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Limited Access to Social Service Benefits by the People with Disabilities in Ermera Municipality

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ABSTRACT

Support services for individuals with disabilities are crucial for ensuring equal rights and facilitating active participation in society. These services include healthcare, education, vocational training, transportation, and social welfare, all aimed at enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities. Accessibility to these services is vital, as individuals often face various barriers physical, social, and attitudinal that hinder their ability to obtain necessary support.

A recent community feedback survey conducted by the CBRN-TL team in Ermera District highlighted significant challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. The survey, which included 207 participants, revealed that 79% of respondents experienced obstacles in accessing health services, including mental health care. Furthermore, 54% reported difficulties in obtaining social assistance due to incomplete documentation, while 51% indicated that economic factors and inadequate infrastructure hindered educational opportunities for disabled children.

Despite some positive experiences, dissatisfaction with public services remains prevalent, with 45% of respondents expressing discontent. Physical barriers and negative attitudes were common grievances. Family support emerged as a key factor, with 89% reporting familial acceptance, which plays a vital role in navigating complex healthcare systems.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Work and Transportation, Ministry of Health, to emphasize the importance of collaboration across ministries to improve access to necessary services. Enhancing infrastructure for education and healthcare, particularly in rural areas, and broadening eligibility criteria for subsidies are essential steps towards fostering a more inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities.



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INTRODUCTION

Services and accessibility for individuals with disabilities are crucial for ensuring equal opportunities and rights to participate in society. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) emphasizes independent living and community involvement as fundamental rights (Antonucci et al., 2020). Despite legislation, significant gaps remain in implementation, with many people with disabilities struggling for effective participation in all aspects of life (Halder & Argyropoulos, 2019). Enhancing community access requires optimizing services like healthcare, family support, and job training, as well as leveraging technologies that improve mobility, communication, and home adaptation (Noreau et al., 2015). Leisure and recreation services play a vital role in improving quality of life for people with disabilities, but these must be both accessible and inclusive to realize their full potential benefits (Stumbo et al., 2011). Addressing these challenges necessitates collaborative partnerships between high-resource and low-resource regions to achieve sustainable goals for human existence and better quality of life for all (Gomes, 2019).

These services encompass supportive mechanisms, including healthcare, education, vocational training, transportation, and social services, all aimed at improving the quality of life for PwD and empowering them to realize their rights and engage actively in community life. Accessibility, in this context, refers to the ease and assistance that PwD can receive in accessing and utilizing these services, particularly in overcoming physical, social, or attitudinal barriers.

The importance of accessibility and support services for persons with disabilities (PwD) to enhance their quality of life and community participation. Key areas include healthcare, education, transportation, and social services (Alsamiri, 2024). Technology plays a crucial role, with apps like "EasenAccess" providing wheelchair accessibility information and emergency assistance (Agarwal & Agarwal, 2018). The concept of independent living, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, emphasizes the need for autonomy and active community involvement (Antonucci et al., 2020). Enhancing community access requires optimizing services, leveraging technologies, and implementing supportive policies (Noreau et al., 2015). Assessment of quality of life should consider the dynamic interactions between personal circumstances and environments over time. Participatory research and partnerships promoting disability rights are recommended to guide the development of optimized supports and policies (Alsamiri, 2024; Noreau et al., 2015).

In the municipality of Ermera, Timor-Leste, the situation for PwD is particularly significant due to socio-economic and geographic challenges. Ermera is a rural area characterized by rugged terrain, poorly maintained village roads, and limited infrastructure, which complicate the delivery and accessibility of essential services. Individuals with disabilities face considerable challenges in accessing commercial centers and markets, often encountering significant transportation costs and difficulties. The socio-economic conditions in Ermera, marked by high poverty levels and limited access to education and employment opportunities for PwD, exacerbate these challenges. These factors create additional barriers for PwD in accessing necessary services and support.

Despite the presence of international and national frameworks aimed at protecting the rights of PwD, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Timor-Leste's national policies for individuals with disabilities, the implementation and effectiveness of these policies at the local level remain inconsistent. Many PwD in Ermera continue to face significant barriers to accessing disability services, including physical barriers (e.g., inaccessible buildings and transportation), information barriers (e.g., lack of accessible information and communication), and attitudinal barriers (e.g., stigma and discrimination), particularly affecting women with disabilities.

This research area identifies a foundation for recommendations based on previous research related to the implementation of the National Disability Action Plan (PAN) and feedback from beneficiaries of the Community-Based Rehabilitation Network Timor-Leste (CBRN-TL), as well as community leaders. Village chiefs have expressed a desire to understand how many PwD are accessing services in their areas and those who are not, and to comprehend the reasons for disparities in access.

Based on this need, the Community-Based Rehabilitation Network Timor-Leste (CBRN-TL) decided to conduct research to thoroughly assess the realities and situations within the communities where they work alongside their beneficiaries and community members.

THE METHOD

This section details the proposed quantitative and qualitative research methods tailored for the study. Researching the access to social service benefits for people with disabilities in Ermera Municipality requires a careful approach that takes into account both quantitative and qualitative methods. By employing these methods, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers faced by this demographic and how these barriers can be addressed.

By identify the intensive and interactive processes in programs and community priority issues, discussing them with program staff and technical advisors, as well as our partners, regarding USAID/Timor-Leste's NGO Advocacy Activity for Good Governance. The research questions will provide us with insights related to advocacy policies and technical service issues within our organization. We also hope to find valuable information regarding other stakeholders who work with people with disabilities and their health assessments.

To effectively investigate this issue, researchers can employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. Each approach offers unique strengths that can lead to a comprehensive understanding of the factors limiting access to social service benefits for people with disabilities.

