

Accessibility of Public and Private Amenities for people with disabilities in the Central Business District of Harare

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ABSTRACT

The study set out to determine the accessibility of public and private amenities for people with disabilities in the central business district of Harare. People with disabilities like everyone else also needed to access various amenities and services in the city. A quick look in the city seems to suggest that access to many buildings, appears to favour the able bodied at the expense of people with disabilities. Some buildings appear to have “cosmetic” adaptations in a bid to accommodate people with disabilities. This study was informed by the quantitative paradigm. The descriptive design was chosen in line with the quantitative paradigm. Random sampling was employed. Data was collected through questionnaires. The study established that many buildings in the city were not user friendly to people with disabilities. Most buildings had stairs, but no ramps, most doors could not fit wheelchairs. Inside elevators, buttons were too high for some people using wheelchairs or those of a short stature. Toilet entrances were too narrow and not disability friendly. Crossing roads at robot controlled intersections was extremely difficult for people with disabilities. The study recommended that adaptations be made to public buildings and space by putting ramps, widening entrances, having sound robots and making pavements more user friendly. The streets also needed to be decongested through harmonizing vending activities that are not orderly. Parking of vehicles also needs to be regulated to avoid the current disorderly manner in which combi drivers especially park anyhow. In view of the recent cholera outbreak stringent measures need to be put in place to provide clean water to citizens including people with disabilities.

Key words : accessibility, public, private, amenities, people with disabilities,

INTRODUCTION

Access to public amenities is a human rights issue for everyone including people with disabilities. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention (2014) indicates that people with disabilities have long term physical mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and these might cause different types of barriers which hinder them from fully and effectively participating in society as others on equal terms. They therefore face accessibility barriers to public areas, transportation, school resources, curriculum and the environment in general. Gray (2008). A quick survey of the situation on the ground appears to be telling a different story altogether. For able bodied people in general there appears to be challenges, worse still for people with disabilities in particular. Accessibility is all about making public space accessible to all irrespective of whether the people had a disability or not, for example ensuring inclusion of people who use wheelchairs into society and granting them opportunities to participate in daily life activities. (Yarfi, Eyk, & Nakira,2017). For People with disabilities, who use the Harare Central Business District, accessing public and private amenities has been a pipe dream. Munemo, (2016). The concept of social justice for this constituency has therefore come to the fore, mainly because it emanates from the recognition of the fact that inaccessibility is an offshoot of a complex web of social injustices to do with economic contexts. Paseka, and Nareadi (2017). This study will therefore interrogate these issues to establish

why the situation is like that and explore what could be done to alleviate the situation and empower people with disabilities.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

People interact with various amenities on a daily basis, but sometimes it may not cross their minds that the things we refer to as amenities are a basic human right and not a privilege. The necessity for these amenities is more pronounced for people with various disabilities mainly because of the limitations that they may have. It is for this reason that people with disabilities appear to have been taken for granted when it comes to the provision of public amenities.

The basic definition of public amenities points at the fact that these are in essence the basic elements of comfort and convenience that every human being needs regardless of whether they have a disability or not. These are the things that are considered to be extremely essential in-order to make life easier and more pleasant for the general populace. These things include resources, convenience facilities or benefits continuously offered to the general public for their use and or enjoyment. Most importantly the bottom line is that these resources should be at the disposal of people with disabilities with or without a charge. These may include the following: relevant information displays, direction signs or indicators, rain shelters, clean toilets, easy access to buildings, water, electricity, drinking fountains, room service in hotels, good crossing places, crossing convenience at robots for people with disabilities especially those with visual impairment.

