

---

## **Factors which facilitate and limit inclusion of children with disability in kindergarten in Vanuatu**

---

### **Sample Study**

Shefa Province

June 2013

---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was conducted with the financial support of the New Zealand Government Aid Programme.

Save the Children would like to acknowledge the guidance and direction provided by a range of people and organisations to the study. In particular

Nelly Caleb (Vanuatu Disability Promotion, Advocacy and Awareness)  
Ellison (Vanuatu Society for Disabled People)  
James Willie (Vanuatu Society for Disabled People)  
Willie Samplan (Vanuatu Society for Disabled People)  
Arthur Simrai (Vanuatu Society for Disabled People)  
Sally Baker (CBM - Nossal Institute Partnership for Disability Inclusive Development)

We are also grateful to the Disability Sample Study Consultative Group who assisted with the analysis of the data:

Jennifer James (Ministry of Education)  
Jocelyn Mete (Ministry of Education)  
Jim Knox (Ministry of Education)  
Sam Kaiapam (Ministry of Justice and Community Services)  
Morrison Kalmaire (Shefa Provincial Education Office)  
Ginny Chapman (NZAid Programme)  
Christina Karae (UNICEF)  
Christelle Thieffry (AusAID)  
Zema Aka (Matevulu College)  
Robyn Finlayson (Vanuatu Society for Disabled People)  
Annie Benua (Save the Children)  
Elizabeth Emil (Save the Children)  
Joanna Spencer (Save the Children)  
James Inga (Save the Children)  
Shantony Moli (Save the Children)

Special thanks to the children, parents, teachers and community member, chiefs, elders and church leaders from the communities of Erakor, (Efate), Vila North (Efate), Paugnanisu (North Efate) and Lumbukuti (Tonga). Without your participation and support this study would not have been possible.

This report was prepared by Geoff Robinson (Save the Children), Sally Baker (CBM - Nossal Institute Partnership for Disability Inclusive Development) and Marguerite Goulding (Save the Children) 2013.



# Contents

---

SUMMARY .....	1
Background .....	1
Methods.....	1
Findings.....	1
Recommendations .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	2
Rationale.....	2
Purpose .....	3
Disability in Vanuatu.....	3
Disability Prevalence.....	3
Community Attitudes and Behaviour .....	4
Government Commitments .....	4
National Policy and Legislative Commitments .....	4
Civil society.....	4
METHODOLOGY.....	5
Limitations.....	7
FINDINGS.....	8
Knowledge of disability.....	8
Barriers to disability inclusive kindergartens.....	10
Children.....	12
Qualitative analysis of factors which limit or promote disability inclusive kindergartens.....	13
Discussion.....	15
RECOMMENDATIONS .....	18
APPENDIX 1. Survey Instruments and Consent Forms .....	20
REFERENCES .....	31



## **SUMMARY**

### **Background**

The 2012 National Early Childhood Care and Education Baseline Survey identified discrepancies between the perception of teachers and families about the number of children who have a disability and/or who are attending preschool. It surfaced differences in understanding of the term 'disability' and the identification of children with disability. These inconsistencies provide the rationale to further investigate the knowledge, attitudes and practices that present obstacles to children with disability accessing kindergarten in Vanuatu.

### **Methods**

The study consisted of qualitative and quantitative field-based research using convenience sampling methodology involving 126 semi-structured survey interviews and one focus group analysis discussion workshop. The interviews were conducted between June 14 and June 25 2013 across four locations in Shefa Province: Tongoa (rural), Paugnanisu (rural) Vila North (urban) and Erakor (peri-urban). Survey participants included 64 women, 45 men and 17 children with disability. Interview surveys were undertaken involved seven (7) different respondent groups.

### **Findings**

Findings suggest that there are several factors which restrict or promote the participation of children with disability in kindergarten. Specifically, there is limited knowledge and understanding regarding the causes of disability including amongst teachers, community leaders and parents, which can translate into negative attitudes towards disability inclusion. The capacity of teachers and community leaders to understand the benefits and mechanisms of inclusion is required. Access to rehabilitation services is limited and there is need for assistive devices for children. Limited transport options and disability accessible facilities are barriers to children accessing education.

### **Recommendations**

Key recommendations to improve access to education for children with disability have been identified. There is a need to raise awareness of all stakeholders at all levels of the nature and causes of disability and strengthen the capacity of community leaders and members to understand the rights and needs of children with disability. Increased access to rehabilitation services, including early intervention and assistive device services, for children with disability is needed.

Training should be available to kindergarten teachers in understanding the nature and causes of disability, in particular less well understood impairments, such as hearing and communication impairments. Options for supporting transport for children with disability to kindergarten should be found and all new and refurbished kindergarten facilities are built in an accessible way to enable accessibility to people with a range of impairments.

Efforts to support inclusive education for children with disability that are in line with the Vanuatu Inclusive Education policy and link Government and non-government stakeholders, including Disabled Persons Organisations should be pursued.

## INTRODUCTION

### Rationale

Save the Children has been working in Vanuatu for over 27 years and implements a range of programs for children in child protection, disaster risk reduction, basic and early childhood education and health programs in partnership with government and civil society.

The National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Baseline Survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and Save the Children in 2012 revealed that while almost 100% of parents and teachers consider pre-school important, only 22.3% of children with disability attend kindergarten in Vanuatu<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, 68% of respondents indicated that there were no preschool aged children with a disability in their community. This contrasts with findings presented within the World Report on Disability, which found that 10% of all children in any population are likely to experience disability.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, 43% of teachers indicated that there was at least one child (or more) with a disability in the community and less than 24% responded that these children were attending school. This statistic aligns with evidence indicating that children with a disability are less likely than their peers to start school and have lower rates of staying and being promoted in school.<sup>3</sup>

The ECCE Baseline Survey identified discrepancies between the perception of teachers and families about the number of children who have a disability and/or who are attending preschool. Responses surfaced differences in understanding by parents and teachers of the term 'disability' and the identification of children with disability. These inconsistencies provide the rationale to investigate further the factors that facilitate or limit access to kindergarten for children with disability in Vanuatu.

Save the Children's commitment to supporting children with disability is shared globally and a recent global assessment of Save the Children's organisational *Experience, Capacity and Needs Assessment*<sup>4</sup> revealed that while Save the Children's collective portfolio boasts a broad range of experience working in disability inclusion, we still have a long way to go. Save the Children's next steps on a global level are to establish a policy on inclusion of people with disability in education programs and draw on our collective experience to identify:

- Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation that focus on learning outcomes for children with disability as well as enrolment rates;
- How to more thoroughly incorporate children with disability into general education projects rather than seeking special funding for targeted programs;
- Standardised disability inclusive language to be used throughout Save the Children International;
- Clear links between the Save the Children International Theory of Change and the relevant human rights documents – particularly the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and
- How to work with other Save the Children sectors – notably child protection and community based rehabilitation and health initiatives – to expand our education reach to more children with disability.