(a) Quantitative Method

Quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, test theories, or make predictions. In the context of studying the limited access to social service benefits for people with disabilities in Ermera Municipality, quantitative methods can provide statistical evidence of the extent of the problem and identify demographic variables correlated with access issues.

Quantitative research methods play a crucial role in understanding and addressing social issues, including those related to individuals with disabilities. These methods can provide statistical evidence and identify patterns in large datasets. In social work, quantitative approaches are essential for data collection, analysis, and evaluation, contributing to effective responses to service users' problems. When studying disabled populations, quantitative research can reveal epidemiological and sociological insights, highlighting the impact of social determinants on health outcomes and access to services. This approach is particularly valuable in assessing parental awareness and involvement in the education and development of children with complex disabilities. By collecting and analyzing numerical data, researchers can make predictions and generalize results to wider populations, informing policy decisions and improving support systems for individuals with disabilities and their families (Taro Yamane, 1967).

1) Research Design

A well-structured quantitative study might utilize a cross-sectional survey design. This approach allows researchers to gather data from a diverse sample of individuals with disabilities within the municipality at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of their experiences and the accessibility of social services.

(a) Sample Selection

- Target Population: Individuals with disabilities residing in Ermera Municipality.
- Sampling Method: Stratified random sampling can be employed to ensure representation across different disability types, genders, and age groups. This will help in understanding varied experiences and needs.

Table 1. Sample respondent, Sub District Eermera, Ermera Municipality

Targetu	Feto	Mane	Total
Humboe	13	12	25
Poetete	23	22	45
Ponilala	13	12	25
Raemerhei	13	12	25
Estadu	23	22	45
Leguimea	13	12	25
Talimoro	13	12	25
Lauala	13	12	25
Mirtutu	13	12	25
Riheu	13	12	25

(b) Data Collection Instruments

Survey Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire can be developed to gather data on various aspects, including:

- Demographics (age, gender, type of disability, etc.)
- Awareness of available social services
- Frequency of service utilization
- Satisfaction with the services received

2) Data Analysis

Once the data is collected, statistical analysis can be performed using software tools like SPSS or R. Key analyses might include:

- Descriptive Statistics: To summarize the data and present findings relating to demographics and service access.
- Inferential Statistics: Techniques such as chi-square tests or logistic regression can be used to identify relationships between demographic variables and access to social services. For instance, researchers could analyze whether age or type of disability significantly affects access.

3) Interpretation of Results

The quantitative findings can provide empirical evidence regarding the levels of access to social services among people with disabilities in Ermera Municipality. For instance, if the data shows that a significant percentage of respondents are unaware of available services, this could indicate a need for improved outreach and education efforts.

(b) Qualitative Method

Qualitative research focuses on understanding the meaning individuals assign to their experiences and the social contexts surrounding them. This method is particularly valuable in exploring the complexities of access to social services for people with disabilities in Ermera Municipality, as it can reveal underlying factors and personal narratives that numerical data may overlook.

1) Research Design

A qualitative study may employ semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions to gather in-depth information from individuals with disabilities regarding their experiences with social services.

2) Participant Selection

Purposive Sampling: Participants can be selected based on specific criteria such as age, type of disability, and experience with social service access. This ensures that a diverse range of perspectives is included.

3) Data Collection Methods

- Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducting in-depth interviews allows researchers to explore participants' experiences, perceptions of barriers, and suggestions for improving access to services.
- Focus Groups: Bringing together small groups of individuals with disabilities can facilitate discussion and enable participants to share their experiences and thoughts collaboratively. This can uncover shared challenges and potential solutions.

4) Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis typically involves coding the data to identify themes and patterns. Researchers can use software like SPSS and excel to assist in organizing and interpreting the data.

5) Thematic Analysis

- Coding: Transcripts from interviews and focus groups can be coded to identify recurring themes, such as specific barriers (e.g., physical accessibility, lack of information) or facilitators (e.g., supportive community programs).
- Theme Development: Thematic analysis allows researchers to develop a narrative that encapsulates the experiences of participants and highlights critical barriers and recommendations for improving access.

6) Interpretation of Results

The qualitative findings can provide rich insights into the complexities surrounding access to social services for people with disabilities in Ermera Municipality. Through personal narratives, researchers can illustrate the real-life implications of barriers to access and the emotional and social impacts on individuals.

(c) Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the limited access to social service benefits for people with disabilities in Ermera Municipality, a mixed methods approach can be highly effective. This involves combining quantitative and qualitative methods to leverage the strengths of both.

- Sequential Explanatory Design: Researchers can first conduct a quantitative survey to identify the extent of access issues and then follow up with qualitative interviews to explore the reasons behind the quantitative findings. This approach enables a deeper exploration of identified barriers.
- Concurrent Triangulation Design: Both quantitative and qualitative data can be collected simultaneously, allowing for cross-validation of findings. For instance, survey data can be used to identify prevalent barriers, which can then be explored in focus group discussions to gather deeper insights.

RESULT & ANALYSIS

(a) Result

CBRN-TL conducted a survey titled "People with Deficiencies Related to Public Service Provision in Ermera Post, Ermera Municipality" from October 14 to 25, 2024. CBRN-TL collaborated with community leaders to identify individuals with deficiencies in the targeted suco, who participated in this survey. The CBRN-TL research team, consisting of six members, carried out this survey in the Ermera Administrative Post, Ermera Municipality. All respondents were individuals with deficiencies, totaling 207 respondents.

1) Individuals with disabilities access public services in the social sector (Health, Education, Social)

Individuals with disabilities require access to public services in the social sector (Health, Education, Social, and relevant documents). However, data indicates that 21% of individuals with disabilities do not access health services, 57% do not access education, 54% do not access social assistance, and 30% do not access identity card treatment services.

