

Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Need Attention Too!

ICBE POLICY BRIEF

By

Rebecca Namatovu and Samuel Dawa

Makerere University Business School
Kampal, Uganda



Creative Commons by The Advocacy Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study addresses entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities in Uganda and their potential to contribute to economic development.

Using mixed research methods, we interviewed Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs) in Kampala in order to learn more about their operating environment, business endeavours, motivations, challenges and growth aspirations.

Key findings were that the majority of EWDs had started their own businesses using personal savings. Many entrepreneurs had previously ventured into business but failed because it was not profitable. Most of the businesses were not registered because the entrepreneurs thought the process was complex, long and tedious. However, the majority of businesses that were registered said the process was easy and beneficial. The majority of the EWDs are involved in retail trade.

The results also show that two thirds of the EWDs did not have any business training, with the majority that received training saying that it was through apprenticeship. Two-thirds of the EWDs said they do not belong to any association, thus starving their businesses of the benefits of these networks. A large majority of the EWDs hoped to grow their businesses, hoping to hire between one and five employees over the next five years.

HEADQUARTERS

TrustAfrica
Lot 87, Sacré Coeur 3
Pyrotechnie x VDN
BP 45435
Dakar-Fann, Senegal

T +221 33 869 46 86
F +221 33 824 15 67
E info@trustafrica.org
W www.trustafrica.org

The ICBE Research Fund is a joint initiative of TrustAfrica and the International Development Research Centre.

INTRODUCTION

The study examines entrepreneurship amongst persons with disabilities in Kampala, Uganda. According to Mukiibi & Mulya (2000) it is difficult to empower disabled persons at grassroots levels in Uganda. There is limited information about entrepreneurs with disabilities (EWDs), despite a number of them being self-employed and starting successful businesses. As a result, the contribution of EWDs to the economy, and society in general, remains unrecognised.

The purpose of the policy brief therefore is to set a platform of informed initiatives based on the entrepreneurial environment, attitudes and aspirations of EWDs in both the formal and informal sectors. The brief also aims to evaluate the successes EWDs have had in business, as well as the challenges that they face as entrepreneurs. EWDs have the potential to better their livelihoods, that of their families, and subsequently make a contribution to national economic development.

The statistics available on EWDs, though scanty, show that many are unemployed or at best underemployed. Anecdotal evidence shows that many are self-employed, yet empirical data on these entrepreneurs do not exist. There are few, if any, interventions that have been devised to improve the entrepreneurial culture among this demographic.

The brief provides practical solutions and contributes to environmental considerations policymakers should focus on to improve the quality of entrepreneurship among EWDs.

METHODOLOGY

As we sought to explore entrepreneurial undertakings among EWDs in Kampala, we focused on the business environment, especially the challenges and opportunities. We also examined the attitudes of the EWDs towards entrepreneurship and the growth aspirations they had for their ventures.

We employed a mixed methods approach, which is said to be crucial if a research problem is to be

understood better and in depth (Creswell & Clark, 2006).

Quantitative data was collected through a survey, where semi-structured questionnaires were distributed in at least one trading centre of each of the five divisions of Kampala. A total of 97 EWDs participated in this survey. Kampala was chosen because it is the commercial and administrative capital of Uganda. Being cosmopolitan, we expected to find a diverse range of respondents and a representative cross section of support organizations.

Qualitative data was gathered from in-depth interviews and other participatory methods like video filming. In-depth interviews with EWDs and key informants were conducted evenly in each of the categories, totalling to 13 interviews. A group of 14 EWDs volunteered to take part in the free film making training.

The study was rolled out in three phases. The first phase was fact finding through literature reviews, institutional mapping and consultations

The brief provides practical solutions and contributes to environmental considerations policymakers should focus on to improve the quality of entrepreneurship among Entrepreneurs with Disabilities.

with associations and organizations that work with disabled people. We mapped the following institutions, Ministry of Gender labour and social development, the disabilities department, National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) and Action for Youth with Disabilities Uganda (AYDU). Other key institutions working with EWDs are National Association for the Deaf Blind in Uganda (NADBU), Epilepsy Support Association Uganda (ESAU) and Legal Action for Persons with Disabilities Uganda (LAPD). An expert in each of these associations was interviewed using face-to-face interviews, which were recorded and later transcribed.

