

Assessment of Knowledge, Perception, and Practice on Sexual and Reproductive Health Among Adolescents with Disabilities at Ilala, Dar Es Salaam

Mgolegrace Mabusu¹, Bernard Kivuma¹

¹Disability Repro-Light Organization, Tanzania

Introduction: Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) refers to a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. Disabilities is an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Illiteracy is highest among people with disabilities, with a 50% higher prevalence than a quarter of those without disabilities. Teenagers with disabilities are more prone to extra hardships and are more likely to be exposed to sexual abuse and violence, as well as being refused access to SRH services and income-generating activities. This study aimed to assess knowledge, perception, and practice on Sexual and Reproductive Health among adolescents with disabilities at ILALA, DAR ES SALAAM.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted among adolescents with disabilities at Ilala, Dar es salaam., Tanzania using probability sampling techniques. Interviewer-administered questionnaires were used to assess the knowledge, perception, and practices on sexual and reproductive health. Data were cleaned, entered, and analyzed using SPSS for Windows (version 23.0 SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA).

Results: Among the 80 adolescents with disabilities, most of them were of age 12 (14(17.5%)) and 14 (14 (17.5%)), with the majority being male 43 (53.8%), Muslims accounted for more than half of respondents 47 (58.7%) and most of them had vision impairment/blind 50 (62.5%). There is a low level of knowledge 58 (72.5%) among the 80 adolescents with disabilities in regards to sexual and reproductive health. Forty-seven students (58.7%) reported positive relations with the opposite sex. Forty-four students (55.0%) acknowledged the importance of talking about SRH issues, and about 35 (43.7%) didn't know who is responsible for contraception use. All participants reported had not had their sexual debut.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that adolescents with disabilities are robbed of the information, knowledge, and power they need to decide sexual reproductive rights. This lack of knowledge leaves them more prone to sexual abuse and at an even higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