(a) Access to Health Services

The result of analysis shown that 79% of respondents report that individuals with disabilities face challenges when accessing health services, including mental health care, due to a lack of information or available services at health facilities. Socialization programs such as the Outreach System, SisCA, and Health in the Family provide some support. However, 21% of respondents indicate that individuals with disabilities still lack access to treatment at health posts or centers due to physical barriers. This research indicates that individuals with disabilities face significant barriers when accessing health services, particularly in developing countries. Common obstacles include lack of transportation, inadequate facilities, and high costs (Eide et al., 2015; van Rooy et al., 2012). Limited mobility and long distances to health centers pose challenges for those with physical disabilities (van Rooy et al., 2012). Additional barriers include lack of information, stigmatization, negative staff attitudes, and communication difficulties (Baart & Taaka, 2018). Support networks, primarily consisting of family members, friends, and neighbors, play a crucial role in facilitating access to health services and promoting social inclusion for people with disabilities (Holanda et al., 2015). However, 50% of individuals with disabilities report having no support outside their families, and reduced social inclusion due to mobility limitations remains a significant issue (Holanda et al., 2015). Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive approach that considers both demand-side and supply-side factors to ensure equitable access to healthcare for people with disabilities (Baart & Taaka, 2018; Eide et al., 2015).

(b) Access to Social Assistance

The finding showed 54% of respondents report that individuals with disabilities encounter difficulties in obtaining social assistance subsidies due to incomplete or missing documents (e.g., medical certificates, ID cards, voter registration), and 46% have successfully accessed social assistance and subsidies. Research indicates that people with disabilities often face challenges in accessing social protection programs, despite being key target beneficiaries (Banks et al., 2019a; Banks et al., 2019b). In Nepal and Vietnam, studies found varying levels of access to disability-targeted and non-targeted social assistance, with coverage rates of 37% and 53% respectively (Banks et al., 2019a; Banks et al., 2019b). Factors affecting access include geographic and financial accessibility of application processes, eligibility determination procedures, awareness of programs, and societal attitudes towards disability (Banks et al., 2019a; Banks et al., 2019b). While cash transfer programs for persons with disabilities have shown positive outcomes, coverage and benefit levels remain low (Palmer, 2013). To address these issues, experts call for increased state involvement in providing social assistance for

persons with disabilities in developing countries, combining economic security measures with policies promoting an enabling environment (Palmer, 2013; Buluş, 2022). Additionally, specialized management and fair implementation of social benefits and services are crucial for achieving intended goals (Buluş, 2022).

(c) Access to Education

Access to education for children with disabilities remains a critical issue globally. This report delves into the barriers that hinder access to education for this demographic, highlighting both the challenges and the progress made towards inclusivity. A recent survey revealed that 57% of respondents believe that economic conditions, lack of accessible infrastructure, and inadequate educational resources are significant barriers preventing many children with disabilities from attending school. Conversely, 43% of respondents noted that children with disabilities have been able to access educational opportunities, especially in rural or community settings. This report analyzes these findings, providing insights into the current state of educational access for children with disabilities, and concludes with actionable recommendations.

(d) Access to Relevant Documentation

About 70% of respondents state that many individuals with disabilities do not know how to obtain necessary documents (e.g., ID cards, medical certificates, voter registration) required to access services or subsidies. Even when individuals attempt to secure necessary documentation, many face delays or rejections due to insufficient support from local leaders or social service agencies. 30% have successfully obtained documents such as ID cards and medical certificates, which facilitate access to subsidies and services.

Research indicates significant challenges for people with disabilities in accessing social protection and essential services. In Vietnam and Nepal, while many received some form of social assistance, uptake of disability-targeted benefits was low (Banks et al., 2019). Barriers to access included complicated application processes, eligibility assessment procedures, and lack of awareness (Banks et al., 2019). In Canada, people with physical disabilities reported difficulties obtaining family doctor services, with some being refused treatment due to their disability (Veltman et al., 2001). Physical accessibility of healthcare facilities was also a concern (Veltman et al., 2001). A study in India found that access to social institutions and utilization of civil services among people with disabilities was generally below 50%, with even lower rates for females (Govindasamy et al., 2019). Participation in empowerment schemes was extremely low, with only 3.2% of participants being members of self-help groups (Govindasamy et al., 2019).

2) What Qualities of Public Service Provision Address the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities

Research on public service quality for individuals with disabilities highlights several key factors. Technical competence of service providers and a 'human' approach to care are crucial elements. However, studies indicate mixed perceptions of service quality, with accessibility, competence, and security often falling short. Barriers such as physical obstacles, transportation issues, and communication difficulties can hinder access to appropriate client-centered care.

Despite these challenges, some institutions have made progress in providing efficient, responsive services without discrimination. To improve service quality, a multi-disciplinary approach is recommended, emphasizing coordination among medical and social providers. Additionally, providing special training for service officers and maintaining facilities for persons with disabilities can enhance service quality. Overall, a context-appropriate response to individual needs is essential for high-quality care.

(a) Perception of Service Quality

A survey of community members reveals a mixed perception of the quality of public services available to individuals with disabilities. Specifically, 51% of respondents believe that the quality of these services is good or very good. However, a significant 45% of respondents characterized the quality of services as neither good nor poor, indicating a lack of strong confidence in service provision.

(b) Adequacy of Social Service Response

Regarding social service provision, only 45% of respondents feel that these services adequately respond to the needs of individuals with disabilities. Conversely, a notable 56% of respondents believe that social services do not meet these needs adequately, highlighting a critical gap in service effectiveness.