Our approach to policy development draws upon global lessons we have collected working with children with disability:

- Working with the families of children with disability is critical, as it supports their protection and participation in education (Ethiopia and Guatemala);
- Promotion of child participation through child clubs has been very successful (Ethiopia), but child-to-child approaches must be highly adapted for children with cognitive disability (Armenia);
- Provision of assistive devices is a source of motivation for both parents and learners, and has a positive impact on school performance (Zimbabwe);
- Entertainment and leisure activities for children with hearing impairments together with children without disability had a strong effect on inclusion and participation (Afghanistan);
- It is imperative that programs do not focus on enrolment of children with disability without providing corresponding support to teachers, who otherwise face difficulties meeting the needs of these children (Bangladesh);
- Focusing on disability as a cross-cutting issue can undermine its importance by distributing diluted responsibilities across many sectors (Bangladesh); and
- Research should be an integral part of inclusive education programming to more thoroughly measure program outcomes (Bangladesh).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to build on the data collected during the National ECCE Baseline Study and create a starting point for Save the Children and other stakeholders to better address disability inclusion in Early Childhood Care and Education programming in Vanuatu. Findings can also be used to contribute to global efforts by Save the Children in policy discussions and programming in inclusive education. Furthermore, the study marks the beginning of a new partnership with the 'Disability, Promotion, Advocacy and Awareness Group' in Vanuatu with whom Save the Children will work with to carry out a two and a half year research piece in partnership with Deakin University in Vanuatu to capture the '*Voices of Pacific Children with Disabilities*'.<sup>5</sup>

### **Disability in Vanuatu**

#### **Disability Prevalence**

The 2009 National Population and Housing Census found that 12% of the population reported having a disability<sup>6</sup>. The Census disability questions used were in line with international guidelines on measuring disability prevalence and measured functioning for seeing, hearing, walking and/or remembering or concentrating. The most commonly cited disability was vision impairment (7.5% of the population), then difficulty with walking (5.4%), remembering or concentrating (4%) and hearing impairment (about 3.3%). The prevalence of disability reported increased with age. While 6% of children under five years old were found to have a disability, the prevalence was more than 50% for those aged 60 and over.<sup>7</sup> The rate of disability reported was higher for females than males<sup>8</sup> in contrast to a study in 1999 that indicated that only 40.3% of people with disability in Vanuatu are women.<sup>9</sup>

## **Community Attitudes and Behaviour**

Vanuatu is considered an inclusive society where family members with disability are cared for and protected. However, this protective approach can leave them ill-prepared to lead an independent life.<sup>10</sup>

The 2005 review of NZAID's disability work in the Pacific found that "the lack of awareness of even the existence of people with disability and negative attitudes towards them was seen as the greatest barrier to equity and empowerment" of people with disability in the Pacific.<sup>11</sup> The same report found that people with disability in the Pacific experience shame. Families are often unwilling to admit that a family member has a disability due to beliefs in divine retribution.

As in many Pacific island countries, children with disability, especially girls, are hidden away from the community and do not attend school. The lack of access to quality education for women and girls with disability is a key factor making it very difficult for them to secure employment later on and therefore live independently.<sup>12</sup> Women are also considered to be at greater risk of preventable disability due to less access to basic health services, including screening programs for women's health issues.<sup>13</sup>

Anecdotal evidence suggests attitudes to disability are slowly changing due to advocacy work of civil society and Government policy efforts. Development programs are increasingly undertaken active measures to be more inclusive and there are improvements in data on participation of people with disability to inform programming.

## **Government Commitments**

The Government of Vanuatu has made a number of steps to demonstrate commitment to the rights of children with disability. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified in July 1993. In May 2008, the Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In 2012, Vanuatu adopted the Ministerial Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2013–2022) and the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

## **National Policy and Legislative Commitments**

The first *National Disability Policy and Action Plan 2008 – 2015* was launched in 2009. It identifies a set of key actions to be taken and indicators to be met in the legislative, judicial, administrative, educational, financial and social sectors. In 2001, the Education Act No 21 was enacted which prohibits discrimination of children with disability in accessing the education system.<sup>14</sup> An Inclusive Education Policy was launched in 2010.

## **Civil society**

The national organisation of people with disability, Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association (DPA) was established in 1999 with the mandate of advocating for rights and promoting the abilities of people with disability in Vanuatu. The organisation has made significant contributions to advancing the rights of people with disability. The Frangipani Association (based on the island of Santo) and the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People (VSDP) (based in Port Vila) provide rehabilitation and early intervention services to children with disability.

## METHODOLOGY

The study consisted of quantitative and qualitative field-based research involving 126 semi-structured survey interviews and one participatory analysis workshop. The interviews were conducted between June 14 and June 25, 2013 across four locations in Shefa Province; Tongoa (rural), Paugnanisu (rural), Vila North (urban) and Erakor (peri-urban). Of the 126 survey participants, 64 were women and 17 children (age 4-13 years) with disability.

Three key questions were identified to elicit information on factors that present obstacles or opportunities to children with disability accessing kindergarten in Vanuatu (see survey instruments in Appendix I). Interview surveys were developed to target seven different respondent groups. Within these, three survey instruments were used with variations to questions relevant to the following target groups either living with a disability or not.

### Living with a disability

1. Children and young people with a disability
2. Parents of children with a disability

### Not living with a disability

3. Parents of children who do not have a disability;
4. Chiefs & Community Leaders;
5. Community Members who did not have a disability, or a family member with disability;
6. Teachers;
7. Children and Young People

The survey design was developed in consultation with a reference group established with representatives from the Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association (DPA) and the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People (VSDP). Input into the technical relevance of survey questions was provided by Save the Children Early Childhood Development (ECD) and CBM-Nossal Institute Partnership for Disability Inclusive Development advisors. Draft survey instruments were tested for contextual relevance by representatives from each of the survey target groups and then translated into Bislama.

All interviews were conducted in Bislama and carried out by three enumerators from VSDP (one mobility and two vision impaired) and supported by two Save the Children project staff who recorded interview transcripts. Written consent was obtained from all survey respondents or their guardian.

A convenience sampling method was used where initial survey respondents within communities were identified through VSDP and DPA networks. Further survey participants were identified at data collection areas. For practical reasons related to time and budget availability, the survey team set a target of 100 responses.



Survey Response Group	Erakor	Vila North	Paugnanisu	Tongoa	Number of participants
Parents of Children with Disability	4	2		14	20
Parents of Children who do not have Disability	4	14	5	4	27
Teachers		7		5	12
Chiefs and Community/Church Leaders	1			7	8
Community Members	7		6	15	28
Children with a disability (<15 yrs)	4	12		1	17 <sup>1</sup>
Children and young people with a disability (15-30 yrs)	3		1	3	7
Children & Young People (15-30 years)	1			6	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>126</b>

Transcripts of the interviews were reviewed and responses categorised for comparison across survey response groups. Data were analysed by participants at a workshop of representatives from the ECCE sector, government disability services, development donor partners, non-government disability support service providers and people with disability.

