



---

# VIVA NETWORK ZIMBABWE

---

SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROJECT FOR YOUTHS AND CHILDREN WITH  
DISABILITIES REPORT



SEPTEMBER 15, 2019  
VIVA NETWORK ZIMBABWE  
188 Westwood Drive, Kambuzuma, Harare

## Contents

|                                                          |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Introduction.....                                        | 2 |
| Overview of Project .....                                | 2 |
| Activity Progress Made .....                             | 2 |
| 1.Disability Friendly Church Baseline Survey .....       | 2 |
| 2.Training of Youth Ambassadors.....                     | 3 |
| 3.Disability Friendly Church .....                       | 3 |
| 3.1 Envisioning Meeting .....                            | 3 |
| 3.2 Training of 12 Churches on Transform Disability..... | 4 |
| 4.Monitoring and Review.....                             | 5 |
| 4.1 Support Visits .....                                 | 5 |
| 4.2 Review Meeting.....                                  | 5 |
| 4.3 Lessons Learnt, Challenges and Recommendations ..... | 5 |
| 5.Challenges and Recommendations .....                   | 6 |
| 6.Success Stories .....                                  | 6 |

## Introduction

From January 2019 to September 2019, VNZ implemented a project titled **Sexual Reproductive Health Project** with children and youths with disabilities. The aim of the project was to improve the SRH knowledge levels of children and youth with disabilities in order for them to make informed decisions. Knowing that the children and youths were coming from churches, a baseline survey on the preparedness of churches to address SRH needs of children and youths with disabilities was done and further to share the vision of the project, an envisioning meeting on Disability Friendly Churches was done with 28 churches. The envisioning meeting saw the network enrolling 12 churches for a full training on how church leaders can establish disability friendly churches for children. Churches trained on disability friendly churches had their exchange visits and review meetings were done with the same group. This report will give a narrative of the progress made in meeting the objectives of this project, challenges faced, lessons learnt and recommendations for the project.

## Overview of Project

The aim of the project was to improve the SRH knowledge levels of children and youth with disabilities in order for them to make informed decisions. To make this possible, Youth Ambassadors were trained on SRH in order for them to offer peer education to their cohorts while churches were mobilised and equipped with information on a disability friendly church in order for them to be able to meet the needs of children and youths with disabilities in their churches. The overview of activities of the projects is as shown below:

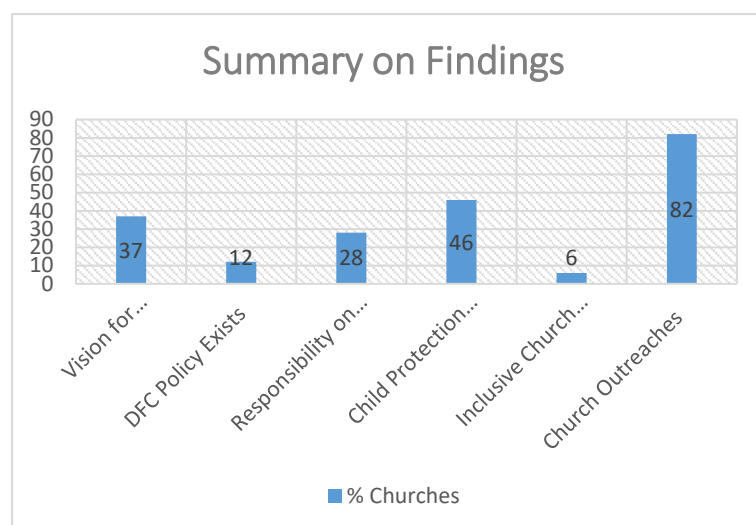
| No. | Activity                                                         | Output                                                                                                    | Outcome                                                                                                                                       |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Baseline survey                                                  | Baseline survey report on disability inclusiveness of organisational and church environments and systems. | Increased awareness on the effectiveness of organisations and churches in meeting the needs of children and youths with disabilities          |
| 2   | Training of 20 Youth Ambassadors                                 | 20 Youth Ambassadors Trained                                                                              | Improved quality of peer education by youth ambassadors                                                                                       |
| 3   | Youth peer to peer education                                     | 580 children and youths reached out to with information on SRH                                            | Increases knowledge of SRH among youths<br>Informed SRH decisions among 480 children and youths                                               |
| 4   | Envisioning of 30 church leaders on disability friendly churches | 30 people trained on disability church                                                                    | 12 churches registered for training on 4 modules On Disability Friendly churches<br>Increased knowledge on disability inclusiveness in church |
| 5   | Training of 12 church Leaders on Disability Friendly Churches    | 12 Churches trained on Disability Friendly Churches                                                       | Disability friendly church systems established in 12 churches                                                                                 |

