner instead of their continued dependence on family and government support which is irregular and hardly sufficient.

But madam, when you continue to fend for someone all the time, then it becomes a problem. In the past, persons with disability were given training and after that, they were employed and sent to some of the schools to teach handicraft. So they were able to at least earn a living. But now, we no longer have it in this system. It was very useful to them because some of the people had jobs through the training they had been given. They came out gainfully employed and started earning a living...I could remember some of the “Knights” were making doormats and shoes (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

So, it is about identifying their needs and assisting them. Maybe some of them are good in sewing. The government should support with training. Someone may be good at training, so that the people are grouped, trained, and materials provided to establish them. In the end, they will be on their own. They will not rely on any other person unless they need aid to move around. I think with things like food and clothing, they can help themselves (Respondent 9, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

I think on the 20th of September, a team from Accra Common Fund administrators came to meet me, MCE, Community Director and the Finance Officer and this issue was discussed as to what do we think will help these people {I: Which people?} Persons with disability. So, these issues were raised. The issue of skills training, that is, identifying one of the special skills that they need to be trained in and to expand those who are into income generating activities and also supporting them to expand whatever activity they are into. In effect, skills training, establishing their business, and supporting them. With the children, they were looking at trying to integrate them into our schools. Then to support those who are in special schools. These are the most important ones we think they should get. However, it will be beneficial to them if they acquire skills on what job opportunities are there as well. We also had a discussion about community’s engagement. That is, identifying skilful craftsmen operating in their communities and then assigning these disabled persons to them for training without necessarily driving them to another community for the training. Those who have special training on that will have to move out. It was agreed that we will see to it, but we have not heard anything from them (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

In view of the fact that government and family support are irregular and barely sufficient, CSOs suggested that the government could develop a fund for persons with disabilities to economically empower them by giving them skills training to set up their own businesses. To start and grow this development fund, several sources of funding were identified. These sources included donations from individuals and philanthropists living within and outside of the country and compulsory levy on parliamentarians and ministers of state, which should be collected at source from their salaries.

Like we said, we will look at all the disabled and then look through to identify those who cannot do anything at all then help them with money and then those that must be given skills training will be empowered and set up. This is what we will plead with the government to do. Government should make sure revenue is collected and support the disabled so that peace will prevail (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authority).

Society can help. Rich people in the society can also help. Those people can occasionally be given awards for their support at a function organized by the District Assembly. Also, we can appeal to raise funds from all businesses in the whole area especially filling stations, wood sellers, and the rest...It could be anybody at all. It could be Ghanaians living abroad or foreigners. So long as they are people who want to touch the lives of people they can support (Respondent 14, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

I will suggest that parliamentarians also support such people. There should be a law to support this...They should be a fixed amount into a fund...The deduction could be done at source from their salary. I think the parliamentarians should know that some of the disabled also voted for them (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Although representatives of OPDs believe that the disability development fund is a laudable idea and could improve upon their livelihoods, they were concerned that if that money is not monitored properly, it will be abused by both individuals responsible for the disbursement and persons with disabilities themselves. They believe that there must be a well-outlined procedure for the disbursement of the fund, which should include their leaders in the disbursement and monitoring to effectively address their issues and enhance mainstreaming into society.

If government will provide the money, there will be mad rush over there. So, if it is skilled training like hairdressing that you want to acquire, they can provide the needed support throughout the training so that when you are done you will inform government and then they will assist you to set up your own small enterprise or give you seed money as start up capital. So everybody will be dealing with the government directly for that job planning process (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

They will be monitored. When the money is given out, they should be monitored so that no one defaults. At times they will tell you that they are not the only person in debt (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

In addition, they suggested a microfinance scheme to economically empower persons with disabilities. They seemed to fear that the development fund could turn to follow the same path as the DACF and might not benefit them much. They noted that with the microfinance, they could work in groups and if they could have the money for longer loan cycles, it could have a lasting impact on their lives.

What she is saying is true. We are always expectant so when it delays, it becomes a challenge. I quite remember the government did a pilot project for Suhum and Somanya. Yes! Whereby you will go to the rural bank so that they will give you a loan facility to work with and pay back within 2 years. The interest rate was flexible as well. So if you take about Ghc 100, you will pay an interest of Ghc 10 which is okay. The beneficiaries who took the money refused to repay, that is why they have cancelled the programme. If you can introduce that it will be good, so that if the common fund is not paid on time, you can have access to that soft loan to work and pay back (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

What my brother is saying is true. If we have 150 members, groups of 20 members can go for the money and use it for about 4-5 years then they can keep the money for so many years to work, so that if the common fund is delayed they will not be worried (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

OPDs seem to be more convinced about the microfinance programme because they claimed that a pilot project of what they were suggesting, which was sponsored by the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD), yielded good results.

The secretariat [GFD] has made us aware that they will be starting a pilot project in Ashanti and Northern Regions of the country. They are in talks with a rural bank so that they will give GDA loan. If the first batch can repay the loan, then it will revolve for others to benefit. If it goes on, the other associations will also emulate that for their members. We will be happy if they increase the money, but the issue is that some of the members will rush in the assembly without our knowledge and fight with the executives over there hence slashing the amount. If they can form groups of 20, that will be okay as well. Henceforth, if we can change our attitude, then something good will happen (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Hamorising various support arrangements to include persons with disabilities

Stakeholders in the field of disability who participated in this study identified several ways that the government could harmonise the various array of support systems to include persons with disabilities into mainstream society.

First, they suggested a political will to augment available services and opportunities for persons with disabilities since they believed the current benefits are not enough leverage to get persons

with disabilities out of poverty. Political will to enforce the implementation of existing policies to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, the political will to include disability issues and persons with disabilities in development planning to effectively target persons with disabilities, and the political will to employ persons with disabilities using affirmative action policy and quota.

Second, with regards to education and dissemination of information about disability to family members, MMDAs and traditional authorities were part of ways to harmonise existing support arrangements.

The third suggestion centred on the reduction of excessive bureaucracy, which participants believed impedes access to existing government services. Building a stronger disability movement to meaningfully engage government and CSOs, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes as well as obtaining disaggregated data were all identified as important ways to harness OPDs and to include persons with disabilities.

Finally, this section also presents information about how the government could collaborate with the media, CSOs, and TAs to effectively mainstream disability issues. The need for the government to initiate and spearhead an agenda to harness existing resources/systems was emphasised.

Political will and commitment to implement policies

The various stakeholders who participated in this study believed that there is the need for government to have political will to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life. Study participants were of the view that the current array of services and programmes were not enough leverage to get persons with disabilities out of poverty and to include them into mainstream society. For example, it was identified that the DACF does not give enough leverage for the livelihood of persons with disabilities and hence participants suggested to augment that scheme to advance the lives of persons with disabilities as well as promote their inclusion.

For me, I do not think there are disadvantages to services provided, rather, the advantages are enormous. For the disadvantages I will say sometimes what they give to persons with disabilities is not enough. Maybe the person has requested for Ghc 1000 for farming and you approve maybe Ghc400, then the person will decide to waste it. So in a way, it is not helping them. They just take the money and some misuse it because it is not enough to enter a meaning venture (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Participants bemoaned the lack of political will to enforce existing policies to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Legal and policy provisions such as the Persons with Disabilities Act 715 and the Inclusive Education Policy as well as the District Assembly Common Fund were identified in that respect. They were of the view that even public officials who represent duty bearers and ought to know more of the laws do not seem to adhere to the provisions.