To confirm that indeed people with disabilities were rightfully entitled benefit from private and public amenities, the Zimbabwe Constitution actually has specific sections that make provisions to these critical issues. These include the following: Section 22(3) acknowledges the welfare, requirements and communication needs of people with disabilities and finally Section 22(4) deals with accessibility of buildings which it rightly points out that this should be availed like it is done for the other people. Not only this the country also has the Disabled Persons Act (1992) which is the Primary law concerning issues and concerns to do with people with disabilities at its disposal. In spite of these provisions it would still appear that people with disabilities were being prejudiced and discriminated against to unprecedented levels when it comes to their benefitting from access to amenities in their community. According to the centre on Disability Studies (2014) prejudice against persons of difference is usually small in nature but not trivial in effect. The same source further goes on to indicate that it is easy to make excuses shifting responsibility away from those who are supposed to do something about it to people with disabilities or being discriminated against.

According to Senator Shiri (2014) while the new constitution provides for rights and privileges of free movement for people with physical or mental disabilities, not much has been done to take measures to ensure that social amenities and buildings are accessible. Senator Mashavakure (2014) becried the fact that the Constitution was crafted by lawyers who did not have any notion of what a disability is and they did not have a disability themselves. Practical experience of the state of public convenience areas at Mbare Musika, Charge Office Bus terminus, Copakabana, Market Square, Fourth Street Bus Terminus reveals an otherwise explosive looming health disaster. Able bodied people struggle to use public convenience facilities not only at these public places, but other heavily congested public areas in the central business district. This is due to the unfavourable state in which these facilities are in. The stench of human stool will strike you from a distance. An attempt to use the actual facilities will find you confronted with human stool from the toilet and up to the entrance.

More often than not, you will find human faeces flowing right outside the public convenience entrances. The toilet seats are not user friendly at all because the dirt is all over the place, to the extent that you should be very brave to use such facilities. If one can imagine the extent of the serious challenges caused by this scenario to able bodied people, what more for people with visual impairment who also have to answer the call of nature like anyone else. All this is happening even when Section 22(1) of the Constitution clearly says that institutions and Agencies of government at every level must recognize the rights of people with disabilities in particular the right to be treated with responsibility and dignity. The same constitution also stipulates that resources should be availed to people with disabilities and that the state should take appropriate measures to ensure that buildings and amenities to which the public has access to are also accessible. However people with disabilities themselves have questioned the provision of Section (83) of the Constitution which specifies that assistance can only be rendered if the requisite resources are available. This section has not gone down very well for people with disabilities since it is discriminatory and therefore uncalled for. It is unfair to the generality of people with disabilities. It is an anomaly that should be revisited as a matter of urgency.

MOBILITY AND ORIENTATION

Mobility and orientation for people with physical challenges and visual impairment is a serious issue in Harare. People using wheelchairs find it extremely difficult to find their way due to the nature of congestion in Harare. NASCOH (2004) also acknowledges that mobility into and from town had become a serious challenge. The number of vehicles has also dramatically increased in Harare. Those using clutches experience similar if not worse mobility challenges. Street kids have not helped the situation either because they also sleep on the pavements during the day. Flea markets now block many of the pavements in Harare. People with disabilities hardly have any space to manoeuvre their wheelchairs or use their white canes as they travel in Harare because most of the space meant for the easy movement of human traffic has been taken up by vendors.

To worsen matters the vendors appear not to even notice the inconvenience they are causing to the public in general and people with disabilities in particular. There is an increasing number of hawking activities on the pavements. (NASCOH, 2004) .Combi drivers and other motorists park anyhow without regard to people with disabilities or City Council by-laws. Some drivers also flout traffic regulations by going through red robots. There is also a more recent menace of small vehicles that pick and drop passengers anyhow without regard to the safety and security of people with disabilities. These are commonly referred to as “mushika-shika”. This has only helped to add onto the list of inconveniences experienced by people with disabilities. It is no longer easy to access the toilets or some shops since some entrepreneurs sell their wares right in front of registered and established shops.

