

Challenges Impeding Humanitarian Organizations from Effectively Safeguarding the Well-being of Persons with Disability in Disaster Situations in Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract: This paper is focused on challenges that humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR, World Vision among others encounter in safeguarding of the well-being of PWD in disasters situations. It argues that in as much as some humanitarian organizations have strong humanitarian programs, they face numerous challenges. The study employed semi-structured questionnaire instruments to gather information on humanitarian policies applicable to PWD in disaster context. It was used with humanitarian officers-98 and government officers-98. Further, the researcher adopted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions which were employed as one of the methods for data collection to provide qualitative data and were complemented by the quantitative data. The researcher used interviews with the regional director of Kenya Red Cross Society, regional directors of UN agencies, the Kisumu County special programs officer, managers of DPOs and director of National Council for People with Disabilities. Secondary data was collected from a variety of sources which included library books, information from journals and other government documents on contributions of humanitarian organizations to the well-being of persons with disability in disaster context. These documents include the national Policy in PWD, Kenya constitution, 2010, UN conventions on PWD. The variables of the study were subjected to descriptive statistics. The qualitative data was analyzed by consolidating emerging themes from the key informant interviews, topic analysis, and cut and paste methods on the focus group discussion transcripts. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The researcher presented data findings in form of frequency tables, pie charts, bar graphs and narratives. From the key findings, the study concluded that the challenges humanitarian organization face limits them in effectively safeguarding PWD in disaster situations. These organizations face challenges in terms of limited resources, ill-trained staff and little coordination to effectively deliver humanitarian relief of food, non-food items and to a lesser extent medical services to PWD in disaster situations in Kisumu County. The study recommends that humanitarian agencies craft specific humanitarian inclusive programs for persons with disability at all stages of humanitarian action in disasters to overcome these challenges. They should source for data on the number of persons with disability in Kisumu County by coordinating with local DPOs and other local authorities. These organizations need to train their humanitarian workers on technical expertise within their programme or organisation for identifying persons with disabilities.

Key Terminologies: Persons with Disability, Humanitarian organizations, Humanitarian Policy, Inclusivity Programs

Introduction

According to Pendo (2013) the Kenyan government does strategic planning and management of disasters in a participatory, collaborative manner with development partners, international agencies, and other bodies. One critical function of humanitarian organizations is provision of humanitarian support in a number of ways. Lena *et al.*, (2019) argue that there are a number of

humanitarian organizations that specifically focus on persons with disability. One such organization is the Northern Nomadic Disabled Persons Organization (NONDO). CBM (2018) report indicate that the scarcity of food and the difficulty of getting it forced about 30% of disabled persons to rely on non-governmental organization for food, clothing and financial support. Some of these organizations include; YADEN, World Vision, Aphia Plus under USAID and religious institutions provided support to the disabled victims of conflict in Kisumu. Aphia Plus under the umbrella of the USAID helped the HIV/AIDS patients to cope with the situation by providing food and medication to the sick. The advocacy role of humanitarian organization includes reducing discrimination and stigmatization that the disabled suffer of in disaster situations. According to Lena *et al.*, (2019), some humanitarian organizations provide financial support for the disabled. Economically, the organization supports some DPOs in income generating activities although they do not have direct funds to support this. This means that lack of funds is a challenge humanitarian organizations face. On the other hand, Ochieng (2012), argues that in Kisumu County about 20% of the disabled persons including women, children and HIV/AIDS sought safe haven in police stations and church compounds where they would earn a livelihood as their basic human need to security was satisfied. However, he adds that it was again a challenge for some of the physically disabled persons who were not able to move faster as they urgently needed aid, thus making them susceptible to injuries from the rowdy crowd. Basing on these events, it is clear that humanitarian support is delivered haphazardly without proper plan during disasters.