We have the Disability Act, but our challenge is implementation. It is there, but we do not implement it. We have the Disability Act so the MMDA's and Assembly

members should go through and read, as well as implement it. When you go to the Municipal Assembly, they have it, but the implementation is the problem...Let's also enforce the provisions in the law. For example, why do we give permit to people to build public structures which do not have access for person with disabilities? Why do we still allow importers to import buses which are not disability-friendly? This building has a big auditorium, but it is not accessible for persons with disabilities. So, unless we carry them at our back they can't come there. Let us also make sure that the provision in the Disability Act is strictly adhered to (Respondent 9, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

In addition, the CSOs, the MMDAs and other government institutions involved in planning, such as the National Development Planning Commission, should specifically include disability in their planning in order to target and address disability issues. They believed that once those issues appeared in planning documents, there is a possibility of their implementation. Participants were also of the view that funding should be made available specifically to implement the plans. These are the ways in which issues of persons with disabilities could be addressed.

Government should be convinced to enforce its own laws and provide the needed resources to the institutions. Make sure the District Assemblies feature persons with disability as their priority when developing plans. Once it is not in the plan, it does not feature in any mandate or manual to be looked at. There must be conscious effort by government and its planners at the National Development Planning Commission to set up guidelines that ensure that persons with disability are a prominent feature. Once it is done, funds will be provided (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Civil Society Organisations, the traditional authority and representatives of OPDs stressed the need for political will to employ persons with disabilities. They said political will in the form of an affirmative action policy that specifically targets persons with disabilities and gives quotas for their employment is imperative. The government could create jobs within its agencies such as the Youth Employment Agency, MMDAs and other government agencies for persons with disabilities. They were quick to add that the need for government to spearhead this initiative is important, given that the private sector aims mostly to make profit and may or may not necessarily pay attention to government incentives for the employment of persons with disabilities due to the belief that they may have to spend more resources to accommodate persons with disabilities.

This issue of common fund should go away because it is not sustainable. We should aim at sustainable development. For instance, under youth employment let us ensure that certain persons with disability are employed and alongside, government employment should target affirmative action so that persons with disabilities with capacity are engaged. The private sector are always looking for profit and they have their own problems when they believe that you cannot perform. Government must show leadership by engaging persons with disability.

When I say they should implement the law you realize there are also tax exemptions for private sector organizations that employ persons with disability. All those things should be enforced. When people have employment, they will not have any issue. The whole issue of completing school without job affects disability person as well (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Although study participants recognised that the majority of persons with disabilities have limited or no formal education due to the many barriers they are besieged with, they insisted that there are still many other jobs that persons with disabilities can perform even without formal education. Jobs such as cleaning offices, ticketing, and collecting money at public places such as toll booths, toilets, markets, and pipes among others are duties that persons with disabilities can easily perform.

I think there should be employment avenues in government sectors that persons with disability can apply. Most of those jobs are based on qualification so if you are not qualified you cannot apply. There are some jobs that do not require qualifications, but even if they do, where there is a will there is always a way. Jobs such as ticketing do not require anything (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

That arrangement is already there. Legislation for employment of the disabled should be enforced. It is there that persons of that nature should be employed. Then it should be that if you employ more than 50 workers, then you should have at least one disabled person. Once it is a law, it must be enforced. If you have 100 workers, a percentage of them should be disabled persons. Even if at least 1%, that will serve as the beginning (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

I think it has to do with policies. For example, government can pass an Act and state that in every institution at least there should be one disabled person there. With the Health Insurance, we can have persons with disability taking money from the district office and issuing receipts (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Representatives of the OPDs welcome the idea of government political will to specifically target them for employment through affirmative action and quota targeting. They assert that this approach will go a long way to reduce their dependency on the government and their families and increase their job and financial security.

I think during the employment at the District Assembly, they can employ at least 2 persons with disability to join the team. Even if you are working as person with disabilities you can even perform better than the able-bodied person. We are not talking about the most expensive jobs. It could be just issuing of tickets, collecting monies at the toilet or at the tap when fetching water (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Awareness-Raising, education and dissemination of information

There was consensus that education is needed to harness some of the existing resources in order to include persons with disabilities into mainstream society. Persons with disabilities indicated the need to educate their families about disability issues and the need to support them regardless of their disability. They noted that most families had neglected their wards with disabilities although they are the primary source of support for them.

Most of them have neglected us because they think we are valueless, but so long as we are living, there is still hope. It is great joy to see us living so I will urge our families and relatives to change their mindset towards persons with disability (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

What I have also realized is that some of the parents will also think that when my ward is disabled then all hope is lost. It is about time we educate parents to know that if your child is disabled.... Let us say some of the illiterates do not know. They will look at them and say my child is disabled and what can he/she do? So we must educate the parents and make them know that when your child is disabled, it does not mean they do not have any abilities (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

They also believe that the education should go beyond the family members to include MMDAs and members of parliament. They emphasised that these categories of people should also be well-informed about disability issues and the need to change their perceptions about persons with disabilities. This will enable them to effectively help with the integration of persons with disabilities in mainstream society.

They should educate people at all levels, even at MMDAS and at the parliament to be aware that physically challenged persons are not second-class persons. There should be no discrimination (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

When the honourable members meet, that should be the agenda; physical challenge is only a deformity. They should create the awareness. The Assembly members should also join the crusade (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

People do not tend to understand us because disabilities like these have been linked to superstition and thereby an outcast from the community. So up till now, society thinks negatively about persons with disability (Respondent, 5 Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

The OPD members believe that, they could help with the awareness-raising about disability issues to government offices and the public as a whole. They noted that they could be invited to state gatherings and given a few minutes to tell their stories. They also suggested that government officials could use a few minutes of their state programmes to talk on disability issues.

At times, when there is a state function or any platform, they can invite us to share our story and for public sentiment. They should make it a priority. We will plead with the public that no matter how disabled a person can be, we are all the same. It can happen to anyone in times of accident (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

What she is saying is true, but we cannot afford to stop the education. We must continue and intensify it. After all, you know the person making fun of you might be in your position sometime to come. I am not predicting that, but accidents are bound to happen. We should rather let government be aware that they should engage us in all forums to educate people. We cannot do it on our own because of lack of resources, but we believe government has the capacity to organize many open forums so that we can leverage on that. In terms of OPD, if possible they should give us 5 minutes at state functions and forums to air our views. That will change the mindset of people (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Participants with hearing impairments stressed the need for their families to familiarise themselves with the sign language in order to effectively communicate with them.

One of the challenges has to do with communicating with their parents and friends so that they will learn their sign language. Since it helps in effective discussions (Respondent 6, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

The traditional authorities also insisted that there should be education about the disability policy to help them pass the information on to their constituents and to be able to raise awareness about disabilities in order to help integrate persons with disabilities in mainstream society.

Because their allocation is based on percentage, most of them do not receive it. I know of a certain person with disability who said they do not get the funds because those responsible expect their cut from the money disbursed. So, if they do not have an educated person to assist them with making the right enquires they will not get it. A brother of mine did not receive his funds as well. So, the information should go down well with them so that if there is any assistance or support, they can assist them (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Reduce excessive bureaucracy

Representatives of the CSOs stated that the procedures for accessing government services and programmes are cumbersome, stressful and sometimes frustrating for persons with disabilities, restricting access to government services and programmes. This is so because sometimes the process is not straightforward. Persons with disabilities have to go to the municipal assembly a couple of times just to see the coordinating director who may finally refer them to the Social Welfare Department, which is responsible for the paperwork to determine eligibility. There again, it may take a while to go through the process.

It is the way the formal system works. First, if you need assistance you will be told to go to the Coordinating Director. When you want to meet him, you are told he is in a meeting so come the next day. They are always in a meeting so upon several attempts the person will get frustrated and stop coming. Social Welfare which is supposed to do most of their implementation hardly receive their subvention/budget money from the government on time so there is always a standstill. Government departments and agencies to that effect are slow and bureaucratic (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Data on persons with disabilities

The importance of data on persons with disabilities for effective targeting of social protection schemes and services and development was emphasized by representatives of the traditional authorities. They noted the need to know the exact numbers of persons with disabilities because they believe the current official numbers that authorities are working with are way below the actuals. They said that as traditional leaders, they know that there are a lot more persons with disabilities in their communities than portrayed in the books and promised to help the government to gather data on persons with disabilities.