Safe passage to public convenience areas or public buildings such as shops and offices is no longer easily attainable for people with disabilities. For people with visual impairment, they have the double burden of maneuvering their way around open drains and pipes left unattended by municipal workers and other employers of entities like Tel one or Zesa. (Munemo 2017)

ACCESSING PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Accessing public buildings such as offices and shops has become increasingly difficult for people with disabilities. According to NASCOH (2004) 83% of buildings in Harare were not accessible to people with disabilities. Entrances of most shops have been blocked by vendors and vehicles. Human traffic has also generally increased over the years. A number

of buildings that have a mandate to serve people with disabilities are mostly in floors that have to be accessed via elevators or lifts. Door handles were in most case too high for people with physical disabilities to access them. Lifts to some buildings were also too high for some people with disabilities to easily access. People with disabilities have to endure waiting for officials who have to save them to come down from offices in the eighteenth or twelfth floor. According to the Standard Newspaper of 7 July, 2014, @<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed> in Zimbabwe, Senator Shiri confirmed and complained that people with disabilities have to wait for government or other officials to come down from their high story building offices to see them on the ground floor because the people with disabilities will not be able to access the building or the office they want to consult. Senator Shiri recounted her personal ordeal and experience of how she was involved in a minor accident in a hotel bath tub, because the hotel did not have proper equipment to support people with disabilities especially in view of her condition where the tub was not user friendly for her situation. Wheelchairs for example may not fit into the entrances that are there. Munemo, (2017) alluded to the fact that in the event that the wheelchair fits into the entrance, there may be further challenges of people with disabilities especially those with physical disabilities being unable to access the elevator buttons. The majority of public and private schools in the Central Business District do not have ramps to enable learners or students with disabilities to access classrooms or administration blocks easily. In such cases somebody has to assist them as soon as they get in the lift and when they want to disembark and regrettably very few people are prepared to set aside their time to do all this for the benefit of people with disabilities. In the case of those with visual impairment, again they have to secure assistance in pressing the correct button of the floor they will be going to as well as when they want to disembark. The same process needs to be repeated when they are done with any business they will have come for. Automatic door openers for example are meant to benefit people with disabilities especially those who use walkers and wheelchairs in addition to being of help to people carrying books and those carrying babies as well as the elderly. (Centre of Universal Design @www.designncsu.edu/cnd/about-ud/about-ud.htm.) In addition sidewalk curb cuts designed to make sidewalks and streets accessible to those using wheelchairs, are also used by kids on skateboards, parents with baby strollers and delivery staff. (Ibid)

Doing simple errands has become problematic for people with disabilities because the environment has not been accommodative to their needs. People with disabilities especially those with visual impairment also need to come into town to pay utility bills and do other seemingly simple errands but they have to put up with several challenges of a mobility and orientation nature eg crossing busy roads, crossing congested robot controlled intersections where no one really bothers to pay any attention to their plight and needs. (Munemo,2017) People with visual impairment for example were very reluctant to get in town to carry out personal business because of the numerous mobility difficulties they have to encounter in finding their way. (Ibid) The worries and anxieties are similar to those of people who use wheelchairs and others who use crutches.

1. The experiences of accessibility outlined above were not peculiar to Harare or Zimbabwe only. Other cities and countries have also passed through similar accessibility difficulties. This is evidenced by similar studies by Rivano-Fischer (2004) in the United Arab Emirates, Yarfic, Eyki and Nakira (2017) in Ghana. This goes a long way to demonstrate that Zimbabwe as a country has a lot to learn from other countries going through the same or similar challenges. A number of studies eg Useh, Moyo, and Munyonga, (2001), Yarfic, Eyki and Nakira (2017), NASCOH (2004), and Fischer, (2004) mainly focused on wheelchair accessibility at the expense of other accessibility issues such as mobility and orientation for people with visual impairment, people who use

crutches, access to public convenience eg toilets, access to shops, accessing parking areas, disorderly vending stalls, broken pavements, open pits and drainage systems, accessibility of public space during the rainy season and others. This study therefore made concerted effort to cover and focus on all these areas hence it is more broad and comprehensive.

Against this background the researcher found it imperative to interrogate the issues at stake in detail with a view to exposing the source of the challenges and proffer ways to deal with the challenge in a manner that would benefit all people with disabilities so that they like any other citizen can also benefit fully from the resources they are also entitled to as equal citizens of the nation.