Materials and Methods

The land area of Kisumu County totals 2085.9 km². Kisumu County neighbours Siaya County to the West, Vihiga County to the North, Nandi County to the North East and Kericho County to the East. Its neighbour to the South is Nyamira County and Homa Bay County is to the South West. The county has a shoreline on Lake Victoria, occupying northern, western and a part of the southern shores of the Winam Gulf. The county has an annual relief rainfall that ranges between 1200 mm and 1300 mm in different sectors. The rain mainly falls in two seasons. Kisumu is known for its thunderstorms, which are the major type of precipitation and normally occur in mid-afternoon during the rainy season. Kisumu is warm throughout the year with a mean annual temperature of 23. 0C. The temperature ranges between 20 0C and 35 0C but seldom falls below 19 0C. The climate of Kisumu County makes it vulnerable to floods in some areas such as nyando. The population of persons with disability and their households in Kisumu county is about 15, 760 (National Council for People with disability, 2019). A section of this population was affected by post-election violence in 2007/8 (Abonyo, 2015). He argues that in this uncertainty some disabled persons were left behind as they struggled for safety, food, protection and recognition from the community. It was of much threat to life as more cases of physical disabilities were reported with others getting injured in the conflict. Nyakundi (2010) concurs that during the post-election violence more than 20% of disabled persons were faced with the challenge of accessing food from shopping centers due to protracted Post-Election violence. Also, Kisumu County is affected by both natural and man-made disasters such as floods, political unrests among others. In November 2015, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) County response team was deployed to assist approximately 1,200 people affected by floods. CBM (2018) report indicates that during floods, older people and people with disabilities were carried to safety on someone's back or transported in a cart for a fee. The study employed semi-structured questionnaire instruments to gather information on humanitarian policies applicable to PWD in disaster context. It was used with humanitarian officers-98 and government officers-98. The researcher adopted semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions which were employed as one of the methods for data collection to provide qualitative data and were complemented by the quantitative data. The researcher used interviews with the regional director of Kenya Red Cross Society (1), regional directors of UN agencies (2), the Kisumu County special programs officer-1, managers of DPOs (3) and director of National Council for People with Disabilities-1. The researcher collected secondary data from a variety of sources. This included library books, information from journals and other government documents on issues of humanitarian policy and well-being of persons with disability in disaster context. These documents include the national Policy in PWD, Kenya constitution, 2010, UN conventions on PWD. The research instruments were trial tested in Kakamega County. Feedback from the pilot study was used to revise the instruments for final data collection. The respondents in the pilot phase were excluded during the final administration of the instruments. The questionnaires used were open and closed questions intended to capture a detailed level of content. It is chosen due to its ability to reach distant respondents hence minimized researchers influence on the respondents. It also allowed time for respondents to give well thought answers and time to respond to the items. The researcher cleaned data by listing, remove errors and check extreme values and edit to ensure conformity. The group survey data were analyzed using SPSS Version 12. The variables were subjected to descriptive statistics. The qualitative data was analyzed by consolidating emerging themes from the key informant interviews, topic analysis, and cut and paste methods on the focus group discussion transcripts. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The researcher presented data findings in form of frequency

tables, pie charts, bar graphs and narratives. Persons with disability face stigmatization in society and therefore, finding them could be difficult. This was a great challenge to the researcher to collect data. The research addressed this issue by employing snowballing. Further, the sub-county commissioners with relevant information assisted. Secondly, some respondents declined to participate due to the sensitivity of the topic. The researcher used secondary data from publication on issues of humanitarianism with regard to PWD in disaster contexts to beef up his data and information. Thirdly, language was of great challenge in remote areas or some respondents had hearing impairment since some of the respondents were unable to communicate in either English or Kiswahili. On this, the researcher engaged research assistants who speak local language and sign language interpreter for the deaf.

Findings and Discussions

The contribution of humanitarian organizations to the well-being of PWD is evident in humanitarian programs for PWD; coordination of humanitarian action and provision of humanitarian relief. However, these organizations encounter numerous challenges in delivering on their mandate.