## Activity Progress Made

### 1. Disability Friendly Church Baseline Survey

One major barrier which children and youth with disabilities meet in accessing their SRH information and services is stigma and discrimination as conspicuously noticed in the exclusiveness of the churches and organisations which offer them services. The social model of disability points out to the social environments as the major impediments children with disabilities face in reaching their full potential as compared the impairments they have. A survey on the assessment of the inclusiveness as well as preparedness of organisations and churches to work with children and youths with disabilities was done and the report was shared with network members in order to raise awareness on the situation as well as to unite the VNZ family on the subject of working with children and youths with disabilities. 50 churches were randomly selected from the VNZ database and a questionnaire was administered. Desktop information as well as 4 focus group discussions with children and youths with disabilities were done in order to further substantiate desktop findings.

Figure 1: Summary on Findings



The finding of the study revealed that only 37% of churches have a vision for the children's church, 12% have a disability friendly church policy, 28% believe that they have a responsibility to take care of CWDs but only 12% have a person responsible for that. 36% of the churches have a child protection policy but only 6% have at once had a deliberate inclusive Sunday service. On community reach, 82% of the churches do community outreaches. These key findings indicate a very low level of disability friendliness, a low preparedness, and very limited knowledge on disability friendliness in the church.

## 2. Training of Youth Ambassadors

A one day-long training with 18 instead of 20 Youth Ambassadors who represented 5 organisations who are members of Viva Network Zimbabwe was held. Since 2015, VNZ has been working with the same Youth Ambassadors and the training was a refresher training to enable them to carry on with their SRH peer education and advocacy activities in their communities. The youths were trained on multi-sectoral approach for sexual abuse, drug abuse and child protection in connection to Sexual Reproductive Health. The Youth Ambassadors got motivated to carry on with their roles in their organisations and agreed to reach out to at least 3 other youths with SRH information per month. Information gathered revealed that the youths reached out to 331 youths. 3 events were attended as part of their advocacy roles and the events had to do with child protection. While it is difficult to attribute change to any one factor sometimes, the Youths put a good fight in sending across a message about the protection of children and youths with disabilities.

## 3. Disability Friendly Church

### 3.1 Envisioning Meeting

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, a transform disability envisioning meeting was done as a recommendation from caregivers support groups of parents/guardians of children with disabilities as well as the children and youths with disabilities who felt that the church in Harare, Zimbabwe was not fully prepared to help children with disabilities to access sexual reproductive health information. As a network, VNZ works with churches and Faith Based organisations. The aim of the network in holding the meeting was to envision church leaders on the need to establish disability friendly churches as the first step as we journey towards having the youths with disabilities accessing valuable SRH and Christian development information. The envisioning meeting was followed by 4 trainings with 12 churches and the training further trained the churches on how to establish disability friendly church systems. Below is an account of the progress made.

