

DISABILITY INCLUSION AFRICA PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

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Welcome!

Charlotte Baker and Elvis Imafidon

The Disability Inclusion Africa project is a research-led project supported by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Global Challenges Research Fund.

The project is working to improve understandings of the impact of alternative explanations for disability on disabled people, their communities, advocates and policy makers.

Through international dialogue at a series of international events, collaborative research, fieldwork, and community engagement, the project aims to bring about a step-change in the ways in which disability is understood by communities, civil society, international development and the academy.

We hope this quarterly newsletter will keep you updated on the project and the work of our partner organizations.

Follow us on social media:

 @TheDIANetwork

 Disability Inclusion
Africa





Project updates

Charlotte Baker

Over the last three months, we have held three linked webinars and workshops focusing on Public Health and ‘Witchcraft’ Beliefs in partnership with the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network.

The invited speakers included Ikponwosa Ero, UN Independent Expert on Albinism, Berrie Holzhausen, Founder of Alzheimers Dementia Namibia, Sarah Snow, Medical Assistance Sierra Leone, Mary Penn-Timothy, Sierra Leone Autistic Society and Dr Olatunde Olayinka Ayinde, University College Hospital, Ibadan.

We have several exciting online events planned over the coming months. We have applied for funding from the Festival of Social Science to hold an online exhibition exploring alternative explanations for disability through the arts and we are also planning a virtual Being Human Festival café.

Finally, we have an exciting online postgraduate workshop planned for November 2020, which will enable postgraduate researchers working on themes related to the project to share their work. You can find the call for papers at the end of our newsletter in the Forthcoming Events section.

We hope you will be able to join us for one or more of these events.

Meet the team!



The Disability Inclusion Africa project team includes Dr Elvis Imafidon (Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria / SOAS, UK), Dr Emelda Ngufor Samba (Université de Yaoundé 1, Cameroon), Dr Nandera Mhando (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania), Prof. Kobus Moolman (University of the Western Cape), and Dr Charlotte Baker (Lancaster University, UK). We also have a group of volunteer project interns working with us and they have been actively supporting our work. We are grateful to them for their time and dedication to the project.

Find out more about us [here](#).



Feature: Kids Club Kampala

Rachel Broadbent, DIA Project Intern



Our partner organisations are crucial to the work of the project. Kids Club Kampala is a UK-based charity working to transform the lives of children living in the slums of Kampala, Uganda. They provide for children's immediate basic needs whilst working to bring about long-term sustainable changes in their communities.

Over the last 10 years, the organisation has provided 1.5 million meals to hungry children, given over 1,000 children free education, facilitated counselling sessions for over 3,000 vulnerable young people, provided vital training skills to over 700 vulnerable women and reunited almost 100 children back with loving families.

Their work has also been invaluable in the pandemic, as they have given out one million food parcels to vulnerable families during lockdown, saving thousands from starvation, reducing pressure for families, and providing social connection in a time of extreme isolation.

The organisation's Ewafe Project Home has had a remarkable impact. This project rescues children who have been abandoned, offering them emergency care and a safe place to live whilst working towards placing them into family-based care. The moving story of Simon shows the life-changing results of the project, in particular for children with disabilities.



Simon's story

When Simon arrived at the project home in 2017, he had previously been living in an orphanage that had been shut down due to allegations of neglect and abuse. They had been keeping Simon locked in a small room all day every day, presumably because he had epilepsy, a condition that is surrounded by stigma in Uganda, widely believed to be caused by demonic possession or a punishment from ancestral spirits. As a result of this treatment, he couldn't speak, didn't make eye contact, didn't know how to go to the toilet and wet the bed every night.

However, Simon's life turned around at the Ewafe project, as he received love, care, attention, underwent rehabilitation and now receives medicine to control his epilepsy, meaning he rarely has fits. He loves playing games, especially with cars, and having cuddles with the Ewafe house mother. Simon stayed at the home for two years, longer than most residents, given that he arrived with no paperwork and couldn't communicate.

Yet, against all the odds, they managed to find his uncle living nearby and, after several visits, in March 2019 Simon moved in permanently with him, along with his aunt and cousins. Kids Club Kampala are supporting the medical costs for his epilepsy treatment and still check up on him regularly - he is doing well and loves playing with his cousins. Now, Simon has a loving family, a permanent home, and a bright future.