Initially, we had educated field representatives that used to go around registering them. They can do that. That is why Doctor said you should go and invite all the Chiefs, Queenmothers, and the Elders of the town. So that we will bring all of them to register because that is the first step before you can be recognized. The total number of persons with disability is more than the number of members you have in the group so there are more out there. That is why if you inform us, the elders of the land, then we will make them available. The registration is necessary (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

While they stressed the need for data on persons with disabilities, they also believed that the current approach to data collection from persons with disabilities may be an issue for data collection in this population.

Maybe we might not be using the right approach to data collection. We need to do our best to get the data on our brothers and sisters to help them. I hope they should come out and register for the programme. That is when we will know their number and help them (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Therefore, they cautioned census enumerators to be careful of how they approach persons with disabilities, their parents, and guardians to collect data about persons with disabilities because disability is a sensitive issue and hence, people are usually wary of information collected from them, since they could be taken advantage of or be exposed to their true situation due to the stigma attached to disability.

I will plead with you all because it is still a matter of education. This is because the disabled person or their guardian must accept it first because they do not know whether they are just going to expose them because these disabled people have accepted their fate. I think we should all do our best so that they come out.

I have conducted census before and it was very hectic. There are times when you will start asking a person some question then after 2 or 3 question they will not answer you anymore because you will uncover the truth surrounding their disabled child. Finally, they asked me if I will not add money after I have exhausted my questions. This shows that the disabled person is important to them. Otherwise, they will ask you why you didn't count the able-bodied person as well. So, I will advocate for education seriously on this. If we do not empower ourselves, who will do it for us. I will plead that we take a second look (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

The traditional authorities further stressed the importance of disaggregated data for effectively targeting persons with disabilities. They identified several levels of categorisation of persons with disabilities including by type of impairments, severity, physiological and skills needs.

In my brother's speech, he said there are some that have both arms and legs not functioning well. Those people must be sorted out first. The government or the system should be able to sort out those people who cannot use their arms or legs to work first. Government should be able to give them stipends because they cannot do virtually anything. That is my passionate appeal (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Left to me, government should identify all persons with disability who have been confined to rooms and support them. This could be in a form whereby the guardian can be supported so that whatever revenue comes out can be used to support the disabled person (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

If we work towards enforcement of all the Bill, it will be good. The disabled can be categorized so that gradually we will be upgrading and up-skilling them. Little by little, we will get somewhere. We can start with those whose problems are hospital and physiological cases then move on to skills upgrading and so on (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Build a stronger disability movement

A stronger disability movement, according to study participants, is a necessity for the integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream society. They suggested several ways (see narrations below) to build a stronger disability movement which could actively engage the government, CSOs and society as a whole to advocate for themselves.

The first suggestion in building the capacity of OPDs is to assess their strengths: asset/capacity-based assessment and find out the ones that could be projected and built on. And this could be done by going to their meetings, observing and encouraging them to move on regardless of the challenges.

Let us encourage them, capitalize on their strength, and project it. By so doing you will be surprised. As at now some of them are doing well. There should be a

wake up call. The conscientization, meeting them and encouraging them that “yes you can.” (Respondent 9, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

The need to build their capacity for effective advocacy was also identified by DPOs. Suggestions were made regarding building their knowledge base about available services and programmes for persons with disabilities and how they could access those services. Financial capacity building was also identified in order to build stronger OPDs.

The thing is that they are not strongly organized so they cannot advocate for themselves and they do not have the needed information to be able to know that there exist such benefits...Let’s ask the question, “Why is it that it has piled up to this point?” Who can be the mediator to speak on their behalf to effect change? They are supposed to have the money, but the money is not there to help them advocate for themselves and/or reach people to lobby for them (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

I think it all boils down to support: physically and monetary. In my opinion, I think every MP should devote a small percentage of their salaries towards supporting persons with disabilities (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Government support for families of persons with disabilities

Participants from the traditional authority emphasized the need for government support for the caregivers of persons with severe disability. They qualified these persons as those who are unable to perform their daily activities of living and, hence, require 24 hours of care and support. They stressed that such incentives could help reduce their burden of care, hence, abuse and neglect.

When you talk about the family you realize that taking care of a person with disability is not an easy task at all. If the person can either walk without the support of another person, then that means he can do any skilful trade, so the pressure will ease a little bit. But if it happens that the person cannot do anything at all, then it will be very difficult because those are the ones that must be fed, bathed, clothed, and so on. So, the caregiver could be fed up. So, if government can transform their lives by even putting them on the “Chop and Die” programme which also works like the pension plan, it will be helpful (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Government to work with the media

Government involvement in highlighting the capabilities of persons with disabilities as well as government policies and programmes that involved the media were suggested by the participants. They asserted that, hitherto, the government have not done enough to engage the media and thus the media is currently using its resources to promote other issues.

We do advert on drinks, so we can ask them to do something, for instance, a nice advert concerning disability as in empowering a person with disability and changing the attitudes of the duty bearers and stakeholders. So if there is a way

we can engage media houses to work on that, it will be of help (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Government's side in terms of contract awarding of school buildings should be submitted and must have easy access for persons with disability and the long-term policies that we have should be drummed into the ears of everyone through the media for people to understand the reason why there should be an inclusion (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

Study participants lamented the exclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream discourses, even those that concern them. The representatives of the OPDs reiterated the need for their inclusion in all discourses, most especially those that concern them. They claimed that this is necessary because they are the experts on their condition and could better help address their issues than outsiders.

Governments come and go but we will be staying at the same place. Most of their policies are not continuous and when there is a new government, policies change. So, if there is any NGO or governmental organizations that want to support us, I believe they should meet us first for an assessment to know our exact need and what can be offered to us. This will be good to some extent since they will engage us first to know our needs hence making provisions to satisfy our core needs. If you engage someone and you realize that Ghc 1000 will not solve his problem and then you go ahead to give him Ghc 1000, after some years if you ask him to account for that amount, he will not be able to give you an answer. We should know what the Assembly is doing about this (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

While some of the participants believe that persons with disabilities rather exclude themselves from mainstream society by not participating in programmes and activities, others are of the view that their self-exclusion is due to the many barriers that they are besieged with which hinder their inclusion.

It is the way we treat them. Just as we have come here, if we ask them to join us and they cannot make it due to lack of access, then they will feel left out (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 2, Government Organisations).

Persons with disability by their appearance have been treated badly so they have internalized oppression. They have been told for a long time that they cannot do anything but somehow there is the need to build their capacity and confidence levels. The onus lies on us to let them know that whatever society is saying about them is not the case. So that they can do more than they are doing (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

What you and the man said is key because if you stay in a place for some time, you need somebody to come and wake you up, probably the person might be

sleeping so you must reach out to them (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Government to monitor operations of CSOs

Representatives of OPDs alleged that some CSOs benefit from them by using their situation in the form of information to raise funds originally intended to support persons with disabilities.

Most of the funding are a way to gain from us rather than to help us. (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

At times they use us to make money. You will be there, and they will use you to go and collect monies from other NGOs. Sometimes if you are lucky and you go to Facebook, you will see your picture on people's website. (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

In view of the above accusation, some of the participants suggested that the government should tighten its monitoring of the operations of various organizations, especially the NGOs.

I think everything the churches do; they will present their final report just as the NGOs do. So that if there is an NGO purposely for persons with disabilities, they will not collect funds from the government or other sources and then use it for a different purpose. All the reports should be sent to a desk at the District Assembly and monitored. If your work is appreciated; you will be supported and if not, fired (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Government to take initiative to lead and bring all on board

It is obvious from the presentation of findings so far that all four stakeholder groups are engaged in one way or the other in providing services to advance the wellbeing of persons with disabilities. However, the stakeholders also believe that a lot more needs to be done to advance the lives of persons with disabilities in a sustainable manner. They believe for this to be realised, there is the need for the government to initiate and to spearhead an agenda towards including persons with disabilities into mainstream society as well as advancing their wellbeing. The government could take the lead by developing and implementing policies and programmes to advance the lives of persons with disabilities in their local communities. Implementing existing policy regarding accessibility of buildings, providing assistive devices, and technical accessible materials for educational purposes and establishing workplaces for persons with disabilities, participants believe, will go a long way to reduce the burden of care by family members and excessive dependency. This could increase independence among persons with disabilities.

