

Engaging Caregivers to Enhance Achievement of Desirable Learning Outcomes for Children with Disabilities using the Activity Bank for Disabilities



The Action Foundation's 2020 Baseline Study on Caregiving and Safeguarding for CWDs in urban informal settlements found that CWD enrollment is at a dismal 12% in 8 regular schools in Kibera and Kawangware. A survey conducted in 2014 by the VSO Jitolee, a non-governmental organization, established that there are more children with disabilities (CWDs) out of school than those without disabilities. The survey also found home-based and systemic factors that hindered CWDs' school attendance, persistence of stereotypes, misconceptions, stigma and discrimination towards children with disabilities in the schools and community.

These factors, in addition to lack of Special Need Education teachers to support CWDs, lack of specialized learning materials and equipment in schools to accommodate the children with special needs limit their access to education. Lack of awareness on disability and poor integration into the community, has seen many caregivers keep their children at home resulting in poor school enrollment. Poverty levels in low resource setting limits the ability of caregivers to invest in the holistic development of their children. These factors combine to produce low learning outcomes, poor growth and development which consequently affect enrollment, retention and transition rates for CWDs. We recognize that caregivers/parents of children with disabilities contribute significantly to a child's learning and well-being. Thus, partnerships with principal caregivers enhance the likelihood that children will have positive and successful health, development and learning experiences. Empowering Caregivers with skills and resources on caregiving, play and learning improves the early development outcomes for CWDs thus preparing them to join formal learning.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is critical in preparing children to enter and succeed in their academic pursuits as well as enhancing their physical, emotional and social development. The purpose of the study was to establish the caregiver engagement in enhancing achievement of desirable learning outcomes for children with disabilities in Kibera and Kawangware informal settlements in the era of COVID-19.

To support continued learning of children with disabilities following nationwide school closures after the onset of COVID-19, we trained caregivers on Education Above All's Activity Bank for Disabilities, a guide that promotes child development in 7 different domains i.e. activities of daily living, oral sensory activities, auditory sensory activities, proprioceptive activities, visual sensory activities, numeracy and literacy activities. In November 2020, we conducted trainings on the activity bank for 163 caregivers of CWDs and 8 Community Health Volunteers from Kibera and Kawangware. Community Health Volunteers were equipped to provide additional support and monitor progress of the use of the activity bank. This followed a virtual training and introduction to the Activity Bank for the TAF team and teachers that was organized by EAA.

147 caregivers were later surveyed on their utilization of the Activity Bank for Disabilities for home-based learning of their CWDs using Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI)-KoboCollect. Caregivers that were not surveyed had relocated to unknown places due to the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 and other factors.

53.7% of the CWDs were boys and 46.3% girls and the age distribution was 1 to 15 years. Cerebral Palsy was the most prevalence type of disability affecting 34% of the surveyed households. Other types of disabilities found among the children includes autism, delayed milestone, down syndrome, epilepsy, hemophilia, hearing impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment, hydrocephalus, intellectual, muscular dystrophy, meningitis, mental, and sickle cell anemia. 41% of the CWDs were not enrolled in school.

68% of caregivers recorded progress in the CWDs including independent feeding and improved motor coordination, increased understanding of home environment, increased physical activity and ability to perform activities of daily living, improved posture and enhanced proprioceptive activities such as squeezing of balls. Those who did not engage with the activity bank cited unavailability due to work schedules, illiteracy and inability to communicate with their children. 96.6% of the caregivers create time to play with their CWDs where 31.3% spends more than 1 hour in playful activities.

Empowering parents in providing holistic caregiving improves learning outcomes for learners, CWDs who receive early interventions are better prepared to enroll in school and with continued support from caregivers stay in school. Using innovations such as the Activity Bank for Disabilities empowers caregivers to impart lifelong learning. This benefits CWDs both in and out of school and enhances access to learning opportunities.