With regard to the nature of challenges, the researcher asked humanitarian and government officers to identify challenges humanitarian organizations encounter with regard to protection of PWD in disaster situations. The total number of respondents was 196. Three questionnaires were not returned. The following table is a summary of findings on challenges encountered by humanitarian organizations:

Table: Challenges Humanitarian Organizations Encounter

Incapacity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of technical expertise	78	40.4
Lack of coordination and information sharing	77	39.9
Lack of resources	38	19.7

Source: Field Data, 2019

The table above indicates that 78 (40.4%) and 77(39.9%) of the respondents agreed to lack of technical expertise and coordination/information sharing respectively. 38(19.7%) agreed to lack of resources on how to handle persons of disability. This means that humanitarian organization lack the capacity and expertise to effectively take care of the well-being of persons with disability. CBM (2018) report indicated that at community level KRCS works through Community Health Workers and Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) who are involved in identification and referral of PWD in the community. The study indicates that the work of community health workers is to do assessments in the community and training beneficiaries on how to use assistive devices before giving them out. This means that humanitarian organizations need to coordinate with community health workers who provide technical expertise in handling the disabled in Kisumu County.

In as much as humanitarian actors respond to disasters; endeavor to provide accessible services and take into account persons with disabilities in their programmes most of them face unresolved challenges in including persons with disabilities in their response strategy. These challenges originate within these organizations or other actors such as the state or Kisumu County government. Data indicates that 78 (40.4%) agreed that humanitarian staff lack of technical expertise in handling the disabled. They need support of specialized organisations so that they adapt their projects and programmes. These specialized organizations include health personnel

from the Ministry of Health or community health workers. On the other hand, DPOs are beneficial to humanitarian actors on understanding specific needs of the disabled on the basis of the nature of disability. In an FDG interview, a DPO member said:

This is a clear call to find ways to meet special needs of the disabled and coordination between all stakeholders during the crisis is important (interview held on 24th May, 2019 at Kibuye Market, Kisumu City).

This statement points to lack of coordination on how to adequately take into account disability and this impedes a more inclusive and effective response during disasters. A humanitarian official of a DPO argued humanitarian organization need to build capacity with representative organization of the disabled. This effort would increase awareness raising and training on disability for all these organizations too.

However, the failure by humanitarian organizations to consult persons with disabilities or their representative organisations to deliver on their mandate is the missing link that leads to challenges in humanitarian action. Likewise, lack of understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities is a fact within humanitarian organizations. In an FDG Interview, a member argued:

It is rare for humanitarian organizations to consult persons with disabilities on their needs (FGD interview held on 21st May, 2019)

This assertion indicates that coordination challenges exist in humanitarian response. While the level of DPO participation in mitigation plans or in coordination mechanisms is better than their participation in other aspects of the response, there is need for further engagement them. Supriya *et al.*,(2018) argued that there is little engagement between DPOs and humanitarian organizations. However, humanitarian actors lament lack of policies or guidelines on how to structure coordination with critical stakeholders.

Humanitarian organizations also suffer limited resources in order to adequately contribute to the well-being of persons with disability in disaster situations. Outreach to persons with disabilities in need of assistance and who have no possibility of accessing services remains an important challenge for humanitarian actors. Humanitarian organisations also have limited financial or other resources available to make their services accessible. Thus, many consider that actions dedicated to persons with disabilities are too expensive. Abonyo (2015) observed that humanitarian organization experienced shortage of supplies during the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kisumu County. On the contrary, Justin (2011) found that the problem is leakage in the supply system that leads to such shortages of relief items. Therefore, financial aspect is perceived by humanitarian actors as an important barrier in addressing coordinating and guaranteeing the well-being of persons with disabilities in disaster situations.

Humanitarian organization faces incapacity to effectively protect PWD in humanitarian situations. It is assumed that these organizations do not have the capacity to include and handle persons with disability perfectly. But some of the challenges come about due to poor coordination even at county level where other stakeholders are not engaged adequately. There is need for more funding and capacity building within humanitarian organizations so that they deliver on their contributions.