Summarised quantitative data to survey responses was classified thematically as barriers (knowledge and attitudes) or enablers (practices) taking into consideration the following:

- What do most people think?
- What do few people think?
- What are the key issues that need to be addressed?
- How can key issues be addressed?

A participatory analysis process was used to categorise qualitative data into nine themes. In order to guide the group through the development of themes, quotes were cut out and laid out over a table. Participants, including representatives of Government, civil society and disabled persons organisations, were divided into three smaller groups and invited to gather around the table and sort the quotes into groups. Participants were asked to discuss what they are moving where and why, so that the thinking behind decision-making was understood and the labelling of themes was clear. Data within this framework were classified as both barriers and enablers. Actions to address issues categorised were then identified.

Thematic areas identified as barriers and enablers for action to address the needs of children with disability included:

- Definitions and Causes of Disability;
- Attitudes;
- Relationships;

<sup>1</sup> Children aged 4-13 years

- Education Participation;
- Support;
- Rights;
- Government Legislation; and
- Advocacy and Awareness

Following discussions about factors which can prevent or facilitate disability inclusive in early childhood education, priority actions and ideas for addressing barriers and facilitating enablers were identified.

### **Limitations**

This research was by design a small study with a limited sample of respondents. The study investigated three key questions which were identified by local stakeholders. Data cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of Vanuatu, but rather provides indications of key issues for further attention and exploration.

The sites selected for this study are unique in that there are kindergartens in each area which children with disability attend. Hence, data suggests that most children with disability have access to mainstream kindergarten. This data is not representative of other communities in Vanuatu and cannot be extrapolated. These sites were chosen as examples of locations where children with disability do have some access to inclusion, in order to help identify the factors which facilitate or limit it.

Data collectors were people with disability. There is a risk that some respondents may have answered in a way that would not offend, or would please, the interviewers. Survey questions were initially developed with input from national and international contributors in English. The survey instruments were translated into Bislama and all questions were asked and responses recorded in Bislama. For the purposes of analysis responses were then translated back in English.

Open questions were used for survey interviews with quality responses being interpreted and grouped for analysis. Survey questions did not seek to identify differences in attitudes to different impairments.

## **FINDINGS**

Findings are presented according to key factors emerging from the study and key responses from particular participant groups. A final section outlines findings from qualitative data, which have been analysed according to themes.

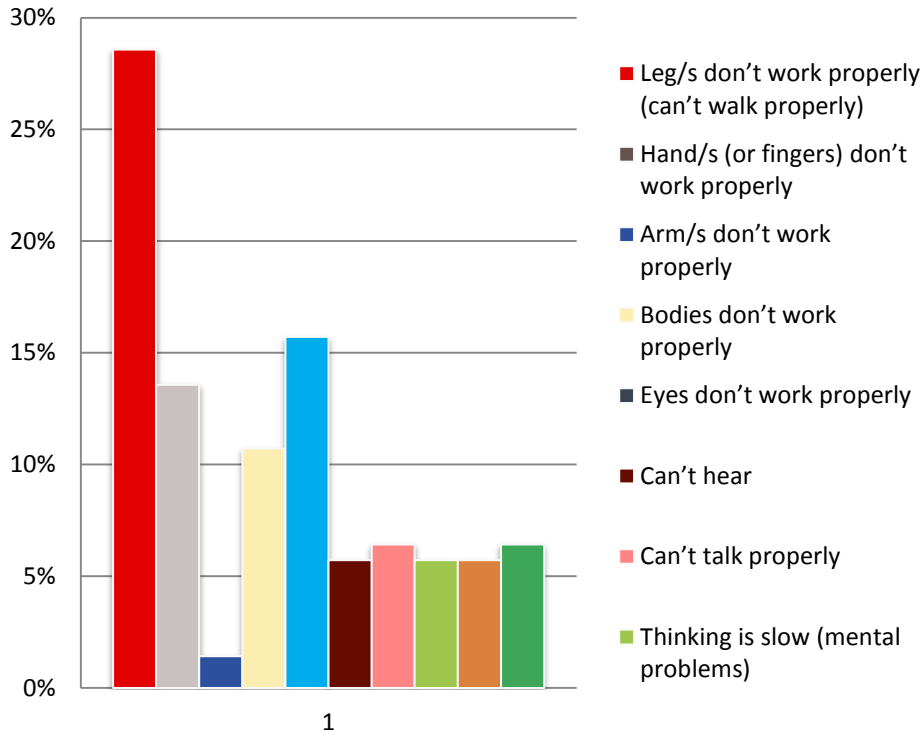
### **Knowledge of disability**

Qualitative data indicates that people understood disability in a range of different ways. Of all respondents, 85% identified that disability relates to impairment, which can be defined as problems in body function or alterations in body structure.<sup>15</sup> The highest proportion of respondents reported that disability is due to impairment in lower limbs. Following that was vision impairment, impairment in hands and fingers, impairment in body, intellectual impairment, communication impairment and hearing impairment. The finding that disability is most often linked to physical or vision impairment broadly corroborates disability prevalence findings from the 2009 Census, which found that these are the most common impairments.<sup>16</sup> Participatory analysis found that the noticeable nature of vision impairment and physical disability means they are more obvious, hence respondents focus on these.

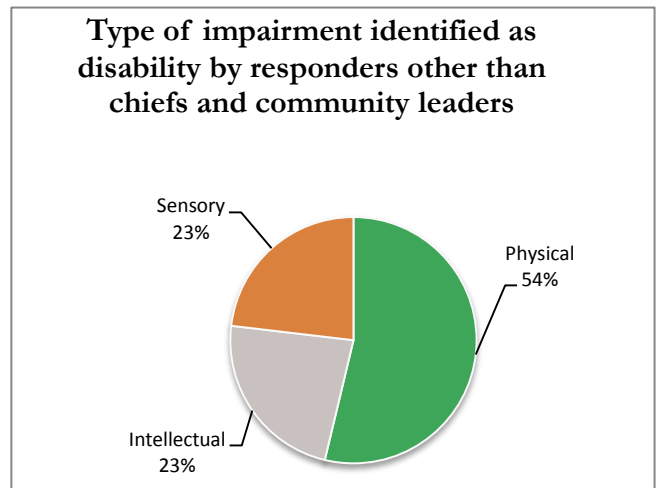
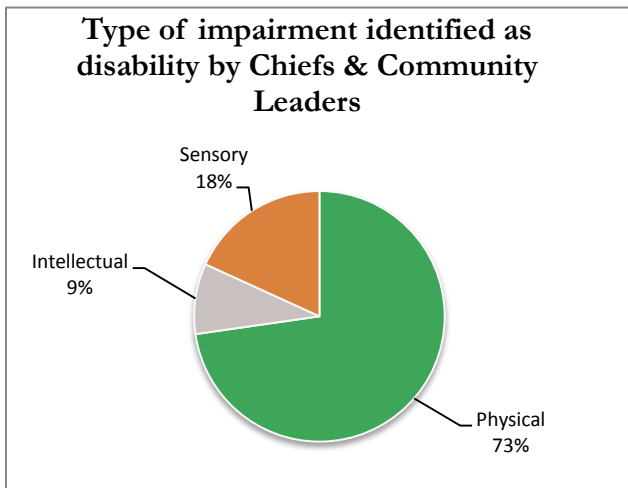
15% of respondents did not link disability to impairment, but rather reported that disability means someone is “not normal” or “half-half”. These findings indicate that while many people surveyed understand disability to be linked to impairment, a large proportion still view disability in a negative way, where people with disability sit outside the rest of the population. Understanding people with disability in this way can lead to their exclusion from usual life, such as education, health services or community decision making. Negative attitudes towards people with disability can be the greatest barrier to their equity and empowerment.<sup>17</sup>