I think what it has to do with, is in terms of policies. For example, for old offices, nothing can be done but new offices being built should try to incorporate them [persons with disabilities] into our institutions and it will help them a lot. This will reduce the burden on families. The family's work will then be how to carry the person to the workplace. If roads are tarred, government can assist them to have self-driven wheelchairs with a paddle so that they themselves can ride to some of

the institutions without assistance. So, in fact, government can do something. (For example, the Chalk Factory issue that came up some time ago, I heard it was opened somewhere. – what has happened to it) Government can establish a workplace for them for either weaving or craftwork. So, if government through the Assembly is serious to do something for them, then they can organize them and do it. So, I see it as more of a responsibility from the government wanting to do something so that we the people will follow (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 5, CSOs).

CSO representatives commented that the government has been inactive towards disability issues and promoting their wellbeing for a while. They claimed to have been playing a major role in advancing the wellbeing of persons with disabilities and that it was time for the government to assume greater responsibilities towards supporting persons with disabilities. They suggested the need for CSOs to perform their oversight role of ensuring that the government takes up its responsibility of providing for the needs of persons with disabilities.

Government has been hiding for some time now because they thought CSOs have been doing what they must do for persons with disability, so government has taken shelter. Government does not know how to provide wheelchairs and other technical aids. Do not be surprised as they are giving free exercise books when you go to School for the Blind. You will find it difficult to find a plain sheet of paper because government knows that both local and international NGOs will go and provide it for them. Government knows that NGOs will support in such areas. So, if we can put pressure on government to take up its responsibility and add to their mainstream budget and support. They end up focusing on other sectors but not the disability sector. When you need a public interpreter for information you need to pay. Who is paying? Why can't the government have one interpreter for every district? If the CSO pushes government, they will wake-up from their sleep (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Some of the ways to perform their oversight role are to advocate for disability issues by naming and shaming the government when they counter the rights and needs of persons with disabilities or when they do not live up to legal and policy provisions. They also suggested CSOs to advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development efforts.

They are only doing advocacy because many of them are operating on voluntary basis. They do not have enough resources so what they can only do is to shout, name and shame. They will only draw government attention to the issue, but government must have its priority. Disability is not manmade but natural and such persons are part of the nation, so their needs should be prioritized (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 4).

I also think the CSO should put pressure on government because the tollbooth jobs that they claim will be given to persons with disability to issue tickets: is it happening or it's just hearsay...Their attention should be drawn to specific issues (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Government collaboration with CSOs

The CSO representatives stressed the need to harmonise resources by collaborating with the government and OPDs. They noted that they can help develop the vocational skills of persons with disabilities and their children, disseminate information and play an oversight role of filling in the research gap to strengthen the development agenda. But they were quick to add that such collaboration should be coordinated to be more effective.

Right now, as we have said as CSOs, we will structure a concept so that we present to the OPDs and see the way forward so if there are such persons who want to learn a trade, we will assist them freely [Clapping] (Respondent 3, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

You talk about collaboration right? I think that will be good because the NGOs can seek for support from the government, so it will be better if they work together...We can work individually but also collectively so we meet at a point. So, coming together should be coordinated (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

The government should collaborate with CSO and use them as information dissemination points. We do not look for information unless we are going to write exams. (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Government should work, and civil society should complement. Also, they should put pressure on government to work and deliver results. People are paying taxes to the government to take care of them. It is the government who signs all those UN Convention 155. We did not sign it. They have some commitment when it comes to international conventions. We need experts to support that and government can collaborate with CSOs. CSOs can also have an oversight responsibility. So, they can conduct research and identify gaps in the development agenda. You have seen that the government has implemented the Free SHS. Whatever government intends to do, they will do it (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

Collaboration with traditional authorities

The participants stated the need to change perception about disability and harness interactions between traditional authorities and OPDs since traditionally, it is the custom that persons with disabilities cannot approach the chiefs' palaces and hence they are excluded from public fora organised by the traditional authorities. During the Focus Group Discussions, participating chiefs have promised to meet with OPDs and even help raising awareness about disability issues.

Persons with disabilities do not normally visit the chief's house because it is a taboo. So when we go there we are not given seats. We hang around at the back of the crowd. Therefore we have stopped going for gatherings. So, we will come together and invite him to one of our meetings. If he does not show up, then we

will know that he keeps that form of old ideology in his mind (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

He can invite us for talks so that if there is any assistance he can give to us... When we are holding meetings we can invite them so if they do show up then we will know if they are in support of us... I mean if we invite him and he shows up then that is good (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 3, PWDs).

Awareness-Raising by traditional authorities

The traditional authorities representatives admitted that they did not know much about disability issues until the research. But in view of the information gathered from the research, they pledged the support to help raise awareness about disability issues. As custodians of the land, they insisted that they should be included in efforts to champion disability issues to yield the desired results, because they said they have the means to summon everyone in their constituency, both persons with and without disabilities. Both sub-chiefs and queen mothers have the power to bring their constituents together to disseminate information to them through the use of gong-gong beating (an indigenous public address system used to announce invitation for community meetings).

TA Respondent 4: The main chief has sub-chiefs under him so if there is something you must let him know so that we will come into agreement and work towards it. This is because we are the custodians of the land and when we get on board it will be successful. If it can be arranged in a way that it can be documented, so that when government does not fulfil its promise, we will know. Suhum is a very big town and there are lot of disabled persons out there in their hiding places (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 1).

The chiefs can inform the gong-gong beater to inform the community on one Thursday to do a sensitization programme and everyone will come. So we can help (Respondent 5, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

I know (referred to a name) is well educated and he can make a difference. There are some people that need to be pushed up when given the opportunity and that can only be done by the most influential people. As you sit here, you are educated and have been to so many schools. You have worked with NGOs and you are knowledgeable about certain things. You have somebody who has been living in the village and that village life can blindfold you. You just said people will lock their disabled person in rooms so that no one will be allowed to visit them. I have seen a lot. It happened to my family member called Ekuu. She will be hiding in her room but when she hears that I am around then she will come and sit by the door so that she will see me and then anything I have, I give to her just to make her happy until she recently passed on. Such a person, how can she market herself unless she goes to school? So with constant sensitization, I will task every member in the community to identify any disabled person and ask them to bus them all to this place so that you and your team will take it up. They will be glad

that they are being sought for and recognized. Do you know how these people will feel when they get to know that a doctor from far has come to recognize them? Most of our problem is attitudinal. One of my grandchildren uses her left hand so they were saying that she will change when she grows so there was a time I was eating, and she wanted to join me, I told her unless she eats with her right hand and the parent were saying I should allow her to eat with the left whilst I use my right in the same bowl. That is our problem. We say things we do not understand. Rather they were disorienting her and that will slow her down. So, they need to be trained in the way that we want them to be (Respondent 8, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

With the information, we can ask the Chief, Queen mother and the Elders to fish out all the persons with disability. If there is any information, we will keep you posted. When there is a meeting and you cannot make it, you can delegate...I think you should give us this assignment to handle. The next time we meet, you can meet 20 Chiefs and all the Queen mothers. If we ask them to go ahead with the sensitization they will be ready and willing to do that. So that if you people will have the time, we will gather them on a specific date for you to present your proposal to them. They will be very much happy. If they are told that the facilitator is a doctor, they will be motivated because maybe they may not have seen a person of that status in their lifetime. That is why their self-esteem is very low. There is one doctor, I think Dr. Raymond, who is also disabled but well built. It will tell their parents that their disabled children can also become somebody (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Collection of data on persons with disabilities by traditional authorities

The traditional authority representatives assured the government that they can help collect data of persons with disabilities by using their structures to send information to all their constituents to bring their wards with disabilities for a census. They believe that, with their structures, they can reach the remotest places that the government structures cannot reach.

