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Acronyms

ID: Intellectual Disability

ISAK: International Standards for Advancement of Kinanthropometry

KUSA: Kenya Universities Sports Association

SMD: Severe Mental Disability

UN: United Nations

WHO: World Health Organisation

Introduction

- 1 Current statistics indicate that there are about 500 million people with disabilities in the world today, with the majority being found in developing nations (UN, 2006). In addition, the World Health Organization estimates that 10% of any nation is composed of people with disabilities (WHO, 2010). The general classification of people with disabilities (PwDs) is based on a medical description of the condition and how it affects the individual's capacity to function independently or based on an educational description that looks at the environmental effect of disability on the person's functional ability. In either case, disability is generally viewed in four broad categories: physical, visual, auditory and intellectual disabilities (ID).
- 2 Generally research indicates that people with disabilities are less active in physical activity pursuits than their non-disabled peers (Frey *et al.* 2008; Hands & Larkin, 2006; Murphy *et al.*, 2008). Yet, given proper coaching and sufficient practice time, most individuals with intellectual disabilities can successfully compete alongside or against

many of their non-disabled peers. People with intellectual disabilities have been noted to be more vulnerable when it comes to learning motor skills (Rimmer & Braddock, 2006). This is due to: a) their slow motor development b) societal attitudes towards them c) limited opportunities to enable them to practice and d) limited capacity to comprehend information (Murphy *et al.* 2008; Sherrill, 2004). In addition, many individuals with intellectual disabilities have been noted to become more inactive as they grow older and are family dependent, home-based and have a higher level of health needs which are unmet compared to the general population (Cooper, Morrison *et al.*, 2006; Special Olympics Inc., 2009). What emerges from previous research studies (Blinde & McClung, 1997; Duran *et al.*, 2001; Fragala-Pinkham *et al.*, 2006; Jacobs *et al.*, 2001; McCubbin *et al.*, 1997; Hicks *et al.*, 2003; Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2004) is that through a well-organised sports programme, it is possible to alleviate health problems that arise due to their conditions. It has also been reported (Blessings *et al.*, 1993; Blinde & McClung, 1997, Hanna, 1986; Carmona *et al.*, 2005; McCubbin *et al.*, 1997; WHO, 2010) that through a well-organized motor skill programme, it is possible to improve the health and wellness of individuals with intellectual disabilities through participation in physical activities.

The Camp Shriver Programme at Kenyatta University

- 3 In order to address the needs of youth with intellectual disabilities (ID) in the community surrounding the University, a Special Olympics programme was established. This is a programme that brings together youth with and without intellectual disabilities to play and learn sport skills. The Kenyatta University programme has recruited 55 youth with ID (referred to as Athletes), another 55 without disabilities (referred to as Partners) and each academic year between 30 and 50 university students are involved as coaches on voluntary basis.
- 4 The Volunteer coaches are selected from among university students in the Departments of Recreation Management and Sports Science, Physical and Health Education and the general University student population. At the beginning of each academic year an advertisement is placed on student notice boards requesting for volunteers to serve as coaches. They are required to have competencies in specific sports skills such as football volleyball and basketball. Those with interest in youth sports are highly encouraged to apply. They are then screened through initial interviews to ensure that all those who are selected: (a) possess knowledge of skills in the activity areas of interest to the programme that season; (b) have a desire to work with individuals with disabilities and; (c) are willing to spend the necessary time and effort to carry out the project. Finally the selected student coaches attend a four-day Event Management Training Workshop.

Event management training workshop

- 5 Using the participatory approach, the selected peer tutors receive theoretical and practical exposure to coaching learners with intellectual disabilities. University lecturers from the departments of Physical and Health Education, Recreation Management and Exercise Science, Sports and Games facilitate the workshop. In addition Special Olympics personnel are always on hand to offer tips on how to handle

people with ID. The training covers various topics that included: Use of appropriate cues, prompting, provision of feedback, scheduling and practical experiences on teaching football and basketball to young participants. Practical demonstrations of coaching football and basketball are facilitated by two University senior basketball and football coaches. The four-day workshop also offers training on fitness testing by a trained International Standards for Advancement of Kinanthropometry (ISAK) facilitators. By the end of the workshop, the trainee peer tutors are exposed to a variety of situations they would likely deal with during the training phase. After the workshop, they are exposed to work with small groups of a before being left to lead sessions. Each is assigned 4-5 youngsters to provide individualized training and also for acquaintance with issues related to ID.