Statement of the Problem

People with various disabilities face numerous difficulties or obstacles in trying to access a number of the public and private amenities available in the Central Business District of Harare.

Research Questions

- To what extent do people with disabilities experience difficulties in trying to access public and private amenities in Harare?
- What strategies can be used to address the difficulties faced by people with disabilities on the quest to access public and private amenities?
- How do people with disabilities stand to benefit from an improved service delivery in terms of accessing both the public and private amenities in Harare?

Significance of the study

First and foremost this study will benefit local Authorities in that when they make their by-laws they will be aware of and incorporate ideas from the study since they will now be aware of the difficulties faced by the constituency of people with disabilities. For people with disabilities the study will work as a strong tool of advocacy in-order to inform decision making by the Authorities including central government, local Authorities as well as Non governmental organisations dotted around the country. Authorities can also take advantage by tapping on what other local Authorities were doing to address the challenges of accessing public amenities by people with disabilities. The researcher will also benefit immensely by getting more knowledge, exposure and foresight into different studies carried out in the area of accessibility of public amenities for people with disabilities. Lastly, the research will also act as a starting point for other researchers who may wish to carry out similar studies elsewhere.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are a number of challenges that have negatively impacted on the welfare of people with disability. The area of accessibility of public amenities remains one of these outstanding areas. One of the challenges is that of the lack of ramps. Most buildings do not have ramps completely. A few do have ramps, but according to NASCOH (2004) some buildings do have ramps with rails but lack compliance to the gradient levels stipulated by the City of Harare. In addition some ramps were found to be very steep

The availability of services to enhance accessibility is a serious challenge to people with disabilities. The situation in a number of schools in Zimbabwe is pathetic. Most of the schools do not have ramps. Only a few schools are compliant in this area. A senate motion by Senator Annah Shiri in 2014 confirmed that most schools were in bad taste and that children only go to special schools that are far away and expensive. The result has been that children with disability mostly end up at primary school level. The Leonard Cheshire Trust Zimbabwe has

done a lot of commendable work in improving the situation at a number of schools in four provinces in the country namely Mashonaland Central, Masvingo, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South. A number of ramps were built at a number of schools in these provinces. Some buildings did not have guiding rails. Some offices were too congested and too small to the extent that those using wheelchairs or crutches cannot even fit into such offices. In such cases alternative ways to attend to such clients will have to be sought as a matter of urgency. Such adjustments, wherever they are made have the result of making people with disabilities feel bad and different. People with visual impairment for example do not want to be marked as different, so they prefer less noticeable assistive devices and are particularly sensitive about others reactions towards them. They prefer something discreet, and do not want to look weird. (Ahmed, Shaffer, Connely, Crandal, and Kapadia, 2016)

In the case of people with disabilities who may wish to become drivers, the situation is far from satisfactory. There are so many issues that remain outstanding in this area, and yet some of the people with physical disabilities can drive on their own, but would need to be taught how to drive in the first place. Unfortunately, in Zimbabwe there are no driving schools with automatic motor vehicles that are fitted with hand controls to train people with disabilities to learn how to drive. (NASCOH, 2004). To worsen matters orthopaedic appliances for people with disabilities are have prohibitive costs since they are very expensive to purchase. The whole issue boils down to the question of societal attitudes about people with disabilities. Society was erroneously brought up thinking that people with disabilities were not of any use in the community. In India for example, they have taken advantage of the Protection of Rights and full participation Act 1995 to provide for facilities at road crossing points and non road transport. Stanbury and Hugo (1995) in Munemo (2017). In Argentina and Costa Rica laws that support people with visual impairment for example are accompanied by comprehensive regulatory frameworks. First (2000) in Munemo (2017) Negative attitudes have been nurtured throughout the evolution of special needs education. These are some of the attitudes and challenges that have contributed to the notion that people with disabilities have to remain in the periphery of community, national regional or international activities. Society has been driven by the medical model which regrettably sees and views people with disabilities as sick people who are in constant need of treatment.(NASCOH,2004) It is largely due to such unfounded beliefs that disability has been mainly associated with poverty, helplessness and vulnerability.