If that is the case then I will appeal that we should have enumeration and identify those disabled so that when we need to support them we will go to them directly. I remember it was because of brand enumeration that sent me to Coaltar. An NGO sent me there to enumerate these cocoa farmers. So, if we can organize these disabled for government to support through the district assemblies to find them all and give them the services that they plan to give them, that will be good (Respondent, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

I support you on this one. A census could be organised to enumerate the number of persons with disabilities. It could be that the assembly is doing up to where their borders are or where their muscles can reach. So, this headcount idea is a very good one and we would have to elaborate on that and we will be able to make them out in every nook and cranny...The Chief can inform the gong gong

beater to inform the community on one Thursday, which is the market day when most people are at home, about the enumeration of persons with disabilities. When the information goes down, they will bring the people (Respondent 2, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

Government to build capacity of traditional authority to help meaningfully

The traditional authorities claimed that they have the means to help the government to effectively target persons with disabilities because they can help locate them, even those in remote areas as well as help sensitise their communities about disability issues and to disseminate information about persons with disabilities. But they said that their capacity needed to be built to augment their knowledge on disability issues as well as resources to aid them play an effective role in the integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream society.

We have the means so you can build the capacity of the Chief and elders. Then if there is any support we can give...As Chiefs and elders, we offer support to persons with disability, but we cannot impose anything on them but to educate and let them know what is best for them. So, let's see how best we can help the persons with disability to empower them and make them feel that they are also part of society (Respondent 1, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

I think all the disabled are different, so every group should be assessed to know their exact needs because for a person who cannot walk he will need a wheelchair or the modernized wheelchair but the deaf will need a hearing aid. So, they will all need assessment so that if any support comes, then they can distribute them based on their report. I want us as elders of the land to show commitment. Finally, we will also want you to build our capacity for us as well so that we will be on top of issues. We thank you all and will continue to grant you support anytime you return . I hope that you will get the needed funding to sponsor this project when the need arises, and when you call us we will come and defend (Respondent 7, Discussant in FGD 1, Traditional Authorities).

The need to build the capacity of the traditional authorities to meaningfully contribute to mainstreaming disability issues in the society was emphasised by CSO representatives.

The thing is that if they are not aware they will not have the idea to teach. So, you must educate the Chiefs. Right now, by the grace of God, most of them can read and write. So, all you must do is to write for them or refer them to any website where they will receive the information (Respondent 4, Discussant in FGD 4, CSOs).

4. Discussion

The qualitative study aimed at exploring the dynamics of formal and informal support services for persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality, barriers that limit access to the existing services, unmet needs of persons with disabilities as well as the way forward regarding harmonising existing resources. There were similarities and differences from the perspectives of respondents from four stakeholder groups, namely traditional authorities, government agencies, persons with disabilities and civil society organisations.

Findings from the study suggested that persons with disabilities received formal support services (such as economic, educational, and health services) from the government, civil society organisations (CSOs), and religious organisations (specifically Christian and Islamic Religions). The Municipal Assembly plays the role of providing formal assistance to persons with disabilities through its specialised agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development to help improve the wellbeing of persons with disabilities.

The study revealed that persons with disabilities in the municipality receive a percentage of the District Assembly Common Fund (DCAF), which is the major source of formal support service for persons with disabilities in the Municipality. The money was used to enroll in school, for skills training, as start up capital for livelihood or to help pay for health care needs. However, findings revealed that although these monies were provided to persons with disabilities, it was far from adequate to sustain their livelihoods.

In terms of education, CSOs such as the Ghana Blind Union, Inclusion Ghana, World Education Inc., National Education Coalition Commission and other stakeholders such as the Special Education Division of the Ghana Education Service and some Universities have made significant contributions by supporting the Ministry of Education in providing inclusive education for persons with disabilities. According to the Persons with Disability Act 715, section 16, subsection one, "A parent, guardian or custodian of a child with disability of school going age shall enrol the child in a school". Contravening this subsection is seen as a legal offence. However, findings from the study revealed that some children with disabilities were not enrolled in schools due to discrimination, stigmatization, and teasing by the other children from the regular school environment.

NGOs have grown in numbers over the past years in Ghana and also widened their scope of work in all aspects of human needs, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups. There are NGOs operating in the Suhum Municipality, but the participants with disabilities indicated that they benefited from just a few of them. Some of the NGOs agreed to this assertion but promised to make conscientious efforts to include persons with disabilities in the future.

With regards to support services from religious organisations, findings from this research show that persons with disabilities occasionally (during Christmas, Easter or a special church activity, Ramadan) receive support from churches and mosques which makes this kind of support seasonal and unreliable. Churches in the Suhum area support persons with disabilities based on their type of disabilities. For instance, the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists

Church support people with mobility impairments by providing them with wheelchairs to ease their mobility. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses concentrate on people with hearing impairments. These findings conform to that of Mustwanga, P., Makoni, E., & Chivasa (2015) that religious organizations provide tremendous support to persons with disabilities.

The study also suggests that persons with disabilities received informal services from the family and social relations outside the family in the form of food, clothing, cash remittances and support to complete daily chores. Support from family and friends is usually intense due to a personal bond that connects them together. Even though legally, much recognition is not given to this kind of support system, it forms a very important part in the lives of persons with disabilities. This is evidenced in the work of Dako-Gyeke (2014), who explains that although modernization and urbanization has weakened the extended family system by a shift toward nuclear family structures, informal support plays a huge role in the lives of persons with disabilities in Ghana. For example persons with disabilities mentioned that the nuclear family has been the provider of support and not the extended family. In fact, the role of the extended family was almost absent. It is therefore worthy to note that there is the need for the strengthening of the formal social services since the role of the extended family have been insignificant in the provision of support for persons with disabilities. In this way, the nuclear family will not be over stretched in the provision of support to persons with disabilities.

In some situations, persons with disabilities have rather been stigmatized and discriminated by the extended family. This may explain why there is the lack of support by the extended family to persons with disabilities. In such situations, members of the extended family refuse to help persons with disabilities due to misconceptions concerning persons with disabilities. An example of such a misconception is the fact that one can contract an impairment by getting close to a persons with disabilities and also the believe that disability is a curse from the gods.

Even though the extended family played a bigger role for persons with disabilities in the past, the disintegration of it due to modernisation, urbanisation, migration and the search for greener pasture leaves families to concentrate on the nuclear family. This has prompted most extended families to shift responsibilities to the nuclear family. Thus, the combined effect of economic crisis which leads to poverty and inadequate support from members of the family that migrated to the urban centres have resulted in the extended family not having the capacity to care for the needs of the vulnerable members such as persons with disability. As a result, the traditional safety net finds it difficult to cope with the abounding needs of persons with disabilities into extended family households which adversely affect their survival in terms of food and meeting other material needs.

Moreover, care for members of the family is first seen as the responsibility of the family, even before other forms of formal support structures are introduced. This is supported by the work of Sikker (2009), who found out that Ghana has tight family relations, making it helpful in the provision of support to persons with disabilities. The point of concern however is that since the social welfare system is not offering sufficient support and care for persons with disabilities in Ghana (Sikker, 2009), the general situation of someone with a disability depends a lot on his or

her family background. This means that if the family has economic resources, the persons with disabilities is likely to have adequate support. On the other hand, lack of economic resources on the part of the family will mean that persons with disabilities in the family will lack the needed support from the family. It is therefore evident that, the closest family (nuclear family) and friends have been the providers of support to persons with disabilities. Despite the fact that informal support on the part of the extended family is decreasing, the family has the moral obligation and take up responsibility to support persons with disabilities and remain the most important source of support.