While some studies report high satisfaction levels (Sintya Trifira et al., 2022), others highlight significant gaps in service provision (M. Mayarni et al., 2018). Key issues include accessibility, competence, and security in public spaces (M. Mayarni et al., 2018). Quality of life differences between adults with and without disabilities persist, particularly in areas of social networks, activities, and self-determination opportunities (D. Sands & E. Kozleski, 1994). To address these challenges, a multi-dimensional approach to quality care is necessary, focusing on clinical quality, access, client experience, and coordination (A. Lawthers et al., 2003). Barriers such as physical obstacles, transportation issues, and communication difficulties need to be addressed (A. Lawthers et al., 2003). Improving coordination among multiple medical and social providers presents a significant opportunity for enhancing service quality for individuals with disabilities (A. Lawthers et al., 2003).

3) Satisfaction and Experience of Individuals with Disabilities Accessing Public Services in the Social Sector

The result of analysis presents an analysis of the satisfaction and experiences of individuals with disabilities as they navigate public services in the social sector. The findings reveal a complex landscape of perceptions, highlighting both commendable aspects of service provision and significant areas for improvement. Below the description of detail indicator while using in this topic analysis:

- **Dissatisfaction with Social Services:** A significant portion of individuals with disabilities 52% express dissatisfaction with the social services they have accessed. This suggests that a considerable number of service users feel their needs are not adequately met, pointing to potential systemic issues within the provision of these services.
- **Community Satisfaction:** Contrasting the broader dissatisfaction, 47% of respondents report satisfaction with the social services

available within their community. This indicates that while there are challenges, there are also pockets of effective service delivery that warrant further investigation and potential replication.

- Overall Experience with Services: A dichotomy emerges in the overall experiences reported by individuals with disabilities: 52% describe their experiences as positive, while nearly half (48%) report negative experiences. This suggests a polarized perception of service quality, with some individuals having favorable interactions while others encounter significant barriers.
- Satisfaction Rates: Among the respondents, 45% indicate dissatisfaction or a lack of satisfaction with social services, while 43% express satisfaction or a high level of satisfaction. This indicates a near-even split in perceptions, suggesting that while some services meet expectations, many do not.
- Experience Assessment: Although a majority (52%) describe their experience accessing social services as very positive, a notable 48% categorize their experiences as very negative. This alarming statistic underscores the urgent need for improvements in service accessibility and quality.

As result mentioned, the research on satisfaction with public services among individuals with disabilities shows mixed results. One study in Turkey found high satisfaction levels with public services, though municipal services received lower ratings (Yenipazarlı et al., 2020). However, other studies indicate more varied experiences. Parents of children with developmental disabilities reported both positive and negative experiences, with satisfaction depending on factors like perceived expertise and intervention goals (Robert et al., 2015). Assessing satisfaction among people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be challenging due to communication difficulties and limited service options (Copeland et al., 2014). In rural areas, barriers to service access extend beyond physical obstacles to include sociocultural and sociopolitical factors, suggesting that one-size-fits-all policies may be inadequate (Neille & Penn, 2015). Overall, experiences appear to vary widely, highlighting the need for flexible, culturally appropriate approaches to both service provision and satisfaction assessment for individuals with disabilities.

4) Factors Contributing to the Level of Support that Individuals with Disabilities Feel from Their Families and Communities

The level of support individuals with disabilities receive from their families and communities plays a crucial role in their overall well-being, inclusion, and quality of life. Recent findings indicate that a significant majority of respondents believe that individuals with disabilities do receive support from their families, with 89% affirming this sentiment. Additionally, 78% of respondents report that this support is considered good. Conversely, a minority of respondents, 10%, indicate that individuals with disabilities do not receive adequate support from their families.

This report delves into the factors contributing to these perceptions of support, exploring the dynamics of family involvement, community resources, and the socio-economic challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. By analyzing current research and relevant data, this summary aims to highlight the critical elements that influence the level of support experienced by individuals with

disabilities and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing this support. The highlight of key finding described in the bellow:

(a) Family Support Dynamics

- A substantial 89% of respondents believe that individuals with disabilities receive support from their families. This finding underscores the importance of family as a primary source of care and emotional backing for individuals facing disabilities.
- Among those who do receive support, 78% report that it is of good quality. This suggests that families are not only present but are also generally effective in providing the necessary assistance.

(b) Barriers to Support

- Despite the positive feedback about family support, 10% of respondents indicate that individuals with disabilities do not receive such support. This highlights the existence of barriers that might prevent families from providing adequate assistance.
- Common barriers include socio-economic challenges, lack of awareness or understanding of disability issues, and systemic exclusions within communities, which can limit families' capabilities to support their loved ones effectively.

(c) Community Influence

- The role of community in supporting individuals with disabilities is significant. Communities that foster inclusive environments tend to bolster the support families can provide. Access to resources, social networks, and community programs are essential for enhancing the support system for individuals with disabilities.
- Communities that lack these resources may inadvertently place additional stress on families, further complicating their ability to offer support.

(d) Employment and Education Challenges

- Employment rates for individuals with disabilities remain significantly lower than those for individuals without disabilities. For example, only 36.6% of individuals with disabilities aged 16-64 were employed as of recent statistics. This economic disadvantage can strain family relationships and reduce the overall support network available to individuals with disabilities.
- Educational attainment is another area of concern, as individuals with disabilities are less likely to graduate from high school compared to their peers. This educational gap can lead to increased reliance on family support and further emphasize the need for strong familial relationships.