Qualitative data suggests that there is little community knowledge and understanding regarding the causes of disability.

**Responses to Question 'What do you think is a disability?'**

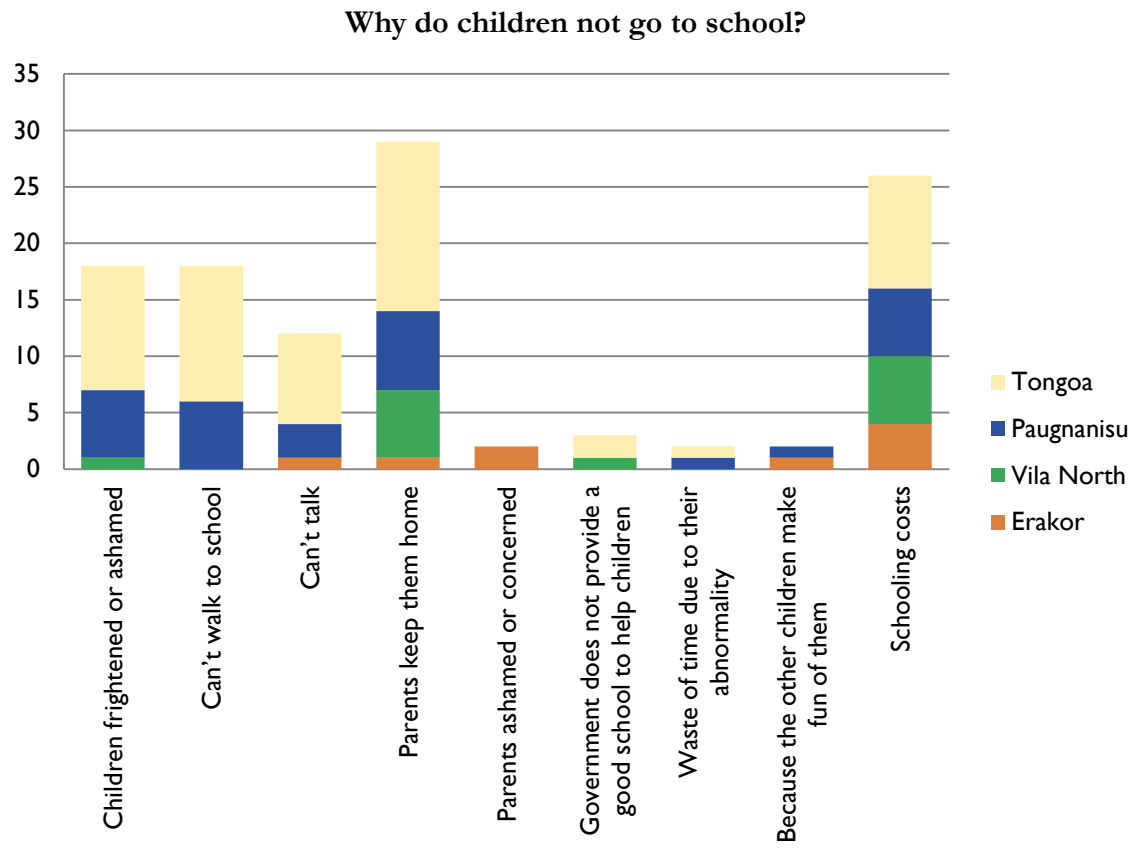


When describing disability, chiefs' and community leaders were more likely to associated physical impairment (73%) than the other respondent groups (54%).

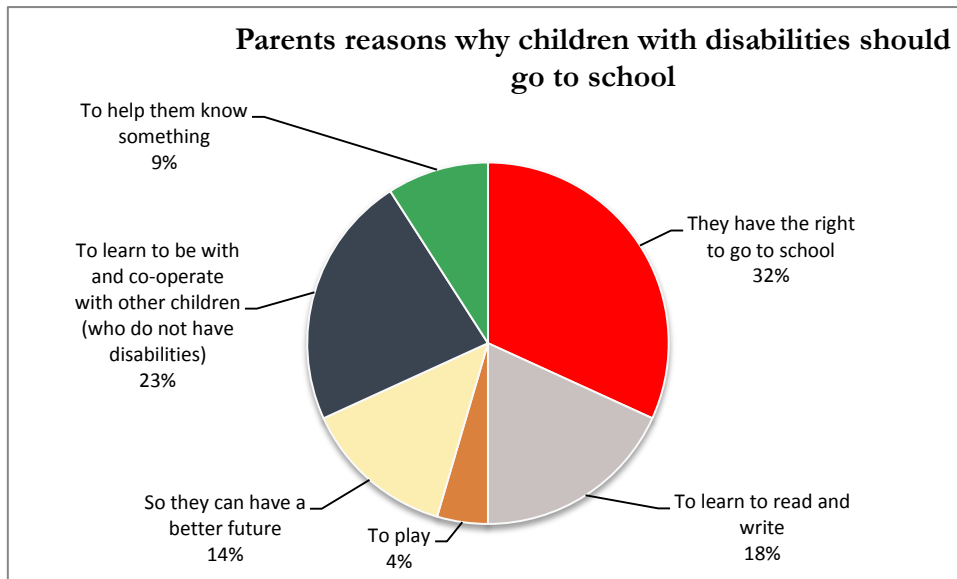


## Barriers to disability inclusive kindergartens

When asked ‘Why do children with disability not go to school?’, survey respondents from the ‘not living with a disability’ group predominantly thought it was due to parents keeping them at home (26%) and the cost of schooling (23%)<sup>18</sup>. 16% thought that children with disability are afraid or ashamed and 16% thought that children with disability did not access school because they were “unable to walk to school’.