The work of Kids Club Kampala is so powerful in overcoming the lack of hope and self-esteem of children like Simon, living in situations of extreme poverty, and will continue to be essential throughout the long-lasting impacts of Covid-19. We are currently collaborating with Kids Club Kampala to produce a sketch-up animation of Simon's story, which they will use for advocacy, so that many more children will have the opportunity to realise their potential.

Disability and Inclusion research

Aless McCann, DIA Project Intern

One of the objectives of the Disability and Inclusion Africa project is to bring together disability studies researchers working across the continent. Aless McCann spoke with Dr Masauso Chirwa from the University of Zambia.

Dr Chirwa holds a PhD from Warwick University. He is a member of several international Think Tanks on disability, including the International Association for Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASSIDD). Currently he is working on a number of projects including a study, funded by the Irish Government, bringing together a global partnership of academics to examine the impact of COVID-19 on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their caregivers.

For his doctoral research, Dr Chirwa examined the experiences of mothers of disabled children in Zambia in urban and rural settings. The study used the lens of Intersectionality Theory to assess how different identities of the mothers participating in the study overlap and cause disadvantage. It examined the impact of having a disabled child on a mother's ability to remain in employment, engage in social activities and their perception within social networks.

The study's findings show that the impact of having a disabled child depended on whether the child was first born or had older siblings. Mothers with older children were better able to cope and adapt to having a disabled child. First time mothers, on the other hand, struggled and were blamed for the child's impairment; they were often cast out by their inlaws or wider social networks and many were divorced by their spouses. Divorce was more common for mothers in rural settings than urban ones after the birth of a disabled child. Across the rural/urban divide it was common for first time mothers to face seclusion or banishment from mainstream society following the birth of a disabled child.

Asked what advice he would give to doctoral students setting out to research disability in the Global South, Dr Chirwa said that since disability is perceived differently in the Global North compared to the Global South, it is important to understand the context of the issues studied. Researchers working in the South need to adapt and not rely solely on theories created in the North, as not all will be applicable. In rural areas of Africa disabilities, particularly intellectual ones, are viewed as punishment from God or spirits for a woman's misdemeanor, such as infidelity during pregnancy. In urban settings there is a more enlightened approach; it is understood that some conditions are genetic, for example. Yet, even in these areas, the medical model view of disability prevails.

Dr Chirwa is involved in several research projects concurrently and has many demands on his time, but his interest drives him. He says, "when you love what you are doing, it doesn't feel like you are busy and you want to take on as much as you can".

Forthcoming events

Postgraduate Webinar 'Alternative Explanations - Disability Research in the Global South'

Friday 6 November 2020

Call for Papers

The Disability and Inclusion Africa Network (DIA Network) is working to highlight the impact of alternative explanations for disability on disabled people, their communities, activists, civil society and policy makers.

A principal aim of the DIA Network is to facilitate discussion, learning and networking in order to understand range of beliefs and attitudes that underpin the alternative explanations offered for disability.

The DIA Network invites Masters' and PhD students to contribute to this discussion, learning and networking by proposing a 10-minute paper for its forthcoming postgraduate webinar under the broad theme of 'Alternative Explanations - Disability Research in the Global South'.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Alternative explanations for disability in the Global South;
- Traditional discourses of disability;
- Epistemologies and ethics of disability in the Global South;
- Traditional methodologies of knowing, classifying, and treating disabilities;
- Disability, religion and ontologies;
- Disability and witchcraft accusations;
- Disability and gender;
- Alternative explanations to disability and human rights;
- Disability economy: money, miracle, and marginalization;
- African verbal arts and the disability narrative: jokes, proverbs, anecdotes, folktales...
- Cultural representations of disability (theatre, art, literature, film...);
- Socio-cultural barriers to understanding disability in the Global South.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words for a 10 minute presentation and a brief bio should be sent to Charlotte Baker c.baker@lancaster.ac.uk by Monday 28 September 2020 with the subject line: Postgraduate webinar proposal. Selected presenters will be notified by Friday 9 October 2020.