Overview of the programme

Demographic data

Coaches

- 6 In total, 102 students have been trained and have served in the programme as volunteer coaches since inception of the programme in 2008. Approximately two-thirds of the coaches were male 70% (exactly 69%) while 32% (exactly 31%) have been female students. There is a high turnover of coaches as the students who volunteer easily are in the final years of study. On average 35 students are recruited each year to serve as coaches and each student coach handles about 4 participants who are randomly assigned to them. This ensures close supervision and also for small group teaching of sports skills.

Annex 1. Distribution of student coaches by gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	70	69
Female	32	31
Total	102	100

Year of Study

- 7 Most of the coaches' peer tutors 66% (65%) have been 3rd and 4th year students with just over 10% having completed their undergraduate studies. This is not surprising as many students who volunteer for various activities at the university are in their last years of study. They tend to be more alert to upcoming activities and enroll more. In addition they understand the value of volunteering as it boosts their curriculum vitae while those in their first years of study are still not confident enough to take up challenges that may go beyond their sports skills. More male students participate in the programme than female students as volunteer coaches. This again is not surprising as many female students are not involved in sports on campus.

Prior contact with individuals with disabilities

- 8 The majority of student coaches have no prior contact with individuals with a disability and they usually enter the programme without knowledge of what to expect.

Annex 2: Coaches prior contact with individuals with disabilities

	Frequency	Percent
No	22	22
Yes	80	78
Total	102	100

- 9 For many, their first contact comes from this volunteer programme. They therefore have great fears when they come in contact with athletes. But these fears soon evaporate when they are encouraged by coordinators. In a multinational study of attitudes towards individuals with intellectual disabilities (Special Olympics in 2006), it was noted that the more the opportunities people have to interact with individuals with intellectual disabilities, the greater their perception of those individuals' competence. This improved perception of competence leads to more positive attitudes toward individuals with intellectual disabilities. In addition, Block (1995) found that having a family member or a close friend with a disability was related to favorable attitudes.

Interactions among the campers

- 10 Overall, coaches report that the participants get along well with each other. In a recent survey (Bukhala, 2012), the coaches reported that they witnessed frequent conversations and joking among participants with and without disabilities and also saw frequent encouragement from partners. Most coaches (63%) also noted that participants frequently helped each other by demonstrating or explaining sports skills to their peers. However, coaches did observe some negative interactions like frustration, dominance, and teasing from some of the partners although this occurred rarely or only occasionally as shown in the table below.

Annex 3: Camper interactions as observed by coaches

<i>How frequently did you witness the following behaviors among participants with and without disabilities?</i>	Rarely or never	Occasionally	Frequently
Conversation/joking	0%	31%	69%
Encouraging/ cheering	0%	44%	56%
Demonstration/explanation of sports skill	7%	30%	63%
Frustration with peer	41%	50%	9%
Dominance/bossiness	48%	52%	0%
Teasing/bullying	50%	33%	17%

- 11 These results concur with an earlier research study among Japanese youths (Special Olympics Inc., 2005) conducted on more than 4,000 middle school students from across Japan to examine their beliefs about the competency of their peers with intellectual disabilities, their willingness to interact with these individuals both in and out of school, and their feelings about including these students in their classes. The youths were more receptive to interaction with peers with intellectual disabilities.

Change in performance

- 12 As shown in Table 3, a survey of the coaches at Camp Shriver have reported improvement in the sports skills of athletes and partners (88%); self-esteem and self-confidence (97%), social skills (94%), and ability/ease making friends (75%) at the end of each year. In total student coaches have continued to report more improvement in all the participants with and without disabilities in the variables investigated. From their observations, although participants with disabilities show improvement in sports and social skills, this is always lower than what is observed among participants without disabilities. It is therefore important for the programme provider to be more patient with the athlete as they learn and acquire new sports skills.