Findings also reveal that although persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality do not receive much support from the sources of support discussed earlier, people with hearing impairments seem to be more disadvantaged due to communication challenges. This finding disagrees with Sultan & Schfro (2008) which indicated that if social protection programmes in Ghana universally target persons with disabilities, then those with hearing impairments are supposed to be receiving support as well. This finding, again, agrees with that of Ademokoya (2008) which states that “those who suffer from hard of hearing do not readily receive the sympathy and support from able bodied persons as those with blindness do” (Ademokoya, 2008). People with hearing impairment are usually excluded from support opportunities, and some often go unnoticed because their impairment is not visible (Coleridge, 1993).

The study further discovered that existing support arrangements available to persons with disabilities in Suhum are inadequate. Hence, it does not guarantee meaningful and sustainable impact on their living conditions. Several obstacles to accessing both formal and informal support were identified in this study. These barriers include information/communication, transportation, infrastructural, and institutional as well as attitudinal barriers. One interesting finding about information/communication barriers is that it significantly effects internal (within the disability organisations, especially between those with hearing impairments and those without hearing impairments) and external (between organisations of persons with disabilities and service providers) communication. But persons with hearing impairments bear more of the impact of information/communication barriers due to the challenge of communication.

Findings regarding transportation, institutional and physical barriers validate other studies (Naami, 2014; Tijm, Cornielje, & Edusei, 2011; Yarfi, Ashigbi, Nakua, 2017) which discussed the challenges persons with disabilities encounter in their quest to participate in mainstream society. The majority of persons with disabilities live in poverty (Naami, 2015) and therefore, use public transport. However, the unfavourable conditions in public transport in Ghana compels some persons with disabilities to find other accessible means of transportation, which can be expensive, in order to commute from their homes to the various offices to access support services. The situation is worse for persons with disabilities living in rural areas because in addition to the inaccessible public transport, they also have to travel on roads that are not motorable from their villages to the urban areas before they can access transportation to the capital city to receive services. And as poverty is concentrated in the rural areas, it could impact their ability to use alternative transport services to access services. Although the government

through the Department of Social Development undertakes outreach services to reach the 'hard to reach' population, the lack of logistics hinders such services to reach the remote areas.

It is important to note that infrastructural barriers such as inaccessible buildings, open gutters and drainage systems hindered access to services for persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality. Those persons with disabilities who struggle their way through from their houses to the Municipal office still face other challenges. Surprisingly, the study found that institutional processes, which relate to the procedures persons with disabilities must adhere to in order to receive institutional support, were cumbersome, compelling persons with disabilities to give up on accessing support. The study also indicates that the central government's monetary allocation to the district sometimes delays unnecessarily and this negatively impacts the livelihoods of persons with disabilities as some of them depend mainly on this form of support.

Physical access was identified as an unmet need in this study. The need for the state to provide access in every sphere of life, including schools, hospitals, police stations, market places, or buses, is necessary for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream society, consistent with CRPD Article 9 (Accessibility) and the Persons with Disabilities Act 715.

Furthermore, the study suggests that attitudinal barriers are one of the major barriers which inhibit access to both formal and informal support services. These include negative perceptions about disability such as seeing persons with disabilities as beggars, regardless of how well they dress, treating them inhumanely, as well as doubting the capabilities of persons with disabilities. This finding supports several studies indicating that social barriers impact the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society (Agbenyega, 2007; Anum, 2011; Ocloo, 2005; Slikker, 2009). While some people without disabilities hold the view that people with disabilities isolate themselves from mainstream society (e.g. not attending gatherings and public fora), those with disabilities cited stigma against them as one of the major effects on their ability to access support. Stigma also contributes to avoidance of persons with disabilities from public gatherings as well as mingling with other people.

Stigma against persons with disabilities results from societal norms, cultural beliefs and practices which discriminate against those with disabilities. For example, cultural beliefs and practices, such as infanticide of children with disabilities, still exist. Some cultures associate disability with evil, magical powers ("juju"), sorcery and witchcraft (Agbenyega, 2007; Avoke, 2002; Kassah, 2008). Others consider disability as a curse from the gods due to sins committed by parents, family members, or ancestors (Avoke, 2002; Agbenyega, 2005; Ocloo, 2005). Yet, other cultures consider children with disabilities as water babies "nsuomma," snake babies or other "animals" (Agbenyega, 2005; British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC] 2015). Children with disabilities are also considered "bad luck" and "evil spirits" who should be "returned" to the spiritual world where they came from (Ocloo, 2005; BBC, 2015). All of these affect society's worldview with respect to persons with disabilities and how they treat them. The study also suggests that some persons with disabilities have internalized oppression and prefer not to seek any services while others resort to begging on the streets for alms. This validates studies which demonstrate that due to their exclusion from mainstream society as a result of the barriers discussed in this report, some persons with disabilities take solace on the streets and

engage in menial jobs as well as resort to begging (Appiagyei, 2007; Kassah, 2008; Naami, 2014).

Because stigma seems to impede the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream society, participants suggested the need for creating awareness about disability issues on several levels as well as the capabilities of persons with disabilities to combat stigma and to enable the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities. Study participants with disabilities suggested the need to encourage their parents and family members to ensure the education of their children with disabilities and not to conceal them from public view, hence, depriving them of education. The study found that staff of the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) and members of parliament should not be left out of awareness-raising and training on disability. They emphasised that these categories of people should also be educated about disability issues and the need to change their perceptions about persons with disabilities. All of these suggestions support CRPD Article 8 (Awareness-raising).

The study further identified several unmet needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality. These included the need for education, awareness raising about the capabilities of persons with disabilities, government funding for education, skills development, employment, health care, physical access, data on persons with disabilities, and the involvement of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

Education is important since it could open up more opportunities for persons with disabilities, including opportunities for employment, regular income, and also involvement in management and decision-making. The importance and need for education is also emphasised in CRPD Article 24 (Education) and Section 16 of the Persons with Disability Act 715 of Ghana. In view of this, the study suggests the need for a disability development fund to enhance both formal and informal education (skills training) of persons with disabilities. The fund should also aim at their employment by helping trained persons with disabilities to set up their businesses as well as empower them to manage those businesses. All of this is consistent with CRPD Article 27 (Work and employment), Section 1 (k) and Section 13 of the Persons with Disabilities Act 715.

Findings from this study are in agreement with Badu et al. (2016) that yet barriers to health care remain one of the major challenges to persons with disabilities. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) stipulates that everyone that qualifies to be on the safety net programme 'Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty' (LEAP) automatically is enrolled on NHIS. However, not every person with a disability qualifies for LEAP, which means that not every person with a disability is automatically enrolled on the NHIS. To get the chance to enjoy free medical care through the NHIS, a person with a disability will need to be enrolled onto NHIS as "indigent". However, the term "indigent" as indicated in the NHIS policy is ambiguous and consequently the NHIS staff use their discretion to interpret and decide who should be considered as indigent to enroll on the scheme.

A study conducted by Sultan & Schfro (2008) revealed that formal social protection in Ghana is insufficient. Schemes are often universally targeted and persons with disabilities are put together with other vulnerable populations with terms such as "vulnerable" or "marginalized groups" or "indigents". Even though the LEAP cash transfer programme targets persons with

severe disabilities as one of three beneficiary groups, so far, there is a lack of evidence on the programme's impact on the living conditions of persons with disabilities. Sultan & Schfro (2008) state that some of the poorest citizens are not benefiting from NHIS due to the premium charged and transportation cost needed to register. Moreover, and most importantly, the scheme does not include additional needs of persons with disabilities such as hearing aids, crutches, callipers, prostheses, spectacles, wheelchairs, and many others which aid their daily activities. These devices are necessary for the effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society, which the Persons with Disabilities Act 715 Section 31 makes provisions for. It states that "The Ministry of Health in formulating health policies shall provide for free general and specialist care, rehabilitative operation treatment and appropriate assistive devices for persons with total disability." It remains unclear, however, 'who is a person with a total disability?' Also, Article 25 of the CRPD (Health) stresses the importance of quality, free and affordable healthcare services for persons with disabilities. The study's outcome further suggests the healthcare situation for women with disabilities could be more complicated due to challenges (attitudinal barriers and inaccessible equipment at labour wards of hospitals) with pre- and post-natal services they received. Article 25 of the CRPD (Health) also emphasizes the importance of gender-sensitive services.