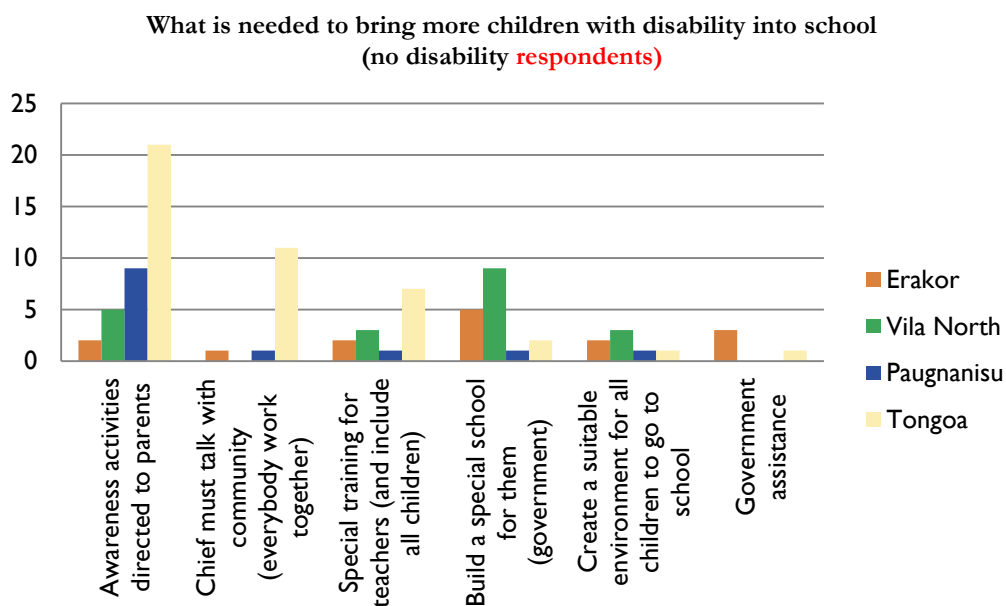


When asked why they thought children with a disability should go to school, 32% of parents of children with a disability thought that their child had a ‘right to education’. However, 51% of parents thought that their child should go to school to learn reading, writing, (18%) social skills and 14% believe that education provides a better future. 4% stated play was the primary motivator to send their child to school. 23% of parents thought their children should go to school to learn to be with other children who do not have a disability.

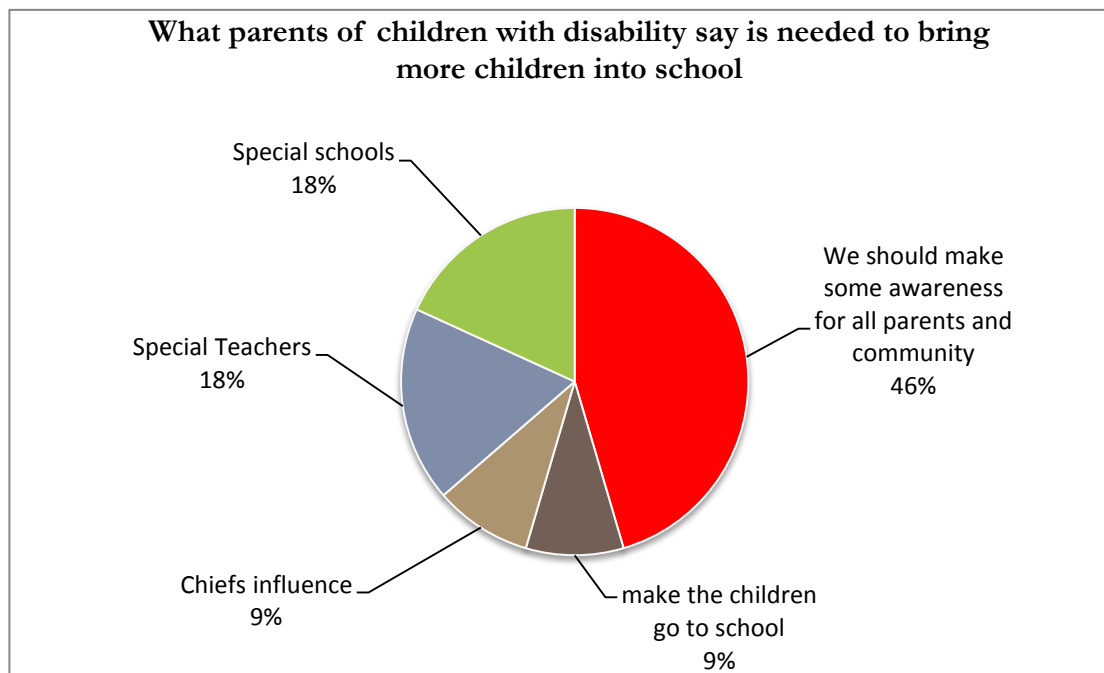


Parental attitudes were identified as a key barrier to access by community members who are not themselves parents of children with disability. This data, viewed alongside the finding that 51% of parents of children with disability believed their children should go to school, indicates that general community perceptions regarding disability inclusion and rights can be negative. 17% of respondents indicated that shame and fear experienced by children with disability is a major barrier to attendance at school, while 7% indicated that children with disability do not attend school because it is a waste of time for them to do so.

Survey respondents were asked ‘What do you think we need to do to bring more children with disability into kindergarten?’ The principal enablers identified by people not living with a disability included providing awareness and encouragement to parents to send their children to school, assistive devices, transport and collectively creating a suitable environment for all children through better facilities (buildings, water, sanitation and hygiene), teacher training and access learning materials and resources.



Parents of children with a disability identified that awareness involving the whole community (including Chiefs and leaders) is needed (46%). Special teachers<sup>19</sup> and schools equipped to cater for children with disability together form the second and third greatest enabler identified to bring more children with disability into schools. Interestingly, there were differences between urban and rural data collection areas where responders from Vila North (urban) identified having a special school as the highest priority yet participants from Tongoa rated awareness activities and community focussed solutions more significant enablers.



## Children

17 children with disability<sup>2</sup> who participated in the sample study attended school and were able to identify aspects of school which they enjoy. Several identified particular subjects, such as maths and writing, and two children reflected that they enjoyed interactions and learning from the teacher. The two respondents not attending school are two brothers aged four and five years from Erakor (peri urban). They both use wheelchairs and stated that they didn't go to school "because the teacher doesn't want me to be there" and because the truck doesn't come to pick them up. Both children identified that they would like to go to school to learn and be with other children.