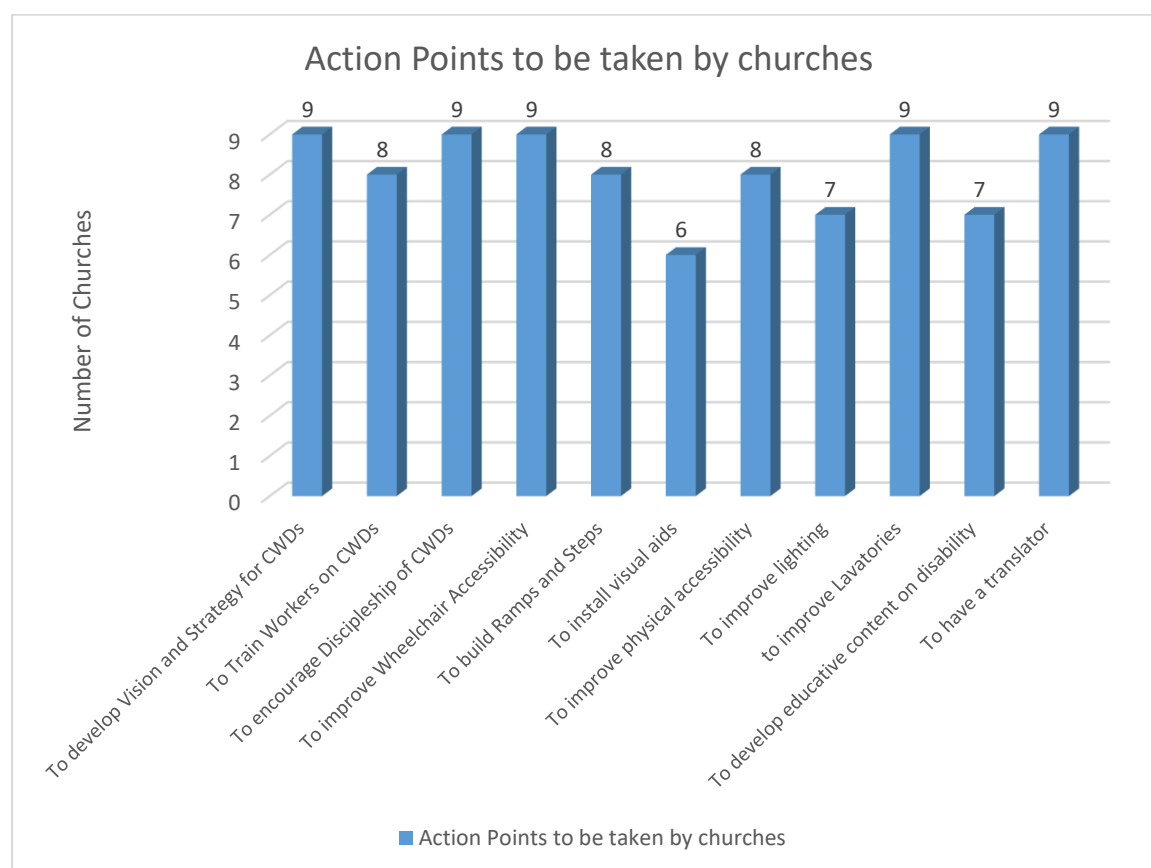
- VNZ managed to gather 28 church leaders instead of 30 for the transform disability-envisioning meeting that was given the theme "***Beyond sympathy, Towards empathy and altruism.***" From the 28 church leaders that attended the envisioning meeting, 12 churches were registered to attend 4 trainings on Transform Disability which were supposed to give them a better understanding of the subject although the majority (79%) had expressed an interest in attending the trainings. The 12 churches were selected to be the pioneers for the project in Zimbabwe and the budget available could only cater for that.
- The venue for the envisioning meeting was donated by a network member (UAFC) and the attendants found the venue conducive for learning. Thereafter, venues for the trainings were offered by VNZ secretariat.
- The use of group discussions, stories and games derived from the module were significant and stimulated active involvement and participation of participants, thus, helping them to understand the subject better.

- During the training, an action plan was developed and it gave a structure of what was to be expected of those being trained. Some of the highlights of the action plan that were brought up and agreed upon. They included; *sharing with the church elders/leaders and other church members about what was learnt during the transform disability envisioning meeting program, assess the disability friendliness of the church, signing and submitting of the declaration of commitments to the inclusion of people with disability in church and community, consider child protection, establishing a disability friendly church committee and development of the Disability friendly church policy framework.*

### 3.2 Training of 12 Churches on Transform Disability

- 9 of the 12 churches who enrolled for further training managed to share with the church elders and other church members about what was learnt during the transform disability envisioning meeting program, assess the disability friendliness of the church, signed and submitted the declaration of commitments to the inclusion of people with disability in church and community, embarked on developing child protection policies, established a disability friendly church committee and committed to the development of a Disability friendly church policy framework for the church.
- Added to this VNZ came up with guidelines on systems and steps that the church would follow towards creating a disability friendly church. These steps included developing Vision and Strategy for CWDs, training Workers on CWDs, encouraging Discipleship of CWDs, improving Wheelchair Accessibility, building Ramps and Steps, installing visual aids, improving physical accessibility, improving lighting in the churches, improving Lavatories, developing educative content on disability and having translators.

Figure 2: Action Points to be taken by churches



- Fig 2. Above shows the commitment made by churches following the trainings, these commitments are perceived to improve the church levels of friendliness to children with disabilities. However, this will require further training and follow ups.