Annex 4: How much improvement did you notice in most of your campers in the following areas?

	No improvement	A little improvement	A lot of improvement
Participants with disabilities			
Sports skills: Self-esteem and			
self-confidence;	0%	12%	88%
Social skills:	0%	3%	97%
Ability/ease at	0%	6%	94%
making friends	3%	22%	75%
Participants without			
disabilities			
Sports skills: Self-esteem and			
self-confidence;	0%	6%	94%
Social skills:	0%	6%	94%
Ability/ease	0%	9%	91%
at making friends	0%	12%	88%

- 13 These results are in line with an earlier study by Klavina and Block (2008) which showed increased interaction behaviors between students with Severe Mental Disabilities (SMD) and other peers during peer-mediated intervention.

Experiences of student coaches at the camp

- 14 Through their experiences at Camp, student coaches learn and benefit in a number of ways. Working with the campers, coaches learn that with patience and encouragement it is possible for youths with disabilities to achieve their full potential. They also gain skills and experience the fulfilment of giving back to the community. The table below presents themes that emanated from the coaches' responses to the following open-ended questions.

Annex 5: What have you learned about working with individuals with ID or other disabilities through your experiences with participants at the camp?

Major Themes	Select Quotes
Need for patience and encouragement	<i>"With patience, humility, and kindness, the campers with ID are very cooperative and feel loved and accepted when involved in events like sports camps." "They are like most kids and only require a little more guidance and patience."</i>
Potential/competence of campers	<i>"Disability is not inability. They need chances to show potential." "All people have the capacity to attain self-actualization if given a chance."</i>
Positive impact of giving back to community	<i>"I have felt inspired and more energized in working with such people." "I feel good because I can change, and really changed, their lives."</i>

Impact on volunteer coaches

- 15 Three major thematic areas were clearly noted. That is a) experience gained through working with youth with disabilities; b) new skills gained; and c) personal growth. Table 5 present themes that emanate from the student coaches' and some of the views that are repeatedly mentioned by many of the student coaches surveyed.

Annex 6: How have you personally benefited from serving as a coach at Camp Shriver?

Major Themes	Select Quotes
Gained experience working with individuals with ID	<i>"I have gained experience and courage in working with the disabled persons." "I have learned different ways of dealing with children with ID and appreciating them, and ways to improve their skills."</i>
Learned new coaching skills	<i>"I learned new coaching skills in both basketball and soccer." "I've been able to apply practically what I have been taught in class in the coaching and training areas. ""</i>
General personal enhancement	<i>"I have gained self-fulfilment in knowing I have influenced and touched some of the athletes' lives." "I have learned to appreciate all people and share whatever I have always by giving my time." "I have learned how to be a better teacher, coach, big sister, and person to others."</i>

- 16 These findings concur with findings in a study by Special Olympics (2009) which concluded that volunteers gain personal satisfaction, increased tolerance and get a chance to re-examine their personal values. In a survey of Chinese youths after the Special Olympics Games in Shanghai, youths without disabilities showed an improved attitude toward peers with intellectual disabilities. This was as a result of their awareness and exposure to information about Special Olympics athletes. Those youths who were directly involved in the games expressed the most positive attitudes. There were dramatic changes, not only in their perceptions of the capabilities of students with intellectual disabilities, but also their willingness to interact with a student with an intellectual disability, both in and out of school.

Parents' demographics

Number of parents attending programme

- 17 In total, 86 parents of athletes and partners have attended the programme at different times since inception. A majority of them were female parents (87%). The majority (70%) of those who attend the programme regularly are parents of athletes. A majority of the parents of athletes were not comfortable allowing their children to be accompanied by partners alone as had earlier been envisaged. They were apprehensive of their safety and being bullied. However, as the days progressed the number of parents accompanying their children begun to reduce. Anecdotal information gathered showed that as parents became more confident with partners and coaches they became more willing to allow their children to be escorted by partners and thus they do not have to come to the programme as frequent as before.