The importance of quality, effective and operational data on disability for effective targeting, planning, and monitoring of policies and programmes to advance the well-being of persons with disabilities was emphasised. Although participants acknowledged that the government has started collecting data on disability, they believed there is the need for more effective measures to compile comprehensive, accurate, and disaggregated data on disability, including gender, disability type, severity, physiological, and skills need as suggested by CRPD Art. 31 (Statistics and data collection).

Another interesting finding from this study is that the traditional authority and OPDs have structures that could be helpful and useful for disability data collection. The traditional authority representatives could use their structures to send information to all their constituents to bring their wards with disability for a census; through the chiefs and sub-chiefs. The traditional authority believed that with their structures, they can reach the remotest places that the government structures cannot reach. The OPDs have regional, district, and zonal structures in place which could also be used to collect disability data.

The non-inclusion of persons with disabilities in planning and decision making, especially those concerning them, is stressed by the participants and identified by CSOs as the major unmet need. They believed that OPDs have been operating in the Suhum Municipal for over 2 decades so they and their operations are very well-known in the area. And yet, these persons with disabilities are hardly included in decisions concerning them.

With regards to support arrangements that could help to include persons with disabilities in mainstream society, the study suggests a blend of both formal and informal (especially familial support, given that the family is usually the first point of contact for a person with disability) support systems. But due to the burden of care for families, poverty, negative perceptions about disabilities and stigma, sometimes, the family structure is unable to play its role of

providing the needs of their members with disabilities. It is also recognised that each stakeholder, in one way or the other, plays roles in providing some form of services for persons with disabilities. There is therefore, the need for the local government to initiate and take the lead in bringing all local stakeholders together in order to help coordinate all available services/programmes provided by all entities to ensure that no duplication of resources occurs and to maximize the use of resources to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities.

Conclusion

The fight for inclusion and support services for persons living with disability cannot be fought by just one stakeholder. There is the need for all stakeholders; from family, government, non-governmental organizations, churches, chiefs, queenmothers, and the society at large to make the goal of inclusion a successful one. Thus, every stakeholder has a unique quota to contribute. It can also be inferred from the study that issues such as educating the various stakeholders on disability issues and laws as well as policy amendments and implementation are key to the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Provision of funding, its disbursement and proper management are also issues that were raised by various stakeholders, pertaining to adequately addressing the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Persons with disability are thus, humans just like anyone else with equal rights and must be given the needed support to cope with as well as enjoy life to the fullest.

5. References

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of participating organisations

NO	ORGANIZATION	WHAT THEY DO
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS		
1.	Department of Social Welfare and Community Development	Responsible for the welfare of people of Suhum area
2.	Ghana Education Service	Responsible for the implementation of approved national policies and programmes relating to pre-tertiary education (to provide and oversee basic education, senior secondary education, technical education and special education etc)
3.	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice	Human Rights issues and Administrative justice
4.	Ghana Education Service (Special education)	Responsible for special education in the Suhum Municipal
5.	Ghana Health Service (National Health Insurance)	Primary Health Care Health services administration
6.	Department of Women and Children (MOGCSP)	Child welfare education Children and women right enforcement
7.	Suhum Municipal Assembly	Responsible for development of Suhum municipal to improve on the wellbeing of people of Suhum
8.	Gender and Disability Desk Office of the Municipal	Persons with Disability and Gender issues at the municipal
10.	Livelihood for Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP)	National cash transfer programme for people over 65 years old, people with disabilities and households with orphaned and vulnerable children

DISABILITY ASSOCIATIONS		
10.	Ghana Blind Union	Advocate for inclusion of blind and partially sighted persons in society through awareness creation, training and rehabilitation
11.	Ghana National Association for the Deaf	To help remove communication barriers, create awareness and advocate for equal opportunities for Deaf persons to enhance social participation
12.	Ghana Society for physically Disabled	To ensure full inclusion and effective participation of persons with physical disabilities in the Ghanaian society
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION		
13.	Community Builders Organization	Child rights sensitization
14.	Muslim Development Organization	Community development, education etc
15.	Caregivers Foundation	Help individual handle their daily task associated with normal living
16.	Opinion Leader	Provide technical expertise to people of Suhum in terms of knowledge (mouth piece of Suhum people)
17.	Development Association/Foundation	Help individuals meet their needs, themselves and improve on their wellbeing
18.	Civic Union	Development advocacy
19.	GIFNet: Governance Issues Forum Network	Empower local community members to participate and deliberate on public policy issues and to engage public officials to influence their decisions through continues dialogue.
20.	Suhum Development Agenda	Public Accountability

TRADITIONAL LEADERS		
21.	Chieftancy	Custodians of ancestral land, culture, customary laws and tradition and also responsible for the overall development in the area of their jurisdiction

Appendix 2: Interview guide for Traditional Authorities

Inclusive design of local communities through new forms of social planning – pilot project at Suhum Municipality, Eastern Region, Ghana

Interview guide for Traditional Authorities

1. Kinds of support structures and services in Suhum Municipality.
 - a. Do you believe persons with disabilities receive any form of support?
 - i. From family? Friends? Church/Mosque/CSOs? Government? Any other source?
 - b. What kinds of support do you believe they receive?
2. Kinds of support persons with disabilities receive.
 - a. Do you give any support for persons with disabilities?
 - b. If yes, what kinds of support do you give?
 - c. What kind of support do you think you can give to persons with disabilities?
3. Barriers restricting access to support (both formal and informal) for persons with disabilities.
 - a. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing formal services? Government? CSOs?
 - b. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing informal support? Family (nuclear, extended)? Friends?
4. The unmet needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality.
 - a. What do you think are needs of persons with disabilities in this Suhum Municipality?
 - b. Health care? Education? Employment? Physical access? Social protection benefits?
5. Kinds of support arrangement participants perceive as needed to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society (formal? Informal? Blend of both?).
 - a. What should the government do to support persons with disabilities to ensure full effective participation in the society?
 - b. What should CSOs do to support persons with disabilities to ensure full effective participation in the society?
 - c. What should chiefs and queenmothers do to support persons with disabilities to ensure full effective participation in the society?

- d. What should the family do to support persons with disabilities to ensure full effective participation in the society?
 - e. Any other entity should take responsibility to support persons with disabilities to ensure full effective participation in the society?
 - f. Should any of these supports be combined to effectively support the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?
 - g. Which ones should be blended and which ones should not?
6. How the government could harmonise the various support arrangements to integrate persons with disabilities in mainstream society.
- a. What should the government do to bring together all of these support in order to ensure the full effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?

Appendix 3: Interview guide for Government Organisations

Inclusive design of local communities through new forms of social planning – pilot project at Suhum Municipality, Eastern Region, Ghana

Interview Guide for Government Organisations

1. Kinds of support structures and services in Suhum Municipality.
 - a. What are the existing government services in the Suhum Municipality?
 - b. Which of the government services benefit persons with disabilities?
 - c. What CSO services here benefit persons with disabilities?
 - d. Other support services you can think of?
 - e. Do you believe persons with disabilities receive any form of support from:
 - i. Family? What kind of support do they receive?
 - ii. Friends? What kind of support do they receive?
 - iii. Church? What kind of support do they receive?
 - iv. Mosque? What kind of support do they receive?
 - v. Any other source? What kind of support do they receive?
 - vi. Which ones are more than others? WHY?
2. How existing support structures are organized and financed.
 - a. How are the CSO services provided to benefit persons with disabilities? Ensure each CSO representative give information about what they do to benefit persons with disabilities.
 - b. How are these services financed?
3. The advantages and disabilities of the support persons with disabilities receive.
 - a. List the advantages of each support identified.
 - b. List the disadvantages of each support identified.
4. Persons with disabilities who receive support.
 - a. Which groups of persons with disabilities do you think receive support? Much? Not much?
5. Which persons with disabilities do not receive any form of support and why?
 - a. List persons with disabilities you believe do receive any form of support.
 - b. Discuss why each group identified does not received any form of support.

