



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DEAFBLINDNESS IN TANZANIA

Grantee
SENSE INTERNATIONAL EAST AFRICA

Grant amount
GBP 523,352

Project duration
June 2016–May 2020

Implementing partner
Sense International Tanzania

Beneficiaries
Families of 100 children with deafblindness and multi-sensory impairment (MSI)

Location
Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro Region



Teachers enjoying the moment with children.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Despite the adoption of the Global Campaign for Education for All and the advancement of rights for people living with disabilities through various national legislations, deafblind children in Tanzania continue to be systematically excluded from education. This can be because their disability is too severe for them to attend mainstream schools or because there are not enough special schools to cater for all deafblind children in the country. As a result, the education of deafblind children is left to their families. With support from HDIF, Sense International is running a four-year pilot to demonstrate that children with the most complex disabilities can be educated in mainstream classrooms in a way that is both life-changing and cost-effective.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

During the pilot, children with deafblindness and multi-sensory impairment (MSI) were supported to learn alongside children without disabilities with the help of 'teaching assistants' who could respond to their specific educational needs.

The pilot was implemented by:

Developing the capacity of 100 schools: This included the training and sensitisation of teachers and head teachers, and the recruitment and training of teaching assistants. Within these schools, teaching assistants provided

classroom support to children with deafblindness in accordance with the specialist deafblind curriculum and their individual education plans.

Supporting the inclusion of children with deafblindness in schools: Special needs education (SNE) teachers were deployed at district level to provide training and support to teachers, parents, and teaching assistants, as well as functional assessments, education goal setting, and progress monitoring for children. They are also responsible for coordinating any medical assessments and medical interventions required by the children.

Developing recommendations for government: Sense carried out research and advocacy activities such as site visits and workshops to help lobby for a national system that provides teaching assistants in mainstream schools with SNE teacher support.

PROJECT RESULTS

As a result of the pilot:

- ▀ Seventy-nine children (40 girls and 39 boys) with deafblindness are achieving their individual education goals as a result of accessing inclusive education.
- ▀ Seventy-nine teaching assistants (64 women and 15 men) have been recruited, trained, and mentored to support children with deafblindness and MSI in schools.



- ▀ The government is now aware of the needs of children with deafblindness and understands the need to develop a system for providing teaching assistants in mainstream schools through the new National Strategies for Inclusive Education.
- ▀ Families of deafblind children have changed their perception and attitudes towards disabilities and now let their children interact with others and allow them to participate in inclusive school education. Parents who previously would have stayed at home to look after their children are now able to work and earn money.
- ▀ Schools have started improving their environment to accommodate children with disabilities. For example, ramps and toilets have been constructed in Kiungwe, Maweteta, Mgagao, and Majengo primary schools.

KEY LESSONS

Build in ongoing training: The training provided during the pilot only occurred once and there were no refresher courses during implementation. As a result, there were few opportunities to revise and update the information available for teaching assistants. Ongoing training would have allowed the project to respond better to their needs and as a result, further enhanced the learning experience of the children in their care.

The importance of partnerships: Sense found it was common for parents to expect the project to support their children in all aspects of life including the provision of food, health service, transport, school uniform, and personal guiders. By developing links and collaborating with other providers, Sense is able to better support parents in bringing their children to school.

NEXT STEPS

In order to convince the government of the need for teaching assistants in supporting children with deafblindness in the mainstream inclusive education system, Sense will carry out the following advocacy activities:

- ▀ Facilitate key stakeholder visits to home-based education programmes and schools in the pilot project;
- ▀ Convene a multi-stakeholder workshop to explore how the government can develop a system of teaching assistants; and
- ▀ Continue discussions with government officials on how to develop a national system of teaching assistants.

Ground ambition in local realities: The project required SNE teachers to mentor and coach the teaching assistants in schools; however, this role is not possible because these teachers were government employees who, as such, could not be additionally employed by the private sector.

GENDER EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The pilot observed that due to social stigma, children with deafblindness are commonly rejected by their fathers, who tend to blame the mothers for their child's disability. As a consequence, many of the women caring for children with deafblindness do so alone, making it difficult for them to earn a living and contribute to the household income. By including children with deafblindness into mainstream schools, women are able to work and provide for their families.

PRINCIPLES FOR DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT

Design for scale: Sense have chosen to scale up using a video-based, rather than 'live' training course. In doing so, participants view real examples from an inclusive setting and rewind the video at any point or re-watch sections again to refresh their memory on certain techniques and approaches. Due to the relatively inexpensive nature of video production, training large numbers of participants can be done at low cost.



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