Research indicates that families play a crucial role in supporting individuals with disabilities, but the level of support can vary. While some families provide good support (Jovanova & Radojichikj, 2013), others may not offer adequate assistance to access essential services like education, which can impact employment opportunities (Opoku et al., 2018). Factors contributing to family support include coping resources, social participation, and perceived burden (Bhatia, 2018). Faith communities can also provide support, with practices, attitudes, and knowledge about disabilities influencing participation (Ault et al., 2013). The stress experienced by parents of children with disabilities is significant, particularly when first learning of the diagnosis (Jovanova & Radojichikj, 2013). To enhance family

resilience and support, community-based strategies that facilitate inclusion and culturally sensitive formal support systems are recommended (Bhatia, 2018). Overall, family support is critical for individuals with disabilities to overcome social barriers and achieve better outcomes.

5) Types of Support Families Provide to Individuals with Disabilities

Many respondents indicate that families provide regular support for various needs, such as food, clothing, health care, and financial assistance. Families often help their members access health care services, such as at health centers or hospitals, and facilitate the acquisition of necessary documents to access social services and subsidies.

Many respondents mention that family support is crucial in accessing medical treatments and in the process of obtaining necessary documents for social services or subsidies. Some families still face challenges in achieving satisfactory results from these services, but family support remains essential.

Communities also play a vital role in providing support, emphasizing neighbors and community groups that help facilitate access to public services, such as health and education, and participation in community activities. Some respondents highlight the importance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that offer workshops and awareness activities, especially for individuals with disabilities.

Families of children with disabilities provide crucial support in various areas, including accessing health services, obtaining necessary documents for social services, and meeting basic needs (Araújo et al., 2016). The types of support can be categorized into four main groups: support, respite, child minding, and emergency support (Tétreault et al., 2014). Family support networks and health professionals play vital roles in enhancing family quality of life, though public service cuts have exacerbated health inequities (Araújo et al., 2016). Communities and NGOs also contribute significantly by facilitating access to public services and organizing awareness activities (Vanegas & Abdelrahim, 2016). However, families often lack the knowledge, resources, and skills to overcome challenges associated with raising a child with disabilities (Vanegas & Abdelrahim, 2016). Further research is needed to comprehensively understand the types of support families provide, the impact on family members, available support systems, and societal implications (Vanegas & Abdelrahim, 2016).

6) Specific Challenges Faced by Individuals with Disabilities When Accessing Social Services

Individuals with disabilities encounter numerous challenges when trying to access social services. This report synthesizes findings from recent research to illuminate the specific barriers they face, the extent of awareness among the general public regarding these barriers, and the impact of these obstacles on the ability of individuals with disabilities to obtain essential services. The challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing social services can be viewed through multiple lenses, including physical accessibility, societal attitudes, and systemic inequalities. The detail description of finding described in bellow:

- (a) Awareness of Barriers : A notable 57% of respondents are aware of specific barriers that individuals with disabilities face when accessing social services. This indicates a moderate level of public understanding regarding the challenges this demographic encounters.
- (b) Types of Barriers :
 - Lack of Accessible Facilities: A significant 26% of respondents highlighted the lack of accessible facilities as a primary barrier. This includes physical infrastructure that does not accommodate wheelchair users or those with other mobility challenges.
 - Discrimination and Stigma: Ongoing discrimination and social stigma were mentioned by 11% of respondents. This reflects a social environment that can be hostile or unwelcoming to individuals with disabilities, further complicating their ability to access necessary services.
 - Public Transportation Issues: Only 5% of respondents cited a lack of public transportation as a barrier. However, it is crucial to note that transportation is often a critical component for accessing services, suggesting that while it may not be the most cited barrier, it remains significant.
- (c) Perceived Significance of Barriers: An overwhelming 75% of respondents believe that the barriers outlined are significant and substantially hinder individuals with disabilities from accessing social services. This consensus underscores the urgency of addressing these issues.
- (d) Neutral Perception: Interestingly, 18% of respondents view the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing social services as neither significant nor unimportant. This may indicate a lack of understanding or a perception that some barriers are overstated.

As description mentioned in above, following research conducted by Bezyak et al., (2020); Grills et al., (2017) the individuals with disabilities face significant barriers when accessing social services and transportation, which negatively impacts their community participation and quality of life. Common obstacles include lack of accessible facilities, discrimination, and limited public transportation options as such the lack of accessible facilities is a significant concern, as it directly impacts the ability of individuals with disabilities to physically access services. Many social service organizations have not fully implemented the necessary modifications to ensure compliance with accessibility standards, thus limiting access for those who depend on wheelchair ramps, elevators, or other adaptive technologies. Social Barriers: Discrimination and stigma remain pervasive issues that can deter individuals with disabilities from seeking help. This social barrier not only affects their mental health but also contributes to a cycle of isolation and reduced access to necessary services. The negative attitudes encountered can lead to feelings of worthlessness or reluctance to engage with social service providers. Transportation Challenges: While the data reveals that only a small percentage cite transportation as a barrier, the importance of reliable public transport cannot be underestimated. Accessible transportation is crucial for individuals with disabilities to reach appointments, employment opportunities, and community resources. The lack of accessible public transport

options can severely limit their independence and ability to participate fully in society.

People with certain disabilities, such as visual impairments or psychiatric conditions, experience more severe challenges (Bezyak et al., 2020). Transportation-related barriers are particularly problematic, with many individuals reporting that limited access hinders their social life (Bascom, 2017). Additional barriers include lack of information, physical inaccessibility, and inadequate disability literacy among service providers (Grills et al., 2017; Scheer et al., 2003). These access problems can be categorized as environmental, structural, and process barriers, affecting individuals' health, functioning, and overall well-being (Scheer et al., 2003). Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving the lives of people with disabilities and ensuring their full participation in society.

7) Regulatory Challenges

The regulatory challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing social services. Drawing on recent survey data, it highlights the perceptions of both service users and providers regarding the effectiveness of existing policies and regulations. The findings indicate a significant divide in experiences, with a notable percentage of individuals reporting that current regulations create barriers, especially for elderly members of this community. Despite some positive experiences, many respondents highlighted persistent issues that need to be addressed to improve service accessibility and effectiveness.