Homebased Learning Survey Report

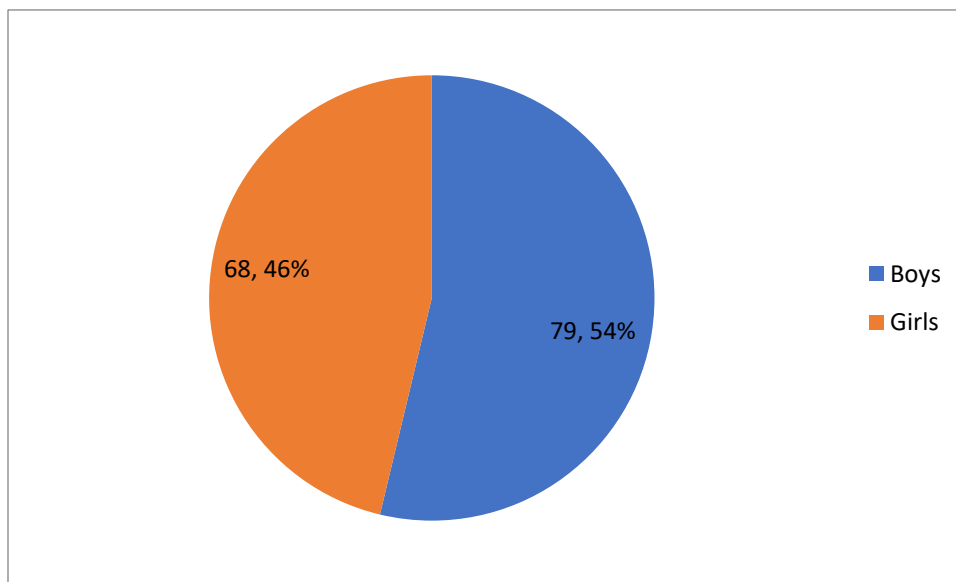
The survey was conducted for two days, on 21st and 22nd January 2021 by a team of Research Assistants, including the TAF staffs and the Community Health Volunteers. They used Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI)-KoboCollect to collect data from the households within Kibra and Kawangware, and all the data were transmitted electronically to the database system. The activity was mainly conducted to identify if/how the caregivers have been using the Home-Base Learning with their CWDs at home

From the Identification activity, a total of 175 beneficiaries were identified from different households within the two locations. However, during the home-based learning survey, 84% (147) were surveyed. The remaining 16% (28) were not surveyed do to a number of reasons;

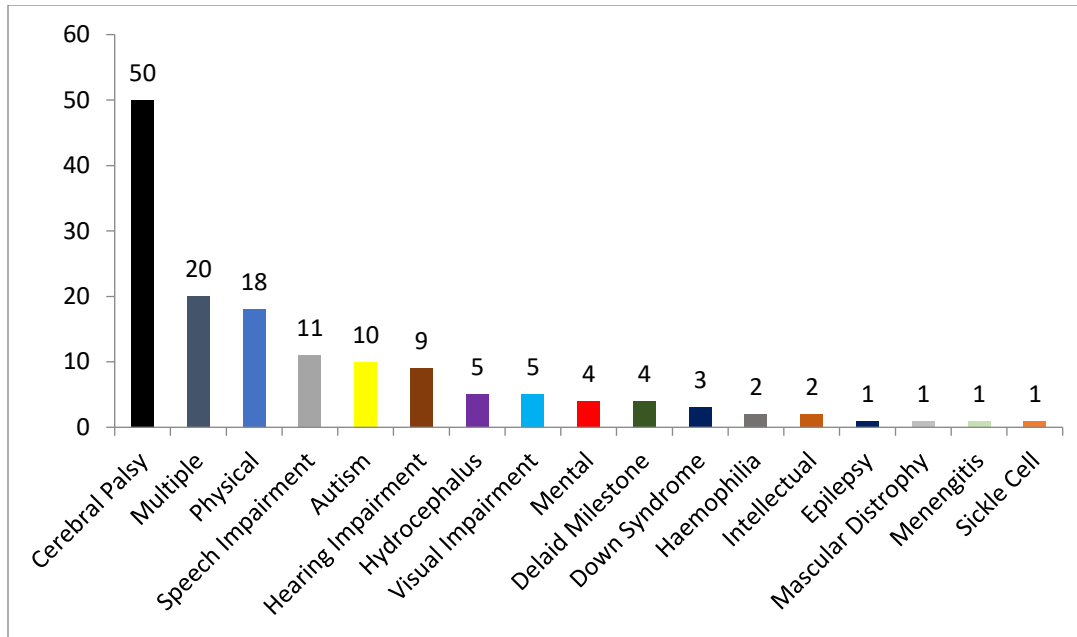
- a) Refusal to participate in the survey. This was due to hostility of a caregiver after feeling guilty that legal action would be taken against him after the Research Assistants realized they had locked the CWDs in the house and went out. This was experienced in Kibra (Makina).
- b) Relocation. Most of the caregivers that were not surveyed had relocated to unknown places and could not be traced even with the help from their neighbors.