This status quo may also have been aggravated by the fact that it was not surprising that quite a good number of some of the people with disabilities who have done well in life especially in the political arena and have probably become politically powerful have tended to dissociate themselves from other people with disabilities. (Zimbabwe Peace Project, 2017) An example is given of a councilor with a disability in the Mutoko area of Mashonaland East, was singled out as having been able to serve the interests of people without disabilities much better than those of his fellow associates with disabilities. This has led to the belief that those people with disabilities who rise on the socio economic ladder cease to view themselves as disabled.(Ibid). At a belated International Day of the Disabled in March 2018, one person with a disability who is the Managing Director of one well known Bank, also indicated that he did not quite consider himself as a person with a disability because he had done so well and much better than most of the so called able bodied people.

Another area of need for people with disabilities is that of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) An important point of critical importance is that at most of the ATMs in the Central Business District there were no ramps .Secondly the cubicles may be too small for wheelchairs to fit in properly. (Nascoh, 2004). This situation presented some serious challenges for people with

disabilities especially those with physical disabilities or those on crutches. They end up seeking the assistance of people they may not even know, thereby compromising their own safety and security considering the risk of muggers and thieves especially when you are assisted by people you don't know. This challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that the Banks themselves are also not easily accessible mainly due to the fact that there not all of the Banks have ramps at the entrances. The steps may also be too high for an individual with a disability to easily access. Those using wheelchairs or crutches are also bound to experience challenges in trying to access the Banks in-order to make withdrawals, deposits or make any other enquiries pertaining to their Accounts. (Ibid) NASCOH (2004) noted with concern that there was general lack of awareness on the specific needs of people with disabilities at most of the banks in the country. In a survey most members of the general public were said to have indicated that it never crossed their mind that people with disabilities needed some of the things that appeared rather too basic to most people and yet were extremely important.

METHODOLOGY

The study was informed by the Quantitative paradigm. The survey design was utilized in line with the quantitative paradigm. The quantitative approach was selected because of the nature or type of enquiry of the study.

The Research Design

The research employed the descriptive survey design. Babbie (1997), describes the descriptive survey method as a method of research that enables respondents to describe what they see over and beyond. This method was chosen because it basically allowed for people with different disabilities to indicate their experiences concerning how they viewed the way they accessed public amenities in Harare. The study was therefore mainly quantitative in nature. The survey method mainly makes use of questionnaires, and rating scales in the collection of data (Best and Khan 1993). Bell (1987) also demonstrates that surveys are targeted at obtaining information on a representative sample of the population from which the findings would be taken as representative of the whole population. Questionnaires were therefore used to collect data for this study. According to Leedy (1980) and Charles (1986), the survey method is the best when carrying out an educational survey.

Some of the advantages that necessitated the selection and use of the survey method include the following:

Surveys gather data from a relatively large number of respondents at a particular time. The researcher made a decision regarding the sample of respondents that he wanted to use, but based on the population of those involved in the study. This sample was representative enough of the population being studied. The sample did not necessarily have to take every member of the population on board. Secondly, the survey method reflects a general idea of the problem. The researcher can come up with at least an informative idea or estimation of what the situation could be like on the ground. This made it possible to use this general idea to inform decision making. Another advantage of the survey method was that through using a questionnaire respondents had the added advantage of getting time to give serious thought to the way they were going to respond to the issues or questions that will be presented to them by way of questionnaires. This implies that the researcher was likely to get more reliable responses unlike interviews which required responses there and then without giving the participant enough time to reflect thereby give serious thought to the type of responses they would eventually give. Questionnaires were also cost effective and less exhausting compared to interviews. The researcher covered many people or respondents in a relatively shorter time. For as long as the instructions are clear enough as not to cause any ambiguity this can be achieved fairly easily. Respondents respond more

independently and unanimously when they are on their own without undue influence from the researcher as is the case with interviews. The presence of the researcher can influence the way the participant answers questions in that the participant may end up giving you what he or she thinks is what you want. Researcher bias is limited in the case of questionnaires since respondents are at liberty of responding in any way they deem necessary because they have the advantage of their autonomy which is not interfered with by anyone.