Perception of Regulations: The survey revealed that 43% of respondents believe that regulations and policies do not obstruct access to social services for individuals with disabilities. Conversely, 57% contend that these regulations still pose significant obstacles, particularly for the elderly and those unable to access necessary subsidies or invalidity benefits.

Experiences of Individuals with Disabilities: While a majority of individuals with disabilities reported positive experiences with social services, 40% indicated challenges with physical accessibility. Additionally, 37% faced difficulties in obtaining essential information regarding available services, and 20% experienced negative attitudes or discrimination. Only 2% of respondents felt that the services they accessed were inadequate.

Impact on Elderly Individuals: The survey particularly highlights that elderly individuals with disabilities face compounded barriers, as many are unable to effectively seek support due to a lack of motivation stemming from inadequate benefits and assistance programs.

Research indicates that individuals with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing social services and participating fully in society. While some progress has been made in regulations and policies, barriers persist (Noreau et al., 2015; Venturiello, 2017). Common obstacles include physical inaccessibility, lack of information, and negative attitudes or discrimination (Grills et al., 2017). The prevalence of disability is estimated at 6.8% in some regions, with psychosocial distress and mobility impairments being

most common (Grills et al., 2017). To enhance community access and participation, optimization of services such as primary healthcare, family support, and job training is crucial (Noreau et al., 2015). Additionally, technologies play an increasingly important role in improving mobility, communication, and home adaptation for individuals with disabilities (Noreau et al., 2015). To ensure accurate representation and inclusion, it is essential to remove barriers to survey participation for people with disabilities (Mitchell et al., 2006).

DISCUSSION

Services for individuals with disabilities are fundamental to ensuring equal opportunities and rights for participation in society. These services include a range of support mechanisms, such as healthcare, education, professional training, transportation, and social services. The goal is to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and enable them to access their rights and actively participate in community life. In this context, accessibility refers to the ease and assistance that individuals with disabilities can receive when using these services. It addresses the physical, social, and attitudinal barriers they may encounter.

1) Services for individuals with disabilities are crucial for ensuring equal opportunities and societal participation.

Despite progress in accessibility, barriers persist in various community settings, including government facilities and services (McDonald et al., 2015). Accessibility encompasses multiple areas such as housing, employment, and education, with an accessible built environment being key to promoting autonomy and active social and economic life (Kerbler, 2012). The European Union recognizes accessibility as vital for sustainable development, addressing it in policies related to architecture, transport, education, and health (Maliszewska-Nienartowicz, 2020). Enhancing community access requires optimizing services like primary healthcare, family support, and job training. Technologies play an increasingly important role in improving mobility, communication, and home adaptation, although their rapid evolution challenges efficacy testing. Ultimately, fostering community access and participation should be based on a culture of 'ability' that impacts all citizens, regardless of their life situation (Noreau et al., 2015).

2) The CBRN-TL team collected perspectives from the population regarding the key research questions through a survey targeting a representative sample.

The survey instrument was developed by the CBRN-TL program and reviewed by the USAID/Timor-Leste Advocacy Activity team. The sample size for the survey consisted of 207 participants, selected randomly from the population, with a margin of error of 10 percent, extending to 25 percent to account for potential respondent limitations and logistical challenges in identifying and reaching out to the targeted population.

This summary synthesizes findings from four studies related to health surveys and data collection in Timor-Leste.

Research on the National Immunization Program revealed generally positive perceptions among the population and health professionals (Tilman et al., 2020). A tuberculosis (TB) knowledge survey identified socio-demographic factors associated with TB awareness, stigma, and treatment intentions, highlighting the need for targeted communication strategies (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2019). A protocol for a national TB prevalence survey was developed to provide more accurate disease burden estimates and insights into health-seeking behaviors (Lopes et al., 2024). Additionally, a study on interviewer effects in surveys found that subjective questions were more susceptible to bias, particularly for female respondents, emphasizing the importance of considering cultural norms in survey design and implementation (Himelein, 2015). These studies collectively underscore the significance of well-designed surveys in understanding and addressing public health challenges in Timor-Leste.

The situation for people with disabilities regarding access to public services in the Social Area (Health, Education, Social Services) in Ermera District showed Seventy-nine percent of respondents reported that people with disabilities face challenges when accessing health services, including mental health care. However, 21% of respondents indicated that people with disabilities still manage to access health treatment at health posts or centers. Fifty-four percent of respondents shared that individuals with disabilities encounter difficulties obtaining social assistance subsidies due to incomplete or missing documents (e.g., medical certificates, ID cards, electoral registration). Nevertheless, 46% have successfully accessed social assistance and subsidies. Fifty-one percent of respondents mentioned that many children with disabilities cannot attend school due to their family's economic conditions, a lack of accessible infrastructure, and inadequate educational resources. However, 49% of respondents noted that children with disabilities do have access to education, particularly in rural areas or at the community level. Sixty percent of respondents stated that many individuals with disabilities are unaware of how to obtain the necessary documents (e.g., ID cards, medical certificates, electoral registration) required to access services or subsidies. Conversely, 40% reported success in obtaining documents such as ID cards and medical certificates, which facilitated access to subsidies and services.

Research indicates that people with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing health and social services. Common challenges include physical inaccessibility of facilities, lack of transportation, and financial constraints (Zuurmond et al., 2019; van Rooy et al., 2012). In rural Namibia, people with disabilities struggle to reach health centers due to distance and lack of transport (van Rooy et al., 2012). Studies in Cameroon, India, and Vietnam highlight the influence of individual factors, family dynamics, and community attitudes on service utilization (Zuurmond et al., 2019; Banks et al., 2019). Additionally, awareness of available services, understanding of application processes, and perceived utility of programs affect access to social protection schemes (Banks et al., 2019). People with disabilities often experience worse socioeconomic conditions and face more barriers to healthcare compared to those without disabilities (Zandam & Juni, 2019). These findings underscore the need for equitable health policies and services that address the specific needs of people with disabilities (Zandam & Juni, 2019).

