

Hear my voice

People in Tanzania tell their stories about living with disabilities and being older



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Hello!



This book tells the stories of women and men and how they feel about life, love and learning.

They come from towns and villages in Tanzania. They are all people with disabilities or are aged over 60.

Their voices aren't usually heard. They often feel ignored. They sometimes find other people are making choices for them.

This book is about their lives, and how they'd like them to be different.

Small changes can add up to a better life for everyone. That includes people who take a bit longer to learn, people who are older, and people who are living with disabilities.

We're working to make change happen!

Our stories

Some of us are living with disabilities. This can mean that our arms, legs, eyes or ears don't work the same way as most people's. Or we may find it harder to learn or understand things.

Some of us are older, and that can sometimes make life harder. We can't always do the things we used to. Or maybe we can - but people think we can't.

We all share something...

... our lives are sometimes hard because of the way people see us and treat us.

But we want to live, love and learn - just like everyone else.



“ We've told our stories so you can hear our voices.

Finding work – what it's like now



If we are living with disabilities, it's hard to find a job. Some people think we can't be useful if one part of our body doesn't work in the same way as theirs. It's hard to find enough money to live on. We don't get much help from the government.

Our families and the people we know don't always help much either. Sometimes they think we can't work just because we have a disability.

Some people see our disabilities before they see us.

We often live on a small amount of money. Or we have no money at all.

If we are older, we may get poorer if we can't work or farm any more. Our families and villages sometimes ignore us and don't look after us.

But we have so much knowledge to share, even if we can't earn money.

“ When I look ahead, I can't sleep at night. I will face difficulties in my old age because I have no savings in the bank and my pension is small.

Finding work – how we'd like it to be

If we are living with disabilities, we want people to know we can still work and do a good job.

We want to learn new skills so we can work for other people.

And we want to learn how to set up our own businesses.

We'd like to get training and advice from our local councils and the government.

This would give us the information and skills we need to earn a living.

We want to earn money, just like everyone else.

We want to support our families, just like everyone else.

We can do this if we learn the right skills and have the chance to earn.



Going to school – what it's like now



If we are living with disabilities, we want to go to school and learn – just like everyone else.

Some teachers think we're not worth teaching. But we can learn just as well as everyone else, if we have the right help.

If we don't learn, it's harder for us to find work when we leave school.

Our families can be just as bad.

Sometimes they think there's no point in sending us to school if we can't see, hear or walk in the same way as other children.

It's not true! We want to learn.

If we are older, we've learnt a lot about life. People may think our stories aren't worth hearing because we're not young any more.

But the opposite is true. We've learnt a lot and we'd like to pass it on!

“ Maybe we can be the teachers of tomorrow. But first we have to learn

Going to school – how we'd like it to be

If we are living with disabilities, we want teachers to include us in their lessons.

Teachers can learn how to do this, even if we can't see or hear or move in the same way as most other children.

This is a new way for teachers to work. Yes, they need to learn too!

Our parents also have some learning to do.

They need to know that every child should go to school and learn.

We might even be able to support them one day, using the things we've learnt!

If we are older, we'd like to tell people what life has taught us, so they can learn from our experiences.

Maybe we can do this in schools or in other places in our communities.

We know lots of things that could help younger people.



Family life – what it's like now



If we are living with disabilities, you'd think we'd be safe with our families. But that's not always the case.

Some of them don't look after us properly. Some of them may bully us or hit us. Some of them abandon us when we're children.

Sometimes people steal our things because they think we're not fit to own anything.

We can't always choose who we marry or live with. It means we're sometimes unhappy with our partners, because we didn't have a say in choosing them.

This can make us feel ashamed and scared. Sometimes we're emotionally and sexually abused.

We should have a choice, just like everyone else.

“ **My husband refused to provide me with support. He was only supporting his child. I cannot force him to support me.** ”

Family life – how we'd like it to be

If we are living with disabilities, we want to make our own choices - just like everyone else.

Our parents shouldn't choose our partners for us, just because we have disabilities.

We want to decide for ourselves about getting married and starting a family.

We want women and men to be treated the same. That way we can all learn how to earn money and run businesses.

Our partners should have to support us if they leave us. It's what the law says!

And if anyone hurts or bullies us, we want them to know we can report them to the police.

When we're older, we can still play a big part in life. But sometimes we get forgotten.

Our village leaders should have a list of our names and addresses. Then they can make sure we're OK and have what we need.



Looking different and getting healthcare – how we're treated...



If we are living with disabilities, some people think we're cursed.

There are lots of reasons why people have disabilities. It's never because we're cursed!

Some of us look different because we have a condition called albinism. We don't have dark skin and hair like our parents.

Some people think hurting us makes them lucky or rich – or wins them extra votes at election time.

It's not true - whatever the witch doctors say!

If we're living with disabilities or we're older, it can be hard to visit health centres.

Doctors and nurses don't always know how to talk to us or listen to us. Sometimes they don't have the equipment and medicines.

If we are older, we're not always paid our pensions, so we can't buy medicine. We're not always respected or cared for. Sometimes we feel neglected.

Looking different and getting healthcare – how we'd like to be treated

If we are living with disabilities, we want people to know we're the same as everyone else.

Maybe we look different, but we're the same on the inside. We have the same rights.

If we're people with albinism, everyone should know that hurting us won't bring them luck. Anyone who hurts us should be arrested.

The witch doctors should stop telling people we can bring them luck, because it isn't true.

Village chiefs and teachers should tell them to stop. The government should say the same thing – loud and clear!

If we're living with disabilities or we're older, someone should make sure we can get to health centres. And no big steps please!

Doctors and nurses should learn how to talk to us and listen to us. They should be reported if they treat us badly.

Officials should visit our villages to make sure we're OK. We want proper health care – just like everyone else!



Thank for you reading our stories

Did you notice how many times we used one phrase?

Just like everyone else

And that's because...

We're just like everyone else!



This easy-to-read report has been produced by



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You can read the original report at:

www.sightsavers.org/voices

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