Means of transport

- 18 The majority of the parents of participants with disabilities walk to the Camp Shriver every Saturday as they either not afford to pay for bus fare or that they live close to the University. Only two parents drive their children to the camp. On the other hand, parents of partners are a mixed group with some driving their children to camp while some walk with their children on some of the days. This provides an opportunity for interaction between athletes and partners as they walk to the camp and back together.

Employment

- 19 The majority of parents (64%) of athletes are unemployed, while most of the parents of partners are employed in the public sector. Mactavish and Schleien (2004) have suggested that a child's disability, the family's ease of participation, and the extent to which modifications to activities are required may be associated with variations in participation and also family financial ability to provide opportunities for their children to participate in recreational activities. Families of children with disabilities may bear additional costs associated with caring for their children, which could make supporting participation in community activities more difficult. The difference in background of parents was at the beginning the source of worries from both groups. As noted from interviews conducted at the beginning and later. Both groups had worries

about the safety of their children, ability to follow instructions, and behavioral problems. As shown in Table 6, these fears vanished later as parents reported surprise at how well the groups had integrated and more so how this programme had introduced them to other parents. A study by Kersh and Siperstein (2008) had also shown that parents were surprised when they saw their children interact with peers without disabilities in a unified sports programme. Families are critical to the success of sports' programmes for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Worldwide, participation in Special Olympics programmes significantly boosts family members' perceptions of and their children's future and improves family members' social networks both within the family and the wider community (Special Olympics International, 2009).

Annex 7: Parents initial and later views about allowing their children to participate in an integrated programme

Initial reactions by parents	Later reactions by parents
My fear is that my child will be hurt by the other children	It is surprising how they work together
My fear is that my child will not cope with the other children	She talks about her friend (partner)
I am not sure if this is the right thing to do	often
I am worried the others will make fun of my child	I think we parents are the hindrance to our children's learning
I am worried that he will not cope with the exercises	Although they live next to us, I had never talked to the parents of the athlete but now we are friends

- 20 As noted by Shields *et al.*, (2009) parents are best positioned to influence the lifestyle habits of their children and to implement changes in their children's activity behavior. Educating family members about the importance of regular activity to maintain good health and how to sustain vigorous activity for improved cardiovascular health might help to increase the level of activity in children with ID. Families should be encouraged to incorporate activity into their daily routine. For example, they could encourage activities that can be pursued into adulthood such as swimming, dancing, cycling, and exercising at a local gym, as these activities can be completed by individuals of all levels of motor ability yet they would also include a social component which is a key facilitator of activity in people with ID.
- 21 In this study, parents of athletes and partners had similar negative views about their children participating in a unified programme at the beginning. Some feared that their children would be hurt by the other children or that those with ID would not cope with the other children. For those with children with ID a major worry was that others would make fun of them while parents of partners were not sure if this was the right thing to do. As the programme came to the end, parents described how their expectations had been positively impacted. One theme that emerged was that the programme had made them more aware of the extent of their children's capabilities

and potential. Some parents explained it with excitement that “it was surprising how the children work together” and another summed it up “I think we parents are the hindrance to our children’s learning.” Another regretted that “Although they live next to us, I had never talked to the parents of the athlete but now we are friends.” These views suggest that parents, as well as the general public, may underestimate their children with intellectual disabilities. When people with intellectual disabilities are challenged and given the opportunity to succeed in a variety of venues, they often demonstrate to others that they are highly capable (Kersh & Siperstein, 2008). Parents may underestimate their children with intellectual disabilities but when they are given a chance to see what training can do towards skill acquisition they are able to change their views as their children interact. Attitudes towards persons with disability remain the major hindrance to access and participation of individuals with such disabilities in unified sports such as this would be useful.

Way forward for the programme

- 22 The programme is set to evolve into a national programme. Already discussions are underway to encourage public universities to open up their facilities to sports programmes geared towards inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Kenya University Sports Association (KUSA) in its recent annual conference held at Kabarak University endorsed the proposal to include disability sports in its calendar. Funding to develop capacity among sports tutors and student coaches in these Universities remain the main challenge to implement this programme.

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