The quality of public service provision for people with disabilities in the community mentioned that Fifty-one percent of respondents stated that the quality of public service provision is good or very good for people with disabilities in the community. Meanwhile, 41% indicated that service provision responded to the needs of people with disabilities. However, 49% confirmed that the quality of public services for individuals with disabilities is neither good nor bad, with 45% stating that services do not meet the needs of people with disabilities, and 14% feeling neutral.

3) Research on public service quality for people with disabilities in Indonesia reveals mixed results.

While some studies indicate positive experiences, others highlight significant challenges. In Pekanbaru, accessibility, competence, and security aspects of public services were found lacking, despite good responsiveness and courtesy in formal institutions (Mayarni et al., 2018). However, the Pekanbaru Public Service Mall was reported to provide very good service quality, with efficiency and responsiveness for disabled individuals (Trifira et al., 2022). Nationwide, issues such as inadequate services, lack of access to information, and societal stigma were identified as barriers to obtaining human rights for people with disabilities (Utami et al., 2023). In Tangerang City, the quality of public services for disabled individuals was found to be suboptimal, with deficiencies in tangible facilities, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy from service providers (Oktavianes et al., 2024). These findings underscore the need for continued improvement in public service provision for people with disabilities across Indonesia.

The satisfaction level and experience of individuals with disabilities regarding access to public services in the social area shown the same 45% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction or a lack of satisfaction with the social service provision they accessed. However, 43% reported satisfaction with the social services they accessed in the community, while 12% described the social service provision as neutral. The majority of respondents (45%) described their experiences accessing social services as positive or very positive. In contrast, 40% reported negative experiences. While individuals with disabilities confirmed positive experiences accessing social services, 40% faced challenges related to physical accessibility, 37% reported limited access to information, and 20% encountered negative attitudes or discrimination. Additionally, 2% indicated that they felt the services they accessed were inadequate.

Research on access to public services for individuals with disabilities reveals mixed experiences and satisfaction levels. While some studies report positive experiences for a significant portion of respondents (Palu, 2021), others highlight persistent barriers. Common challenges include physical inaccessibility, lack of information, and negative attitudes or discrimination (N. Grills et al., 2017). Satisfaction levels vary, with some studies showing nearly equal proportions of satisfied and dissatisfied users (Palu, 2021). Factors influencing satisfaction include awareness of rights, local culture, and urbanization pressure (Palu, 2021). Language differences and cultural expectations can create barriers to accessing services, particularly for minority groups (E. Yeung et al., 2016). Some public facilities lack adequate accessibility features for

persons with disabilities (Herlina Sakawati et al., 2022). Recommendations include improving awareness among political leaders, enhancing collaboration between local authorities and community organizations, and ensuring inclusive design in public services to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities (Palu, 2021; E. Yeung et al., 2016).

Factors contribute to the level of acceptance that individuals with disabilities feel from their families and communities provide eighty-nine percent of respondents indicated that individuals with disabilities receive acceptance from their families, while 10% confirmed that their families do not accept them. Following type of supportive provided by families to individuals with disabilities as such many respondents noted that families provide regular support for daily needs such as food, clothing, health care, and financial assistance. Families help their members access health care services, such as at health centers or hospitals, and facilitate access to necessary documents to obtain social services and subsidies. Therefore, some respondents mentioned family support in accessing medical treatments and in the process of obtaining documents required for social services or subsidies. However, some families face significant challenges in achieving satisfactory results from these services, although family support remains crucial.

4) Family support plays a crucial role in the acceptance and well-being of individuals with disabilities.

Studies have shown that emotional support from family and friends significantly impacts disability acceptance (Li & Moore, 1998). However, some families struggle to provide adequate support for accessing education and other essential services, which can hinder social inclusion (Opoku et al., 2018). Key factors influencing family acceptance of disability include effective communication with healthcare professionals, strong partner relationships, and a functional social support network (Kolařikova, 2014). Family members can positively impact healthcare access for individuals with disabilities by providing financial support, physical assistance, and spiritual support. Conversely, negative factors such as misconceptions about disability causes and preferences for alternative treatments can hinder access to proper healthcare (Acheampong et al., 2021). Overall, family support is vital for individuals with disabilities to overcome social barriers and improve their quality of life.

Specific challenges do individuals with disabilities continue to face when accessing social services overed fifty-seven percent of respondents reported awareness of barriers and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing social services. However, 26% noted a lack of accessible facilities, 11% mentioned discrimination and stigma, and 5% reported a lack of public transportation. Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated that all barriers mentioned are significant and severely affect individuals with disabilities' access to social services. Eighteen percent stated that the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities in accessing social services are neither significant nor insignificant. Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that regulations and policies do not prevent individuals with disabilities from accessing social services, while 57% reported that policies and regulations continue to impede

access for individuals with disabilities, especially those of younger age who cannot access subsidies and benefits.

Individuals with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing public transportation and social services, which negatively impacts their community participation and quality of life. Physical inaccessibility, lack of information, and inadequate transport options are common challenges (Grills et al., 2017; Bezyak et al., 2017). These barriers disproportionately affect certain disability groups, including those with visual impairments, psychiatric disabilities, and multiple disabilities (Bezyak et al., 2020). The majority of individuals with disabilities report that transportation limitations hinder their social life (Bascom, 2017). Spontaneous activities are particularly affected by transportation issues, highlighting the need for extended hours and alternative options (Bezyak et al., 2020). Despite improvements following the Americans with Disabilities Act, both physical and attitudinal barriers persist in public transportation systems (Bezyak et al., 2017). Addressing these challenges requires targeted policy advocacy, improved accessibility, and educational initiatives to reduce stigma and discrimination against individuals with disabilities (Bezyak et al., 2017; Bezyak et al., 2020).