- VNZ developed guidelines on how to work with people with disabilities in churches and the 12 churches that were trained ratified the guidelines and adopted them as a guide for their own policies which they were going to develop as well as to guide their processes of building a disability friendly environment.

| # | Recommendation                                        | Expected impact                                                                                                  |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | To have a child protection policy                     | A conducive environment and guideline for further child protection frameworks and programs development           |
| 2 | To have a vision and strategy for CWDs                | A foundational support for disability friendly initiatives and possible infrastructural improvements             |
| 3 | To train workers working with CWDs                    | Workers who are informed on and able to work with children with disabilities                                     |
| 4 | To have translators and sign language persons         | An improved communication with the children with disabilities in churches                                        |
| 5 | To install ramps and surfaces that are slip resistant | A welcoming and accommodating church entry for children with disabilities                                        |
| 6 | To have educative media on PWDs                       | An informative environment for both people with and without disabilities to be fully informed about disabilities |
| 7 | To have inclusive church services                     | An environment that is welcoming and prepared to embrace people with disabilities                                |

- The 12 churches that enrolled for a full training on Transform Disability established a Committee which was given the role to oversee together with Viva Network Zimbabwe the progress being made by the project.
- It was noted that the trained church leaders testified to having changed their thoughts and attitudes towards children and adults with disabilities. Church inclusion, as one of the key characteristics of a disability friendly church was drilled in the participants and testimonies and comments given by participants shows that it has been a success.

## 4. Monitoring and Review

### 4.1 Support Visits

2 support visits were conducted to each of the 12 churches which were undergoing trainings on Disability Friendly Church establishment. The visits were meant to support churches in meeting their set targets. It was noted that 9 of the 12 churches who enrolled for further training fulfilled the above action points. The network is yet to further work with other 16 members who attended the envisioning meeting but did not go through the training in order for them to also be able to meet the action points. However, this will require further training and follow ups.

### 4.2 Review Meeting

One review meeting was done with 11 instead of 12 churches. The aim was to review the work of the trained churches and offer recommendations. It was noted that most churches were readily available to improve their churches in order for them to be disability friendly but this was mostly on policy adjustments than environmental things. Of importance to note was that some guidelines were developed and signed, disability committees were established and other things. However, none of the churches had worked on things like ramps, improving parking space, and other things requiring the improvement of the environment.

### 4.3 Lessons Learnt, Challenges and Recommendations

#### *Lessons Learnt*

- Many Pastors are interested in reaching out to people with disabilities but they do not have adequate knowledge and experience on how to do it
- Envisioning meetings are a key to unlock buy-in from stakeholders since the majority of the churches envisioned on disability friendly churches were interested in joining the trainings although the network had the capacity to recruit 12 only
- Youths have the impetus to develop and run programs if empowered fully as noticed from the commitment from the Youth Ambassadors who were able to reach out to other youths with SRH information

## 5. Challenges and Recommendations

| Challenge                                                                                                                       | Recommendation                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Impact in programs requiring systems change is not quickly noticeable                                                           | There is need to develop longer projects to allow for time to establish changes and have impact                                           |
| More church leaders were interested in attending the full training although the organisation wanted to work with 12 for a start | Another training with the remaining churches and other interested churches should be organised                                            |
| Inconsistent attendance                                                                                                         | The network allowed the churches to send a representative for each training and so some ended up having 2 or 3 different people attending |
| The disability subject is sensitive in a big way                                                                                | Seasoned trainers were invited                                                                                                            |
| None of the attending churches had a disability friendly environment to be used as a model for others                           | VNZ encouraged the attendants to visit other churches with a disability friendly environment and learn from them                          |

## 6. Success Stories

Several church leaders had a lot to say about the program. A few of the testimonies are as follows:

*"I have been a Pastor for over 10 years and I never had a person with disability being part of the praise and worship team. However, there is one child called Rufaro (pseudo-name) with a physical impairment who has been attending my church for quite some time now and has always wanted to be part of the praise and worship but was hesitant due to fear of being stigmatized. When I spoke to my church about this disability friendly program after the training, Rufaro approached me and requested to be part of the team. Rufaro is now one of the best lead singers in the team and several testimonies from the congregants have shown how God is using Rufaro for his glory."*

Another Pastor had this to say, *"After receiving the training, I decided to talk to my church elders about disability friendliness and we all agreed that there is need to talk to the congregation about it. When I did, congregants welcomed the program, with a few hesitations from some church members. A few weeks after, one Sunday school boy called Tom (pseudo-name) invited his school friend who uses a wheel chair to attend our church. The unfortunate thing is that we are still working on developing a ramp at our church entrance thus Tom's friend had a few challenges entering into the church. However, with the help from our church ushers he managed to get into the church and has been attending church since then along with his family. We are working on ensuring that our environment is disability friendly but this shows that the disability friendly church program is contributing to the growth of our church"*