6. Barriers restricting access to support (both formal and informal) for persons with disabilities.
 - a. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing formal services? From the Government? CSOs?
 - b. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing informal support? From: Family (nuclear, extended)? Friends? Church? Mosques? Others?
7. The unmet needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality.
 - a. What do you think are the needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality?
 - b. Health care? Education? Employment? Physical access? Social protection benefits?
8. Kinds of support arrangement participants perceive are needed to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society (formal? Informal? Blend of both?).
 - a. What should the government do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - b. What should CSOs do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - c. What should the chiefs and queen-mothers do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - d. What should the family do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - e. Any other entity that should take responsibility to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society.
 - f. Should any of these supports be combined to effectively support the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?
 - g. Which forms of support should be blended and which ones should not?
9. How the government could harmonise the various support arrangements to integrate persons with disabilities in mainstream society.
 - a. What should the government do to bring together all of the forms of support identified in order to ensure the full effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?

Appendix 4: Interview guide for Persons With Disabilities

Inclusive design of local communities through new forms of social planning – pilot project at Suhum Municipality, Eastern Region, Ghana

Interview Guide for Persons with Disabilities

1. Kinds of support structures and services in Suhum Municipality.
 - a. What are the existing government services in the Suhum municipality that you access?
 - b. Which of the government services benefit persons with disabilities?
 - c. What NGO services are available to you here in Suhum?
 - d. Other support services you can think of?
 - e. Do you receive any form of support from:
 - i. Family? What kind of support do you receive?
 - ii. Friends? What kind of support do you receive?
 - iii. Church? What kind of support do you receive?
 - iv. Mosque? What kind of support do you receive?
 - v. Any other source? What kind of support do you receive?
 - vi. Which ones are more than others? WHY?
2. Persons with disabilities who receive support.
 - a. Which groups of persons with disabilities do you think receive support? Much? Not much?
3. Which persons with disabilities do not receive any form of support and why?
 - a. List persons with disabilities you believe do not receive any form of support.
 - b. Discuss why each group identified does not received any form of support.
4. Barriers restricting access to support (both formal and informal) for persons with disabilities.
 - a. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing formal services? Government? CSOs?
 - b. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing informal support? From: Family (nuclear, extended)? Friends? Church? Mosques? Others?

5. The unmet needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality.
 - a. What do you think are the needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality?
 - b. Health care? Education? Employment? Physical access? Social protection benefits?
6. Kinds of support arrangement participants perceive are needed to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society (formal? Informal? Blend of both?).
 - a. What should the government do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - b. What should CSOs do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - c. What should the chiefs and queen-mothers do to support persons with disabilities to ensure full effective participation in the society?
 - d. What should the family do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - e. Any other entity that should take responsibility to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society.
 - f. Should any of these supports be combined to effectively support the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?
 - g. Which forms of support should be blended and which ones should not?
7. How the government could harmonise the various support arrangements to integrate persons with disabilities in mainstream society.
 - a. What should the government do to bring together all of the support identified in order to ensure the full effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?

Appendix 5: Interview guide for Civil Society Organisations

Inclusive design of local communities through new forms of social planning – pilot project at Suhum Municipality, Eastern Region, Ghana

Interview Guide for Civil Society Organisations

1. Kinds of support structures and services in Suhum Municipality.
 - a. What are the existing government services in the Suhum Municipality?
 - b. What CSO services here benefit persons with disabilities?
 - c. Other support services you can think of?
 - d. Do you believe persons with disabilities receive any form of support from:
 - i. Family? What kind of support do they receive?
 - ii. Friends? What kind of support do they receive?
 - iii. Church? What kind of support do they receive?
 - iv. Mosque? What kind of support do they receive?
 - v. Any other source? What kind of support do they receive?
 - vi. Which ones are more than others? WHY?
2. How existing support structures are organized and financed.
 - a. How are the CSO services provided to benefit persons with disabilities? Ensure each CSO representative give information about what they do to benefit persons with disabilities.
 - b. How are these services financed?
 - c. How are the CSO services provided to benefit persons with disabilities?
 - d. How are these services financed?
3. The advantages and disabilities of the support persons with disabilities receive.
 - a. List the advantages of each support identified.
 - b. List the disadvantages of each support identified,
4. Persons with disabilities who receive support.
 - a. Which groups of persons with disabilities do you think receive support? Much? Not much?
5. Which persons with disabilities do not receive any form of support and why?
 - a. List persons with disabilities you believe do receive any form of support.
 - b. Discuss why each group identified does not received any form of support

6. Barriers restricting access to support (both formal and informal) for persons with disabilities.
 - a. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing formal services? Government? CSOs?
 - b. What do you think are the barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing informal support? From: Family (nuclear, extended)? Friends? Church? Mosques? Others?
7. The unmet needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality.
 - a. What do you think are the needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality?
 - b. Health care? Education? Employment? Physical access? Social protection benefits?
8. Kinds of support arrangement participants perceive are needed to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society (formal? Informal? Blend of both?).
 - a. What should the government do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - b. What should CSO do to support persons with disabilities to their ensure full effective participation in the society?
 - c. What should the chiefs and queenmothers do to support persons with disabilities to ensure full effective participation in the society?
 - d. What should the family do to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society?
 - e. Any other entity that should take responsibility to support persons with disabilities to ensure their full effective participation in the society.
 - f. Should any of these supports be combined to effectively support the participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?
 - g. Which forms of support should be blended and which ones should not?
9. How the government could harmonise the various support arrangements to integrate persons with disabilities in mainstream society.
 - a. What should the government do to bring together all of the forms of support identified in order to ensure the full effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society?

Appendix 6: Objective of the study

The main objective of the project is to create deeper knowledge of the support system arrangement dynamics for persons with disabilities in Suhum Municipality. Specifically, the project will explore:

1. Kinds of support structures and services in Suhum Municipality.
2. How existing support structures are organized and financed.
3. How Persons with disabilities receive support.
4. Kinds of support persons with disabilities receive.
5. The advantages and disadvantages of the support persons with disabilities receive.
6. How Persons with disabilities do not receive any form of support and why.
7. Barriers restricting access to support (both formal and informal) for persons with disabilities.
8. The unmet needs of persons with disabilities in the Suhum Municipality.
9. Kinds of support arrangement participants perceive are needed to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream society (formal? Informal? Blend of both?).
10. How the government could harmonise the various support arrangements to integrate persons with disabilities in mainstream society.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) obliges States Parties to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of person with disabilities. Governments at all levels are called upon to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life. The local level plays a particular role with respect to provisions made by the CRPD, which states that disability arises from the interaction between a person and her/his physical and social environment. Persons with disabilities are particularly affected by social, environmental and cultural barriers. It is the social and physical environment of local communities, where these barriers take concrete shape, and where local planning approaches have to manage the dismantling of barriers and the implementation of inclusive structures.

The Republic of Ghana ratified the CRPD in 2012 and started to adopt legislative and policy measures for its implementation at all government levels. But how are these legislative and policy measures being taken up in Ghanaian districts? Which approaches for a local implementation of the CRPD prove to be effective in Ghana? These and further questions were addressed by researchers of the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana and the Centre for Planning and Evaluation of Social Services (ZPE) at University of Siegen, Germany in a Pilot Project at Suhum Municipal, in the Eastern Region of Ghana, implemented between July 2017 and June 2018. This report presents the findings of a qualitative baseline study on support systems and social service arrangements for persons with disabilities in Suhum, which was conducted in late 2017 as part the pilot project.

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