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Kibra	59	40.1%
Kawangware	88	59.9%
Totals	147	100%

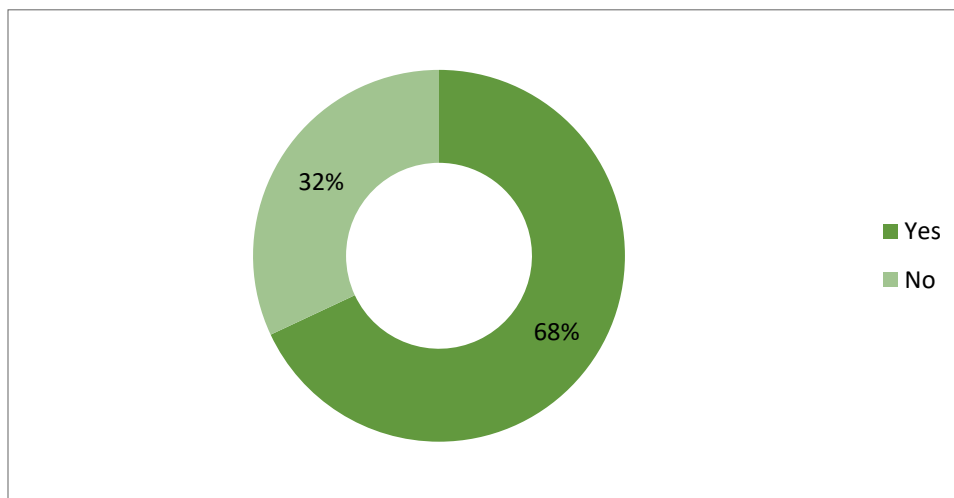
From the households, the youngest CWD was 1-year old while the eldest was 15, while most of them are aged 10. In terms of gender distribution, there were more boys 53.7% than girls 46.3% among the CWDS.



Cerebral Palsy is the most prevalent type of disability affecting 34% (50) of the Children With Disabilities that were visited, followed by multiple, and physical at 14% (20) and 12% (18) respectively. Other types of disabilities found among the children includes autism, delayed milestone, down syndrome, epilepsy, hemophilia, hearing impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment, hydrocephalus, intellectual, muscular dystrophy, meningitis, mental, and sickle cell anemia. The graphical representation below summarizes how the number of CWDs suffering from specific types of disabilities.



From the 147 surveyed households, 100 households (68%) have been able to utilize the Home-Based Learning guide books with their Children with Disabilities at home while 47-32% have not.