Children offered many ideas on what they thought is needed to bring more children with disability into kindergarten. This included providing children with assistive devices such as wheelchairs, walking sticks and hearing aids (18% of responses) and assisting with transport to school and health services (29%). They thought that, providing personal assistance with walking, catching transport and going to the toilet would be helpful (35%) as well as assisting them (including other children) with their school work (18%) and payment of school fees. Responses also stated that children with disability must learn properly and should be treated with respect<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> 5 children vision, 5 hearing, 5 intellectual, 2 physical impairments

## Qualitative analysis of factors which limit or promote disability inclusive kindergartens

A participatory analysis of the qualitative data, including comments and responses to open-ended questions, identified emergent themes and issues that present barriers or are facilitators to improve access to education for children with disability. A description of the identified recurrent issues is presented in the table below, according to the themes into which the workshop participants grouped them.

Theme	Issues
Definition and causes of disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough understanding of what a disability is.</li> <li>• People have a range of understanding about what constitutes a disability.</li> <li>• Different beliefs exist regarding the causes of disability – some cultural, traditional beliefs eg women entering areas that are tabu while they are pregnant. Black magic is sometimes considered the cause.</li> </ul>
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some community members are willing to help and support people with disability but attitudes towards people with disability is still a challenge given limitations to participation in many aspects of society</li> <li>• Look at my ability not my disability.</li> <li>• We have role models and champions with disability in our communities with a 'can do' attitude.</li> </ul>
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with a disability need love, care, protection the same as anybody else.</li> <li>• Special care is needed in relationships.</li> </ul>
Education Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with disability can benefit from going to school.</li> <li>• There is a lack of model inclusive schools</li> <li>• Lack of information about what existing resources are available (for example VSDP existing early intervention program is not widely known).</li> <li>• Infrastructure in schools is an issue.</li> <li>• Special schools that enable mainstream access.</li> </ul>
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with disability need support in terms of assistive devices, finances and continuous support from family, members of the community and government.</li> <li>• Communities want to support people with disability.</li> <li>• Adequate transport needs to be provided.</li> <li>• What are the real needs of people with disability across Vanuatu – what is the cost?</li> </ul>
Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children with disability have the right to education the same as every other child.</li> <li>• People with disability have the same rights as other people.</li> <li>• Special schools are another form of discrimination.</li> </ul>



Theme	Issues
Government/ Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government needs to pass laws to empower people with disability.</li> <li>• Government should provide better support to children with disability.</li> <li>• Limited awareness of existing policies and legislations, including the conventions the government has signed. There are also gaps in implementation of policy(ies) and legislations.</li> <li>• Government policy should reflect the needs in geographical zones.</li> </ul>
Advocacy and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start with awareness with chiefs and communities.</li> <li>• The church can be influential in changing people's attitudes and behaviours regarding children with disability.</li> <li>• Use schools, community and theatre groups and media to campaign.</li> <li>• Government and non-government stakeholders should develop one common methodology and language to help educate people.</li> </ul>

## Discussion

*“I like learning something for the future” - Girl with vision impairment, 9 years old.*

*“All children have the right to go to school” - Teacher*

All respondents were invited to identify barriers to and facilitators of greater participation of children with disability in kindergartens. This section discusses findings regarding these.

### **1. Shame, fear and discrimination**

*“Parents don’t want people making fun of their children” – Community member*

The majority of participants reported that children with disability do not go to school because their parents keep them at home. This finding resonates with a 2007 roundtable discussion which found that in many Pacific island countries, children with disability, especially girls, are not sent to school and are hidden away from the community.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, in 2010 UNICEF found that Vanuatu is an inclusive society where family members with disability are cared for and protected within the home; however this protective approach can leave them ill-prepared for independence.<sup>22</sup>

*“Teacher doesn’t want to teach me” – Boy with disability, 4 years old*

Qualitative data suggests that some community members are willing to help and support people with disability, but negative attitudes towards people with disability remain a challenge. 17% of respondents indicated that shame and fear experienced by children with disability is a major barrier to attendance at school, while 7% indicated that children with disability do not attend school because it is a waste of time for them to do so. Reflection during participatory analysis found that the sense of shame and fear experienced by children with disability is likely to be linked to negative beliefs about the capacities of children with disability. Participatory analysis viewed these findings to be indicative of general lack of awareness and understanding regarding disability issues and rights, the strong cultural background to beliefs about disability, and stigma and discrimination. This finding links to those from other studies, which found that people with disability in the Pacific experience shame and are treated paternalistically, which limits their potential and enhances their marginalisation<sup>23</sup>. This corroborates links to earlier findings regarding the understanding of disability, which found that 15% of respondents view disability as “not normal”, and indicates the importance of awareness raising to disability inclusive education efforts.

*“Help the parents talk to their children with disability  
so they don’t have any fear about going to school”  
– Parent of a child with disability*

The most commonly identified facilitator of increased kindergarten attendance of children with disability centred on raising parents’ awareness of the necessity of sending children with disability to school (41% of respondents). This corroborates with findings regarding the

two major barriers perceived to be preventing school attendance by children with disability, which were that children with disability are kept at home by parents, and experience shame, fear and discrimination.

## **2. Teacher training**

*“Parents and teachers must understand the child’s disability before they teach the child” –  
Community member*

19% of respondents reported that teachers require training in how to include and teach children with all types of disability, for example, mobility, hearing, vision and intellectual impairments. This involves education about the different types of impairment and their causes, but also how to adapt curricula, lesson plans and teaching tools to enable the participation of all.

## **3. Getting to school**

*“The truck doesn’t come” – Boy with disability, 5 years old*

Seventeen per cent of participants indicated that not being able to walk to school is a major barrier to participation in education. Participatory analysis found that this barrier could stem from any of the following scenarios:

- Where the geographical location of the school is some distance from homes;
- Where the student lacks assistive devices (for example a wheelchair or crutches) which would help them to mobilise to school; and/or
- Where the student is unable to utilise public transport, through lack of accessible transport, and/or cost.

## **4. Community responsibility and leadership**

*“As a Pastor, I want to help those kind of people  
to have a life where everybody enjoys the life of today” - Pastor*

Sixteen per cent of respondents reported that strengthening community leadership in disability inclusion would assist kindergartens to be more inclusive of children with disability. For example, strengthening the role and capacity of chiefs to promote and support inclusive kindergartens could develop community commitment. Some leaders identified the need for training and support to enable them to understand the issues better, and qualitative data suggests that community members need to understand more thoroughly the various disability policies and conventions which Government has committed to. These respondents also discussed the need for the broader community to be engaged in actions to support disability inclusive kindergartens, with one respondent stating “everybody must work together”.

## **5. Enabling environment**

Fifteen per cent of respondents indicated that the physical environment can be a barrier to

or enabler of participation of children with disability in kindergarten. The kindergarten environment must be accessible (for example allowing independent entry and access and use of sanitation and hygiene facilities) and there must be space for children with particular impairments to learn comfortably (for example space for a wheelchair, space at the front for a child with vision impairment). The kindergarten must also be a safe environment; one child with disability reported that children with disability must not be abused.