The survey design is not absolutely reliable as a method of gathering data in research. Surveys have their own limitations which researchers have to be aware of and therefore guard against. Some of these disadvantages include the following: The first one was that the researcher was limited to testing the theories he postulated on. In the event of other critical variations coming up during the course of the study the researcher may not be absolutely flexible to take these into account because as you start the study you will be guided by certain specifications which you may not easily adjust just like that. Qualitative designs have a certain leeway to be flexible since you will be dealing with people's views and opinions which are not a straight jacket like in the case of the quantitative approach. Another limitation of the survey design is that it makes unjustified assumptions that the researcher knew what was important and respondents could not therefore provide answers to questions that were not asked. This was unfortunate because it interferes with the overall outcome of the findings to some extent. The assumption that the researcher is the expert and therefore knows it all interferes with the final outcome of research findings.

Mitigation of Disadvantages of the survey design

Disadvantages of the survey method could be overcome by carrying out a pilot study first in order to determine suitability of questionnaires. A pilot study was carried out before the actual study. Open-ended questions were also provided for respondents to express their views freely. The pilot study went a long way in helping to improve some of the questions. Some of the questions needed further clarity while a few appeared to be double barreled. Some of the questions needed to come earlier than others mainly due to the issues they were focusing on. Shifting positions of questions therefore helped to come up with a better and leaner questionnaire. All these aspects were taken into consideration before coming up with the final questionnaire.

Population

The population was comprised of all people with disabilities in Harare. People with disabilities were chosen because they were the ultimate beneficiaries in the event that public amenities were accessible in Harare.

Sample

The research was based on a random sample of 40 people with different disabilities in Harare. Random sampling was opted for because the researcher found it easy to make use of respondents picked this way. (Siegle, 2002). The researcher therefore took advantage of the people with disabilities who were available and were conversant with what was involved in the provision of public amenities. It is not possible to study the whole population of people with disabilities, hence the need to sample.

Instruments

Questionnaires were the major instrument used for this study. The questionnaires contained both structured questions and open ended questions. All the questions solicited for information on the accessibility of public and private amenities in the Central Business District.

The questionnaire was chosen because it gave respondents enough time to think and reflect on their responses. In addition, responses were also most likely to be genuine because of the anonymity involved since no names were indicated. Questionnaires were also used because they saved time. Analysis of data from both the structured and open ended questions was initially recorded then coded in accordance with specific themes or categories. Findings and conclusions were then extracted on the basis of these themes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Existing challenges pertaining to access to public amenities in Harare

The study established that there were a number of accessibility challenges that existed and these were at the disadvantage of people with disabilities. These included the following :

- lack of ramps,
- dirty convenience areas eg public toilets
- difficulty in mobility due to parking at unauthorized places
- unavailability of clean water
- dirty streets
- crowded streets making it problematic for those using wheelchairs and crutches to find their way safely in the central business district.
- Disorderly hawking and vending activities on every corner of the streets.
- disregard for the welfare of people with disabilities from both the City fathers, law enforcement Agencies and the general public.

The explanation for the increase in these challenges could be lack of awareness on the part of these critical stakeholders including the city fathers. Lack of awareness leads to attitude problems that view people with disabilities as not worthy of prioritizing or giving any service to at all. Another explanation that can be used to account for this seemingly uncaring way of accommodating people with disabilities could be that people just don't care about the needs of another person except their own, worse still if that person is one with a disability. People probably now care more about their own needs and worries more than the next person. Another position could be that since most of the resources, assistive devices and gadgets that are used by people with disabilities are very expensive, Authorities and other stakeholders don't find it prudent to make these requirements a priority and this a very unfortunate position. This finding confirms a similar finding by NASCOH (2004) which found out that most people had indicated that it never crossed their mind that people with disabilities had special needs that also needed the attention of everyone from the community such as policy makers, businessman, Central government officials ,schools authorities and more importantly local authorities since they were the people at the ground and had to sensitise the other stakeholders.

