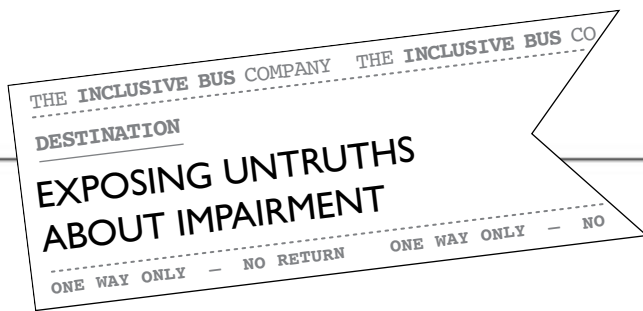


Unmasking myths



TIME

30 Minutes



MATERIALS

- **Handout 3**
on different types
of impairment.

Myths have emerged across all cultures about why people are born with or acquire impairments. This activity is designed to help participants appreciate some of those. Project staff going into villages, holding discussions, and including disabled people in meetings should have an awareness of local superstitions.

There are many examples of myths – ranging from ‘bad’ spirits, punishment for sins, to fear of seeing a disabled person while pregnant. Where factual knowledge on the causes of impairments is limited, these beliefs can be powerful and pervasive. They will profoundly affect the way disabled people are treated and view themselves.

Programme staff need to be aware of this. It will have an impact on how well disabled people are accepted into project activities by the community. A session like this, held in the community, could be a useful starting point for introducing disability inclusive activities.

Seeing a disabled person
whilst pregnant means
that the infant will be
born with a disability

fact

or

myth

Road accidents are
a common cause of
disability

fact

or

myth



TELLA STORY...

In Kenya, the Samburu people believe having a child with albinism is extremely unlucky. They don't understand how two black people can produce a white child. So the father is allowed to question the paternity. He does this by leaving the infant across the gate of the cattle boma (compound) as the cattle are released. If the child isn't trampled by the cattle and survives, it's assumed the child is his.

There are other hazards the albino child has to endure. Mothers believe if they leave the child in the sun, the burns the child receives will settle and cause the skin to darken. This causes much suffering to the child and is likely to shorten life expectancy. There are very few albinos in Maasai culture.

METHOD

- 1 **Talk through some of the most common forms of impairments and their typical causes.** It's useful to help participants understand the language associated with different disabilities. Distribute the handout on different impairment groups.
- 2 **Ask participants to describe some common reasons given locally for the causes of impairments – and some common reactions to disabled people.** List the most popular myths about disability onto flip chart paper which can then be displayed.
- 3 **Tell the group the true-life story from 'TELLA STORY...' in this section.** Are there local cultural beliefs like the one from Kenya? Lead a discussion. Help the group understand how local people perceive disability. Some myths of impairments are contributing to negative – sometimes hostile – attitudes towards disabled people.

MOTIVE

The session should focus on **process** rather than outcome. It allows participants to voice the superstitions. The facilitator can help clarify the more likely causes of impairment. The outcome is that people have a chance to talk about superstitions, so participants can understand these are myths, not facts.

Disabled people are being punished for their sins?

fact

or

myth