## **6. Individual impairment**

Impairment was identified as a barrier to participation in education by 13% of respondents, who specifically identified not being able to talk as a major issue restricting involvement in school. Interestingly, these survey respondents identified the impairment as a barrier, rather than external barriers within the context and environment. Participatory analysis found that contributing factors may include limited knowledge of sign language amongst teachers, families and students with communication or hearing impairments, limited education for teachers in how to include and teach children with these impairments, and a lack of access to teaching and learning resources.

## **7. School fees**

School fees were identified by 12% of respondents as a major barrier to education for children with disability. Participatory analysis found that the cost of school, including fees, uniforms, textbooks, transport to school and other costs, may contribute to parents prioritising school for some, but not all, of their children, and that this process may result in the exclusion of children other than those with disability, for example girls, from school.

One child with disability recommended that school fees for children with disability should be waived, to enable their participation. Other research has found that families which contain a person with disability tend to be poorer, due to the extra costs associated with disability, for example medication and assistive devices<sup>24</sup>. Assisting families of children with disability by waiving fees and supporting uniform and other ancillary costs is a mechanism to support inclusion<sup>25</sup>.

## **8. Access to health and rehabilitation services**

*“Children whose legs do not work properly need a walking stick” – Community member*

Five children with disability identified the importance of health and rehabilitation services as facilitators of school attendance, and qualitative data suggests that while assistive devices and rehabilitation services are crucial, there is a lack of information about the resources and services which are available. Without appropriate assistive devices, such as wheelchairs or walking sticks, it can be difficult or impossible for children with disability to get to kindergarten and participate in an equitable way. One respondent identified the importance of teaching children with physical disability how to use the toilet, and finding someone to help them when they are at kindergarten.

## 9. Access to special schools

Nine per cent of respondents suggested that the Government needs to build a special school for children with disability to attend. Participatory analysis found that this may seem a simple solution to a complex problem, but ensuring equity of access to all ni-Vanuatu children, regardless of where they live, would require the construction and resourcing of dedicated special education facilities across the country, which would not be a cost-effective approach<sup>26</sup>. Participants in the data analysis workshop recognised that action towards education for all is required, however agreed that proceeding with inclusive education principles and practices in line with the Vanuatu Inclusive Education Policy would be a more sustainable and equitable approach.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Data and participatory analysis suggests that the following actions could be considered in order for to progress towards access to kindergarten for children with disability in Vanuatu. This is not an action plan, but rather a set of recommended actions for further discussion and planning amongst relevant stakeholders, Contextual factors, which were not explored through this study, must be considered when planning the development of disability inclusive kindergartens, including stakeholder capacity and responsibility, and availability of sustainable human and financial resources to support further development according to a realistic time frame.

1. Raise awareness of all stakeholders at all levels of the nature and causes of disability and the rights of children with disability to attend school, including kindergarten. This could include children with and without disability and their parents, teachers, community leaders and decision makers, churches, civil society and government, and be based on:
  - a. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
  - b. The Vanuatu National Disability Policy
  - c. The Inclusive Education Policy
2. Train kindergarten teachers in:
  - a. Understanding the nature and causes of disability, in particular less well understood impairments, such as hearing and communication impairments.
  - b. Understanding the rights of children with disability to attend kindergarten.
  - c. Methods and techniques for facilitating enrolment of children with disability, and supporting their learning, in mainstream education settings.
3. Seek options for supporting transport for children with disability to kindergarten. These could include:
  - a. Advocating or Government policy which waives bus fare for people with disability.
  - b. Training teachers in methods for working with individuals with disability to find local solutions to transport problems.
4. Strengthen the capacity of community leaders and members to understand the rights and needs of children with disability.

5. Ensure all new and refurbished kindergarten facilities are built in an accessible way, and support modification of existing kindergarten facilities to enable their accessibility to people with a range of impairments.
6. Waive costs of kindergarten for families of children with disability.
7. Increase access to rehabilitation services, including early intervention and assistive device services, for children with disability, including:
  - a. Strengthen referral linkages between kindergartens and existing rehabilitation services.
  - b. Strengthen development of existing rehabilitation services to enable provision to people with a range of impairments, across a wide geographic area.
8. Support efforts towards inclusive education for children with disability in line with the Vanuatu Inclusive Education policy, in link with Government and non-government stakeholders, including Disabled Persons Organisations, and in the context of past and present inclusive education research and practice in Vanuatu.
9. Undertake further investigation into effective models for implementing and monitoring inclusive education in Vanuatu.

**SAVE THE CHILDREN**

in conjunction with

**VANUATU SOCIETY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

And

**DISABILITY PROMOTION, ADVOCACY & AWARENESS**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION  
DISABILITY STUDY – EFATE, VANUATU  
ERAKOR, TONGOA, VILA NORTH**

**JUNE 2013**



## CONSENT FORM: Parent or guardian

I,.....(*print full name*)  
of

.....(*Village*)

**consent** that my child and I be involved in the sample study being undertaken by Save the Children in conjunction with DPA and VSDP to identify attitudes, knowledge and practices that present obstacles to children with disabilities accessing kindergarten in Vanuatu.

**I agree (acknowledge) that:**

1. The purpose of the study has been explained to me.
2. My participation involves answering a short questionnaire.
3. Information gathered in this study may be used for further research purposes, project designs and publications.
4. I am free to withdraw from the study at any stage. If I withdraw from the study Save the Children will destroy the information I have provided.

Parent/guardian's Signature .....Date.....



## CONSENT FORM: Chief or Community Leader

I,.....(*print full name*)

of

.....(*Village*)

**consent** that to being involved in the sample study being undertaken by Save the Children in conjunction with DPA and VSDP to identify attitudes, knowledge and practices that present obstacles to children with disabilities accessing kindergarten in Vanuatu.

.

**I agree (acknowledge) that:**

1. The purpose of the study has been explained to me.
2. My participation involves answering a short questionnaire.
3. Information gathered in this study may be used for further research purposes, project designs and publications.
4. I am free to withdraw from the study at any stage. If I withdraw from the study Save the Children will destroy the information I have provided.

Signature ..... Date.....

## CONSENT FORM: Children and Youth

I,.....(*print full name*)  
of

.....(*Village*)

Agree to being involved in the sample study being undertaken by Save the Children in conjunction with DPA and VSDP to identify attitudes, knowledge and practices that present obstacles to children with disabilities accessing kindergarten in Vanuatu.

**I agree (acknowledge) that:**

1. The purpose of the study has been explained to me.
2. My participation involves answering a short questionnaire.
3. Information gathered in this study may be used for further research purposes, project designs and publications.
4. I am free to withdraw from the study at any stage. If I withdraw from the study Save the Children will destroy the information I have provided.

Signature .....Date.....

