

Disabilities and Entrepreneurship in Makonde Rural Community in Zimbabwe

Jabulani Mpfungu and Almon Shumba*

*Department of Disability Studies and Special Needs Education,
Zimbabwe Open University Harare, Zimbabwe*

E-mail: jabumpofu@cooltoad.com & jabumpofuh@gmail.com

**School of Teacher Education, Faculty of Humanities, Central University of Technology,
Free State, Bloemfontein 9300 South Africa*

E-mail: ashumba@cut.ac.za & almonshumba@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to find out the level of community engagement of people with disabilities in entrepreneurship programmes in rural Zimbabwe. The study used survey methods to assess community engagement of people with disabilities in entrepreneurship programmes in terms of access to entrepreneurial activities, entrepreneurial education, effects of institutional, legal and policy relating to entrepreneurship, business networking and finance/credit lines. Questionnaires and interviews were used to solicit relevant information from 137 persons with various disabilities (46 physical disabilities, 24 visual impairment, 20 hearing impairment, 15 mental retardation, 10 emotional disorders and 22 other health related conditions) from a rural district of Zimbabwe. Respondents who happened to be people with disabilities were selected purposively from Makonde district. Quantitative data were analysed using bar graphs and tables; and qualitative data were analysed using themes. The respondents acknowledged existence of entrepreneurial activities in their communities but was meant for people without disabilities. The study also found that due to exclusionary nature of entrepreneurial activities in rural communities of Zimbabwe, people with disabilities were not having access to entrepreneurship education; found it difficult to negotiate against stringent entrepreneurial policies in the country; were being shunned by entrepreneurial peers without disabilities; and had little or no access to credit of lines from finance institutions in the country because of their condition. The study recommends intervention from the government to include the excluded population in entrepreneurship programmes in order to achieve the Millennium Developmental goal of reducing poverty by fifty percent in 2015.