For the 47 who have not been able to utilize the guide with the Children with disabilities, 20 of them have the guide book but cited the following as reasons why they have not been able to do so;

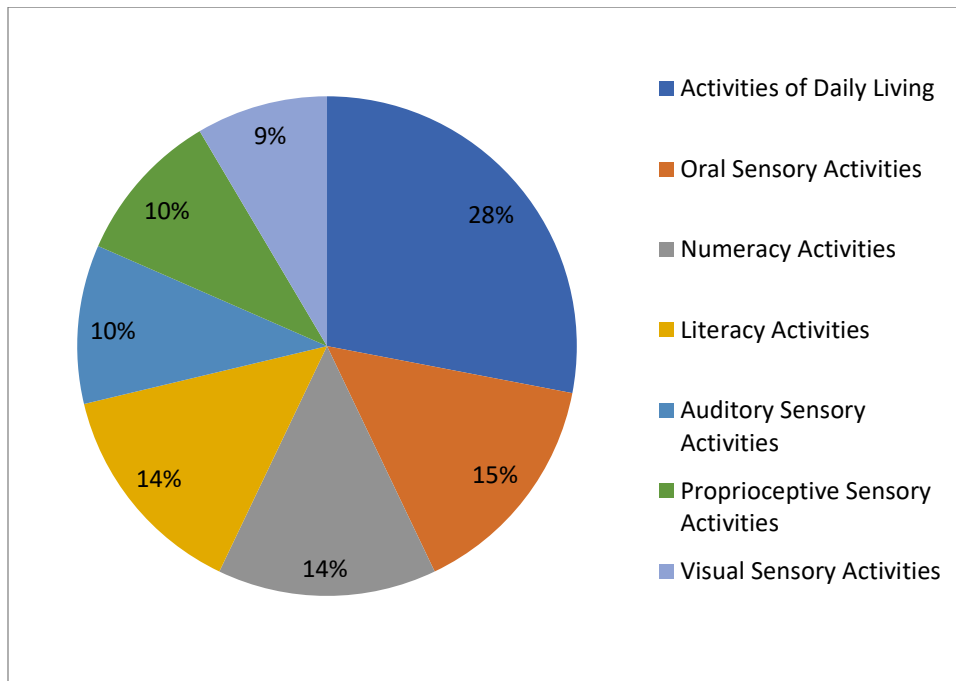
- a) 13 said they were occupied with work activities to meet the basic needs for their families
- b) 2 admitted they are illiterate hence can't take the child through the book
- c) 1 said Child has hearing impairment type of disability but the caregiver doesn't know how to communicate with him/her through sign language
- d) 4 said they had been travelling hence did not find the time.

27 caregivers said they did not get the guide book since they did not attend the training session.

For those who have been able to utilize the guide book with their children, all of them observed the guide book has been very useful to them by highlighting some of the following success stories;

- a) Child has recorded milestones such as being able to pick up food from a plate, hold a pen and scribble in a book since the activity bank training
- b) Produce sound can understand when sent to shop. Understanding ability has developed.
- c) Active... Cheers when she see different colors and when listening to stories
- d) The child is able to perform various activities of daily living like bathing, dressing and undressing
- e) The child is able to sit, can chew something
- f) A little improvement in proprioceptive sensory activities like squeezing balls

From the guide book, the caregivers found the “Activities of Daily Living” to be the most useful topic to their CWDs. However, all the topics have been important to the parents concerning the different types of disabilities their children have. The topics include; Oral Sensory Activities, Numeracy Activities, Literacy Activities, Auditory Sensory Activities, Proprioceptive Sensory Activities and Visual Sensory Activities.



98% of the participants also admitted their households were affected by COVID-19 pandemic in various ways such as, children with disabilities missing therapy services due to closure of the therapy center, job losses, reduced incomes, food insecurity hence starvation, and collapse of businesses. TAF carried out COVID-19 intervention programs in three different ways; issuing of vouchers, cash transfers and food relief donations to the families of Children With Disabilities. 85.7% (126) of the households said they have benefitted from the intervention programs.

96.6% of the caregivers create time to play with their CWDs, 31.3% spends more than 1 hour to play with their CWDs, 27.9% spends between 16-30 minutes to play with them, 15.0% spends between 31-45 minutes to play with them, and 11.6% spends 1-15 minutes to play while 10.8% spends between 46-60 minutes to play with their children at home.