



South Africans with disabilities' experience of COVID-19 findings from a large online survey

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Introduction

- The research specifically looked at the socio-economic, wellbeing and human rights related experiences
- Data collected through an online voluntary survey with nearly 2,000 respondents
- Possibly one of the largest datasets on people with disabilities' Covid-19 experiences in a single country

Study Motivation

- Between 12%-20% of the SA population over 5yrs have some form of disability
- COVID-19 – What is impact on persons with disabilities in South Africa?
 - Overlooked generally by disaster relief
 - Ignored by pandemic directives
 - Impacted negatively by regulations aimed at virus control
 - Neither DM Act (2002) or the DMF (2005) acknowledge people with disabilities or that they have diverse needs different to other vulnerable groups in the country
 - Stipulations of Section 3.5 of WPRPD Disaster implementation framework far from complete

Background

- Desire to explore further evidence but constrained by Covid-19 regulations relating to fieldwork – online self-administered survey with associated weaknesses.
- Strong collaboration between national DPO, national research council and international research institute.
- Research process very collaborative and knowledge exchange encouraged and respected
- Roles of 3 partners: IDS funder liaison, and overall leadership, HSRC local project management and research design, and NCPD access to people with disabilities and DPO networks. NCPD instrumental in survey distribution and high response rate
- 1857 final valid responses

High Level Key Findings

- Very little government intervention – reliance on DPO sector and other NGOs
- Communication about Coronavirus and monthly meetings inadequate for certain types of disabilities as most rely on Television – captions not existent, SASL interpreters not always visible, language challenges
- Resulted in confusion about intervention services available

- Negative economic impact of regulations 30% unemployed at start of Lockdown
- 13% Job losses, 11% reduced pay, 6% compulsory leave, negative impact on own business
- 31% receiving disability grant but 33% receiving the (paltry) SRD grant -£17/m.
- 10% elderly persons grant
- Thus most are poor – less GBP 238 / ZAR 5000 per month

Unfamiliar Experiences

- Higher food insecurity experiences - generally 40% at some stage
- BUT 29% during the survey - after 16 months of pandemic relief interventions
- 76% difficulty in paying for basic living expenses and noticed increases in disability expenditure (hygiene, sanitation, medication)
- 60% reliant on daily carer services and 73% interrupted
- Rehabilitative services interrupted for long period – medical, counselling, physical therapy
- Disability specific services also interrupted – repairs to assistive devices delayed
- Psychosocial experiences – 60% Stressed, 54% Depressed, 52% Scared/Anxious, 42% Lonely – limited social interaction as many live alone
- Most government and other providers considered by 48% to be doing a poor job
- 37% rely on state but greater movement to DPOs - 51% for COVID-19

specific support

Conclusions

- Disability Rights Disaster Framework far from complete – must be completed urgently
- Overlooked by many interventions – lack of disability-inclusive approach
- Mitigation and control regulations had negative consequences on rehabilitative and other services
- Diversity of people within sector ignored
- Information and interventions more accessible to those on the system – existing grant recipients
- Little interaction/collaboration across departments and with DPOs
- Data driven response but lack of disability data!
- 83% feel that government should monitor circumstances during pandemics – ensure continuity of services and monitor rights protection