Concerns of people with disabilities

Against the background of the challenges identified above, the study also unearthed a number of concerns on the part of people with disabilities regarding the accessibility of public amenities in the Central business district. One of these concerns was that the current confusion created by the vending stalls that are dotted all over town was making it extremely difficult for people with disabilities to move around. The situation was more pronounced for people with visual impairment since most of the passageways they are supposed to use for their mobility in doing various chores and errands in town are now blocked. The challenge remained the same for those using wheelchairs and crutches to manouvre their way to different places in town. Combi drivers did not help the situation either, since they parked their vehicles willy nilly

blocking roads and crossing places. They drop and pick passengers anywhere without regard for human life. Even able bodied people have also confessed to being harassed and disturbed by Combis and vehicles that park anyhow. Public toilets have remained an eyesore in the central business district. Able bodied people no longer prefer to use the available public toilets in the CBD mainly because of the state in which they are which is abhorrent to say the least.

The explanations for this position are numerous. One school of thought could be that there may not have been adequate advocacy initiatives in-order to create the necessary awareness for those charged with the responsibility of ensuring service delivery in the area of concern. These include local and international Non- governmental organizations,law enforcement Agencies ,government and other stake holders. Advocacy can be achieved from a transdisciplinary perspective ie to mean that the people with disabilities themselves can also do their part through advocacy efforts in-order to conscientise society about their welfare and needs. Other stakeholders can then come in to complement what the people with disabilities will be doing to empower themselves.

As for reckless drivers the challenge could probably emanate from the disregard of traffic regulations for which stringent measures can be put in place to deal with such drivers. Another dimension could be poor driver training processes on the part of driving schools and this could need to be looked at by all those in the driver training fraternity. The issue of retests and retraining courses could be a solution to this challenge. The worst scenario that has probably shortchanged people with disabilities could be corruption. Drivers could be getting their Certificates of Competency to drive through unorthodox means. This challenge has far reaching consequences for not only people with disabilities but even people without disabilities because if incompetent drivers are on our roads it will spell disaster for not only people with disabilities but other pedestrians and innocent people.

On the issue of vending stalls that are not well organized, the explanation for this confusion could be that most of these vendors have become a law unto themselves. This could be confirmed by the unending running battles they engage in the Central Business District with both the municipal police and the regular law enforcement agencies. Most of the vendors appear not to respect the law in any way. They can be removed today, but on the next day you find them back on the streets. The City Council puts so much in terms of resources to deal with the menace, but they are obviously limited in that they cannot continuously pour resources into a futile exercise.

Political entities also appear to play a key role in the confusion caused by vendors. Attempts to clear vendors from the streets have been witnessed several times, but only to be cancelled at short notice by mainly political parties who probably feel that their political support base could be negatively affected and nose dive if vendors are removed to other places in the periphery of the Central Business District. The vendors themselves have also been heard vowing that they will make protest votes against the ruling party if they are removed from their existing vending sites. Politicians probably fully know too well the implications of such threats. Politicians are interested parties who have found themselves compromised in a very big way.

Sometime early this year the City Of Harare had finalized plans to relocate all vendors to designated areas in the periphery of the city. Regrettably one day into the implementation of the noble idea, government cancelled the exercise through the Minister of Local government. It was strongly believed that this decision by government could have seriously been politically motivated. This position was confirmed recently when high ranking senior members of the

ruling party publicly indicated that if vendors voted for them they will not be removed from the Streets of the Central Business District area. Clearly this way of doing business has compromised the impartiality of the ruling party and government.