In the second phase, we conducted a purposive survey. We went to the known EWDs areas of operation in each of the five divisions of Kampala and approached the leadership in the trading

centre or markets who directed us to the EWDs. This implies that the nature of entrepreneurs we interviewed were typically those that are mobile or have means of transportation that enable them get to trading centres. Ordinarily, these kinds of EWDs are likely to be more aggressive and have a higher tolerance for a busy environment. Thus, this method could have eliminated some EWDs such as those who have home-based enterprises, with low tolerance for busy environments and minimal mobility.

The third phase, which was participatory in nature and involved a skills imparting session (video filming), entailed asking the EWDs to make a collective film about their business life. The group of EWDs that were involved was part of the Uganda volleyball team that trains at Lugogo indoor stadium in Kampala. The group of 14 EWDs voluntarily signed up for the session. After a week's training from SLUM Cinema, a local youth videography group were able to produce a film about EWDs.

KEY FINDINGS

- 84.5 percent of the EWDs operating in commercial centres were male and were between 18 and 45 years;
- 81.4 percent of the EWD headed their households;
- 50 percent of the EWDs had no education or only up to primary school;
- 58 percent were engaged in retail trade and vending;
- More than 75 percent of the EWD operated unregistered businesses;
- 57.5 percent felt they either did not need to register or could not afford registration;
- Only 4 percent of the registered enterprises were able to access government contracts;
- 55.8 percent could not access credit because they did not have security which is a requirement for most financial institutions;
- 60 percent of the EWDs did not have any specific skills training on how to do business;
- 60 percent did not belong to any formal or informal network and due to lack of trust by officials in charge or because they felt marginalized and thus anticipated less support;

- Up to 80 percent operated in open spaces or by the roadside and have no permanent premises. This is due to the fact that it was difficult to access many of the buildings; and
- Only 20 percent of the EWDs were able to access business development services and the majority had received these services from their umbrella organizations

Their personal experiences reveal that, as entrepreneurs, they have greater personal and financial autonomy, an increased role in household decisions, more influence as community leaders and can serve as role models for other aspiring Entrepreneurs with Disabilities.

CONCLUSION

This policy brief reports about entrepreneurship among people with disabilities. It demonstrates the challenges and aspirations of disabled people in relation to the environment in which they operate. It also alludes to their potential to contribute to the economy.

The findings show that there is potentially, a large group of EWDs who are hobbled by challenges, which make it almost impossible to start and grow their enterprises. Their personal experiences reveal that as entrepreneurs they have greater personal and financial autonomy, an increased role in household decisions, more influence as community leaders and can serve as role models for other aspiring EWDs.

It is obvious that we still have much to learn about the entrepreneurial capabilities of this demographic and what would be ideal to alter the landscape for them to realise their full potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a.** Sensitisation and facilitation in the registering of a business is needed to enable EWDs to access specific benefits such as support from government and other agencies.
- b.** Extension of affirmative action to awarding of government contracts to EWDs and incentives to private firms that engage firms owned by EWDs.
- c.** Provision of tailor-made business skills training for EWDs through their umbrella organisations.
- d.** Creation of special financing or guarantee schemes for EWDs with terms tailored to the circumstances of the recipients.
- e.** Provision of adult and continuing business education for EWDs to enable business skills acquisition.
- f.** Gazette specific areas equipped with assistive devices, infrastructure and security for EWDs to operate in.
- g.** Creation of structures that will ensure transparency and accountability in associations by having a monitoring function at the umbrella organization level.
- h.** Sensitisation of EWDs on the existence and importance of business development services.

REFERENCES

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2006). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Namatovu, R., Dawa, S., Mulira, F. & Katongole, C. (2011) *Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Report*. Makerere University Business School.

Mukiibi, N. & Mulya, D. (2000). *Study on the involvement of entrepreneurs with disabilities in the IYB Uganda programme*.