## QUESTIONS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN DISABILITY STUDY

### A. CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

1. Do you go to school?
2. If yes, what do you enjoy most about school?  
If no, what are some of the reasons you don't go to school?
3. What could be done to ensure more children with disabilities attend kindergarten?

**QUESTIONS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN DISABILITY STUDY**

**B. PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY**

1. What kind of disability does your child have?

2. Do you think children with a disability should go to kindergarten?

If yes – Then why?

If not – Then why not?

3. What do you think we need to do to bring more children with disabilities into kindergarten?

**QUESTIONS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN DISABILITY STUDY**

**C. PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO DO NOT HAVE A DISABILITY**

**1. What do you consider a disability?**

**2. Are there any children with disabilities who do not go to school?**

**If yes – Why is it that they go?**

**If no – Why not?**

**3. What do you think we need to do to bring more children with disabilities into the kindergarten?**

**QUESTIONS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN DISABILITY STUDY**

**D. CHIEFS**

**1. What do you consider a disability?**

**2. Are there any children with disabilities who do not go to school?**

**If yes – Why is it that they go?**

**If no – Why not?**

**3. What do you think we need to do to bring more children with disabilities into the kindergarten?**

**QUESTIONS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN DISABILITY STUDY**

**E. TEACHERS**

**1. What do you consider a disability?**

**2. Are there any children with disabilities who do not go to school?**

**If yes – Why is it that they go?**

**If no –Why not?**

**3. What do you think we need to do to bring more children with disabilities into the kindergarten?**

**QUESTIONS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN DISABILITY STUDY**

**F. COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

**1. What do you consider a disability?**

**2. Are there any children with disabilities who do not go to school?**

**If yes – Why is it that they go?**

**If no –Why not?**

**3. What do you think we need to do to bring more children with disabilities into the kindergarten?**



**QUESTIONS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN DISABILITY STUDY**

**G. KINDY MANAGEMENT**

**1. What do you consider a disability?**

**2. Are there any children with disabilities who do not go to school?**

**If yes – Why is it that they go?**

**If no – Why not?**

**3. What do you think we need to do to bring more children with disabilities into the kindergarten?**

## REFERENCES

---

- <sup>1</sup> Vanuatu Early Childhood Education Baseline Survey, April 2012, Macquarie University
- <sup>2</sup> World Health Organization & World Bank. (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: World Health Organisation
- <sup>3</sup> Filmer, D. (2008). Disability, Poverty, and schooling in developing countries: results from 14 household surveys. The World Bank Economic Review 22, 141-163. Cited in World Health Organization & World Bank. (2011). World Report on Disability. (p. 206). Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- <sup>4</sup> Educating Children with Disabilities, Organisational Experience, Capacity and Needs, Save the Children US, September 2012
- <sup>5</sup> AusAID Development Research Awards Scheme 2012: Disability Inclusive Development. Identifying the needs and priorities of children with disabilities in Vanuatu and PNG.
- <sup>6</sup> 2009 National Population and Housing Census Analytical Report Volume 2, Vanuatu National Statistics Office
- <sup>7</sup> 2009 National Population and Housing Census Analytical Report Volume 2, Vanuatu National Statistics Office, p xi.
- <sup>8</sup> 2009 National Population and Housing Census Analytical Report Volume 2, p 80.
- <sup>9</sup> [http://www.undppc.org.fj/\\_resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf](http://www.undppc.org.fj/_resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf), accessed 12 August 2011.
- <sup>10</sup> UNICEF, Pacific Children With Disabilities, 2010, [http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Children\\_with\\_disabilities\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Children_with_disabilities_final_report.pdf)
- <sup>11</sup> [http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Regional\\_Doc\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_NZaid\\_Pacific\\_Health\\_Sector\\_program.pdf](http://www.forumsec.org.fj/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Regional_Doc_Review_of_the_NZaid_Pacific_Health_Sector_program.pdf), accessed 12 August 2011.
- <sup>12</sup> United Nations Development Programme (Pacific Centre) (2007), Round Table on the Situation of Women and Girls with Disabilities in the Pacific, Nadi, 26-7 November. Cited in [http://www.undppc.org.fj/\\_resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf](http://www.undppc.org.fj/_resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> A Voice of Our Own: Advocacy by Women with Disability in Australia and the Pacific. In Gender and Development, Volume 13 no. 3. Therese Sands (2005).
- <sup>14</sup> Country Study Vanuatu.
- <sup>15</sup> World Health Organisation. (2001). The International Classification of Functioning. Disability and Health. World Health Organisation: Geneva
- <sup>16</sup> Government of Vanuatu. (2009). National Population and Housing Census Analytical Report Volume 2, Vanuatu National Statistics Office: Port Vila
- <sup>17</sup> Nowland-Foreman, G. & Stubbs, D. (2005). Free and Equal: A Review of NZAID Pacific Regional Disability Programme for New Zealand Agency for International Development. [http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Regional\\_Doc\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_NZaid\\_Pacific\\_Health\\_Sector\\_program.pdf](http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Regional_Doc_Review_of_the_NZaid_Pacific_Health_Sector_program.pdf) : Accessed 12 November 2013
- <sup>18</sup> School costs are taken to include fees, transport and other expenses associated with children attending school.
- <sup>19</sup> Special teachers was taken to mean teachers with capacity to identify needs and skills to support children with disabilities learning in schools.
- <sup>20</sup> The actual response was 'We should not spoil them' meaning not damage or disregard the child's rights as an individual.

---

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Development Programme (Pacific Centre). (2007), Round Table on the Situation of Women and Girls with Disabilities in the Pacific, Nadi, 26-7 November. Cited in [http://www.undppc.org.fj/\\_resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf](http://www.undppc.org.fj/_resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf): Accessed 12 November 2013

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF. (2010). Pacific Children With Disabilities. [http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Children\\_with\\_disabilities\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/Children_with_disabilities_final_report.pdf): Accessed 12 November 2013

<sup>23</sup> Nowland-Foreman, G. & Stubbs, D. (2005). Free and Equal: A Review of NZAID Pacific Regional Disability Programme for New Zealand Agency for International Development. [http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Regional\\_Doc\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_NZaid\\_Pacific\\_Health\\_Sector\\_program.pdf](http://www.forumsec.org/resources/uploads/attachments/documents/Regional_Doc_Review_of_the_NZaid_Pacific_Health_Sector_program.pdf) : Accessed 12 November 2013

<sup>24</sup> Zaidi, A., Burchardt, T. (2005). Comparing incomes when needs differ: equalization for the extra costs of disability in the UK. Review of Income and Wealth. Cited in World Health Organization and World Bank. (2011). World Report on Disability (p. 10).

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2010). EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized (p.183). United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Oxford University Press: France and United Kingdom.

<sup>26</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (1999). Inclusive education at work: students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Paris: OECD. Cited in World Health Organization & World Bank. (2011). World Report on Disability (p. 220).