Public toilets have been the worst thing to happen to the list of the numerous public amenities that are in shambles in the Central Business District of Harare. These have not been maintained by the City Council to a very large extent except for a few for which if one needs a service there, they have to be prepared to pay to the City Council Attendants who will be present for people to access this service. Unfortunately the majority of people with disabilities cannot afford even the small amounts that are charged there. Many people without disabilities refrain from using these paid for facilities mainly because they cannot afford the fees asked for. The issue of affordability is even worse for people with disabilities.

The city Council may have put in place supervision routines for those of its workers who clean the toilets and streets. The situation on the ground does not however seem to reflect this position. This could be due to the fact that some supervisors may not take their responsibility seriously with the seriousness it deserves. This can lead to disease outbreaks. The challenge could be that of untrained supervisors hired by the city Council. The supervisors could just be neglecting their duty for no apparent reason.

Another dimension could be that maybe the City Council was not giving its workers the chemicals to use for cleaning these toilets and this can be and real issue since employees can then resist their duties on the strong reason that there are no chemicals to use for the cleaning. On the other hand the City Council could also be facing cash flow challenges to enable it to purchase chemicals for toilet cleaning. The issue of forex challenges is one that Has affected many companies and individuals to the extent that so many things have ground to a halt because many things needed cannot be bought because of the critical shortage of funding to do so. While forex may be available on the black market it is very expensive to buy it from that source because of the prohibitive costs. Another issue could be that City fathers may not quite appreciate the role they are supposed to play through the many health and other by-laws that they make themselves. This could be true especially if one considers the rate at which City by laws are being flouted willy -nilly by residents and and its City Council employees as well on a daily basis throughout the Central Business district.

Unclean water

The study established that the water being provided to people with disabilities was not clean. Generally all the residents of Harare were exposed to untreated water. This has led to outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, typhoid and other diseases that are linked to health related issues. People with disabilities had to think twice before they drank the water that is available. This could be accounted for by the fact that the City Council may be experiencing cash flow challenges making it difficult to secure appropriate chemicals to treat the water. Most of the chemicals that are needed are costly and are mainly imported from other countries.

Dirty Streets

The study also revealed that most of the streets in Harare are so dirty. Garbage is found all over the place. The garbage is not collected at all or not collected in time posing a serious health hazard. Refuse disposal has also not been handled well. This garbage has been allowed to get to the stage where it was now blocking streets making it extremely difficult for people with disabilities to move around in the streets freely. Those on wheelchairs and crutches experience mobility challenges because of the dirty coupled with the congested streets. It is even worse for those with visual impairment especially those who travel on their own without sighted guides.

This could be probably accounted for by the limited refuse trucks that are at the disposal of the city council. Again the City council could be experiencing funding challenges to enable it to purchase the garbage collection trucks. Another issue could be the lack of prioritization of issues on the part of the City Council. City fathers probably needed to prioritise matters of garbage collection to avoid disease outbreaks as well as make the town accessible to people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings the following recommendations were proposed :

- The city Council needed to create a disability desk which will among other things and duties prioritise issues to do with the accessibility of amenities especially those that empower and benefit people with disabilities
- City fathers need to revisit their bylaws with a view to amending and strengthening them for the benefit of people with disabilities.
- Central government also needs to come up with user friendly policies and laws that make it mandatory for local Authorities to comply with.
- People with disabilities themselves also need to redouble their efforts in doing strong and effective advocacy work that will make an impact on different stakeholders.
- There is need to come up with strong awareness programmes that have the capacity to empower people with disabilities.
- There is need to improve the technical, architectural features of buildings and other facilities such as ramps, specially designated parking areas, loop systems and places of residence with integrated care resources.
- There is also urgent need to give advice to construction departments to revisit the way they plan buildings, or modifications to already constructed buildings or old buildings with a view to adopt ramps, elevators, lifts, automatic doors, toilets, and parking places for people with disabilities.
- The provision of public amenities to people with disabilities need to be approached from a holistic and trans-disciplinary perspective in order to come up with measures that will go a long way in improving the lives of people with disabilities.

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