The researcher explored ways of mitigating challenges humanitarian organizations encounter in regard to protection of PWD in disaster. The researcher asked humanitarian and government officers to identify mitigation strategies that can eliminate challenges humanitarian organizations face. The total number of respondents was 196. Three questionnaires were not returned. The following table is a summary of findings on mitigation strategies of challenges mentioned:

Table: Challenge Mitigation Strategies

Mitigation Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Create specialized agencies	99	51.3
Tailor individual disaster assistance for PWD	94	48.7
Coordinate humanitarian activities with PWD/DPOs	97	50.3
Humanitarian Disability programs	96	49.7

Source: Field Data, 2019

Table 6.2 indicates that 99(51.3%) agreed to creation of specialized agencies while 97(50.3%) to coordinated humanitarian activities with PWD/DPOs. 96 (49.7%) and 94(48.7%) agreed to humanitarian disability programs and individual disaster assistance for PWD respectively. Data indicates that creation of specialized agencies is important since that would specifically focus on the special needs of PWD. The result indicates that the most preferred mitigation strategy is creation of specialized agencies, humanitarian disability programs and individual disaster assistance. In an FDG interview, a DPO Member argued:

Special agencies will handle PWDs unique needs well. Such agencies will handle issues to with medication (Interview held on 23rd May, 2019 in Nyando).

The statement indicates the wish of persons with disability for specialized agencies to handle health issues. Data indicate that 96 (49.7%) of the sampled agreed to specific disability programs. In an interview, a head of a household was of the view that specific humanitarian programmes on socio-economic issues that crop up because of disasters are needed. Abonyo (2015) study found out that the aftermath of Post-Election Violence in Kisumu, PWD had to depend on community support, personal strategies, support from government and non-governmental organization to survive. This means that there were no concrete no humanitarian strategies on how to socio- economically support PWD after disasters destroy their livelihoods.

A household head argued that at county level, the government of Kisumu and its partners could provide genuine support to policy focused on ‘mainstreaming’ PWDs to promote broader economic inclusion into existing programmes and institutions via the promotion of a reservation system or the implementation of preferential hiring systems. Large-scale level, humanitarian livelihood programs being implemented by international NGOs, such as World Vision and Care International should also include targeted initiatives to support employment and entrepreneurship for person with disability in disaster prone areas of Kisumu County. It was observed that this has already taken place, for instance, Handicap International collaborates with a local DPO in Kibuye market to offer persons with disability income generation activities.

Data indicates that 94(48.7%) of the sampled agreed that individual humanitarian assistance for PWD is important to reduce vulnerability of PWD to disasters. This is important since the nature of disability determines the degree of vulnerability. There is a significant need for targeted analysis and creation of new sectors and employment opportunities that account for different abilities of person of disability. These successful models of collective employment and skill development and others such as handicraft initiatives in Kibuye market should be replicated for PWDs across Kisumu County. However, it is necessary to create partnerships with the private sector to ensure market linkages and product placement necessary to sustain these initiatives for persons with disability. In an FDG, a DPO member argued:

In cases where severe disabilities limit the ability of PWDs to participate in these kinds of programmes, it may also be helpful for humanitarian organizations to promote new kinds of income-generating activities for the caregivers who support them as a complementary effort (Interview held on 23rd May, 2019 in Kisumu City)

This statement indicates that the individual support programs need to target also caregivers. It was observed that majority of persons with disabilities in Kisumu County are dependent or at least partially dependent on family members for their care and livelihood. These caregivers range from children, siblings, parents, spouses and other relatives. A household head argued that the caregiving role is often lifelong and with little or no outside assistance at all. This is not to say that caregivers aren't doing what they can but with a lack of outside help, the level and quality would depend on the financial situation of the family and sustained level of care is difficult to maintain.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that humanitarian organizations face challenges in provision of humanitarian relief to PWD in form of food and non-food items. These challenges include lack of structures to coordinate humanitarian response which hampers delivery of humanitarian relief in many disaster situations. Coordination of humanitarian action is disjointed and therefore protection of persons with disability becomes difficult. These organizations do not have the capacity to include and handle persons with disability perfectly. There is need for more funding and capacity building within humanitarian organizations so that they deliver on their role of protecting the disabled in disaster situations. The study concludes that challenges humanitarian organization face are due to lack capacity in terms of resources and staff training to effectively deliver humanitarian relief of food, non-food items and to a lesser extent medical services to PWD in disaster situations.

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