

# Applied Research Partnerships with Developing and Transition Countries

## Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education

### Project title

## Nondisabled Children's Attitudes Towards Disabled Children in Tanzania

### Thematic focus

Disability-based Attitudes, Middle Childhood, Tanzania

### Year

2010

### Project location

Arusha, Tanzania

### Swiss Institution

Luciano Gasser (luciano.gasser@phz.ch), Teacher Training University of Central Switzerland, Lucerne, Institute for School and Diversity, <http://www.fe.luzern.phz.ch/ish/>

### Partner Institution

Benny Mussa (bennymussa@yahoo.com), Patandi Teachers' College, Arusha Tanzania, <http://patanditc.tripod.com>



### Description

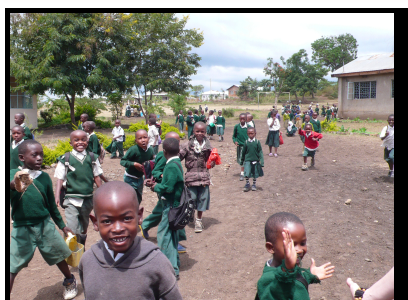
The goal of the present study is to investigate nondisabled children's attitudes towards mentally disabled and hearing impaired children in Tanzania. The sample includes 160 9- and 13-year-old children from inclusive and noninclusive primary school classes. Individual interviews on different components of children's attitudes (evaluative, emotional, cognitive and behavioral) will be conducted. Results will provide important knowledge about the impact of socio-cultural context on children's competencies to deal with diversity in primary school classes. They therefore will constitute an important basis for (inclusive) school development as well as for teacher education in Tanzania.

The research project is imbedded within a partnership between Patandi Teachers' College (PTC) and Teacher Training University of Central Switzerland (PHZ). Moreover, it is conceptually and methodologically related to a larger research project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation ('Development of social and moral competencies within inclusive and noninclusive classes'). Having relevant knowledge and expertise regarding the 'Swiss case', we are interested to broaden our knowledge on inclusive education across cultures.

### Development relevance

Our research project is in concert with the Millennium Developmental Goals 2 'Achieve universal primary education' as well as with international commitments to inclusive education (e.g., UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006). Inclusive Education has become a major subject in Tanzanian education policies. Despite this, many disabled children are excluded from school.

One of the main barriers may be negative attitudes towards disabled children. As the peer group is the main context where inclusion of disabled children takes place, it is crucial to learn more about attitudinal challenges in Tanzania. In this respect, our research project may provide important knowledge for the development of policies to realize inclusive education in Tanzania.



Inclusive School in Tanzania



Children with special needs in inclusive schools at PTC

# KFH

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## Main features of the project

The right of disabled children for inclusive compared to segregated education is increasingly acknowledged as a basic right of the child (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) played a critical role in highlighting that inclusive education is a key strategy for reaching education for all regardless of any difficulties or differences children may have. Although evidence suggests that the educational policies in many developmental countries recognize inclusion as a desirable form of education for individuals with special needs (e.g., UNESCO, 2009), it remains the case that inclusion is not being satisfactorily implemented in many countries.

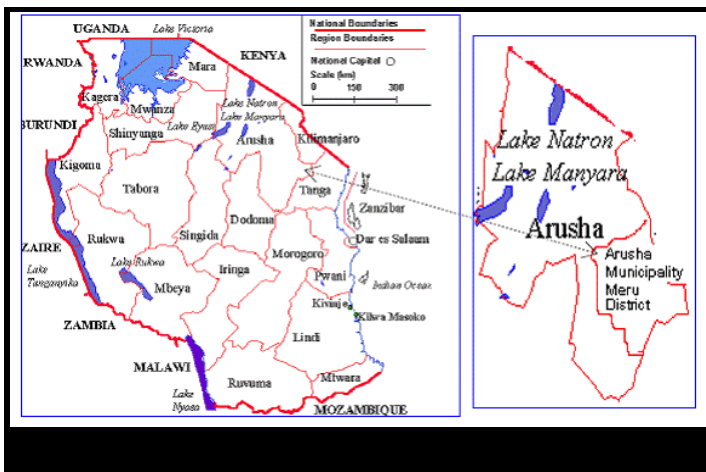
Primary school in Tanzania is a seven year compulsory level for all Tanzanian children. De facto, however, the drop out numbers are high. The disabled children who are not attending school are clearly overrepresented compared to the disabled children who are attending school. But also among those disabled children who are included into regular classes, it is unclear if these children are socially included and accepted by their peers, or not. For example, comparable research in Nigeria indicates that children at primary levels were socially isolated since they just sat in the classrooms and never participated in any activity in and outside the classroom (Anumonye, 1994).

An important explanation for ineffective inclusion and discrimination of disabled children is that people hold negative attitudes and stereotypes towards these children (e.g., UNESCO, 2009). In fact, attitudinal barriers to inclusion and disabilities are supposed to be even greater than economic difficulties in developmental countries (Bardon, Sipperstein, & Parker, 2008; Krohn-Nydal, 2008; Stubbs, 2002). Based on the premise that disability-based attitudes (as well as the specific contexts in which they develop) have to be taken into account in order to improve the conditions for a successful inclusive education, the main goal of the study is to empirically investigate attitudes towards disabled children in Tanzania. More specifically, we are interested in investigating the following research questions: (a) How do children judge the exclusion of a disabled child from different social activities by the peer group? Do nondisabled children regard disabled children as equal and as deserving the same rights to participate in all areas of social life? What are their reasons for inclusion/exclusion? (evaluative component of disability-based attitudes); (b) What do children know and think about disabled children? What do they consider as causes for disabilities? (cognitive component of disability-based attitudes); (c) What feelings do children express towards disabled children? (affective component of disability-based attitudes); (d) Are children motivated to have contact with disabled children in different social settings? (behavioral component of disability-based attitudes); (e) Is there a general, i.e. cross-cultural effect of inclusive schooling on disability-based attitudes, or does this effect depend upon the societal/cultural context?

**Method:** We plan to include 160 younger and older primary school children, 80 from inclusive classes and 80 from segregated classes. Individual interviews will be conducted by the research staff from PTC. Disability-based attitudes will be assessed by several instruments that have been validated within the DORE project. The specific contents of the instruments will be adapted in cooperation with the research partners.

We will use different empirical indicators to assess the different components of disability-based attitudes (evaluative, emotional, cognitive, behavioral):

- (a) Evaluative component of attitudes: This instrument includes several moral conflicts in which a child has to decide if he or she should include or exclude a disabled or nondisabled child into a group activity and to justify this decision.
- (b) Emotional component of attitudes: Children have to report their empathic reactions to social conflicts involving disabled children.
- (c) Cognitive component of attitudes: Children are asked about their knowledge regarding disabilities, for example about their conceptions of causes of different disabilities (genetic, effort, accident, religious).
- (d) Behavioral component of attitudes: Children will be asked about their motivation to have contact with disabled children.



Arusha



Inclusive school in Tanzania