As an recommendations particularly for the ministry of social solidarity and inclusion suggest to enhance collaboration between the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Health, and community leaders to facilitate access for individuals with disabilities to obtain medical certifications. Revise the relevant legislation to consider individuals with disabilities aged 0-17 for subsidy support and amend the term "Invalids" that limits individuals with disabilities from accessing government subsidies. Ensure access for individuals with disabilities to social integration measures (employment, services, or financial support). Identify, support, and refer eligible children with disabilities to access subsidized programs under the Bolsa da Mãe conditions.

Research on disability policies in Brazil highlights both progress and ongoing challenges. While significant advancements have been made since the 1988 Constitution, barriers persist in education and employment (Saraiva Sá et al., 2024). The Continuous Cash Benefit Program (BPC) provides financial support to people with disabilities, but access is determined through medical examinations that may not fully capture the complexities of disability (Santos et al., 2009). A study on BPC concessions for children found that grants were more dependent on diagnosis and age than on the degree of dysfunction (Dias de Campos et al., 2022). Additionally, there is a lack of specific attention to children aged 0-3 with disabilities in both government programs and scientific literature. Social Assistance has invested the most in programs for this demographic, while Education has produced the most studies on school inclusion policies (Rozek & Martins, 2020). These findings underscore the need for comprehensive, intersectoral policies to support individuals with disabilities across all age groups.

The Ministry of Education should improve accessibility in school infrastructure to facilitate access to education for children with disabilities, including providing specialized teachers to educate children with disabilities. Data shows that 51% of individuals with disabilities currently do not have access to education due to a lack of

inclusive infrastructure in schools (ramps, wide doors, specialized classrooms).

Research indicates that children with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing education in various countries. Key factors limiting accessibility include inadequate school infrastructure, lack of specialized teachers, negative societal attitudes, and poverty (Limaye, 2016; Alam, 2024; Opoku et al., 2015). In Ghana, limited special education facilities and resources hinder accessibility for disabled children (Opoku et al., 2015). Similarly, in Indonesia, despite progress in policy frameworks, implementation of inclusive education faces challenges such as limited mainstreaming, insufficient teacher training, and poor cross-sectoral collaboration (Hata et al., 2021). To improve access, studies recommend investing in inclusive infrastructure, enhancing teacher training, and strengthening governance and service delivery (Hata et al., 2021; Opoku et al., 2015). Additionally, addressing parental perceptions, societal attitudes, and poverty is crucial for increasing educational opportunities for children with disabilities (Limaye, 2016; Alam, 2024). Overall, a multifaceted approach involving policy reforms, resource allocation, and awareness campaigns is necessary to ensure equitable education access for disabled children.

5) Ministry of Health must increase outreach services through Family Health Systems and SISCA to facilitate access for individuals with disabilities to health assistance in rural areas.

Data indicates that the majority, 79% of individuals with disabilities, face challenges in accessing health care services, including mental health care and ensure that health posts and clinics provide accessibility for individuals with disabilities through ramps and specialized care, including mental health services.

Research indicates that individuals with disabilities in rural areas face significant barriers to accessing primary health care services. These challenges are exacerbated by factors such as limited availability of healthcare facilities, perceived low quality of care, geographic distance, and affordability issues (Dassah et al., 2018; Iezzoni et al., 2006). Studies show that rural residents with disabilities often struggle to find physicians who understand their conditions and may need to travel long distances for specialized care (Iezzoni et al., 2006). Transportation difficulties further compound these access problems (Lishner et al., 1996). In South Africa, persons with disabilities in rural areas experience higher rates of unmet health needs compared to non-disabled individuals, with barriers increasing with disability severity and decreasing with education level (Vergunst et al., 2017). To address these issues, interventions beyond healthcare are needed, including improvements in transportation and accessibility (Iezzoni et al., 2006). Additionally, health policies should consider all dimensions of access and their interactions to promote equitable healthcare for rural residents with disabilities (Dassah et al., 2018).

RECOMMENDATION

The results of the principal findings are based on the following five research questions: (i) The assessment of people with disabilities regarding public services in the social sector (Health, Education,

Social Services), (ii) The quality of public service delivery for people with disabilities in the community, (iii) The level of satisfaction and experiences of people with disabilities regarding public services in the social sector, (iv) Factors contributing to the level of satisfaction that people with disabilities feel from their families and communities, and (v) Barriers and challenges faced by people with disabilities when accessing public services.

From the findings, CBRN-TL indicates that there are significant gaps that people with disabilities encounter when accessing social services. These gaps are largely connected to healthcare, social assistance, education, and obtaining necessary documents such as identity cards, medical certificates, and electoral documentation. Therefore, CBRN-TL recommends that the government, local authorities, and civil society organizations consider the following important points:

(a) Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion:

- Strengthen collaboration between the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Health, and community leaders to facilitate access to medical certificates for people with disabilities.
- Revise Decree Law 10/2018, which supports subsidies for people with disabilities, to include individuals aged 0-17 who require access to subsidy support and change the term "Invalids" to better reflect the preferences of people with disabilities seeking government support.
- Distribute information about subsidy support programs and social assistance at the community level so that people with disabilities are aware of the requirements that facilitate access to subsidies.
- Promote the involvement of people with disabilities in social programs at both the community and municipal levels.

(b) Ministry of Education:

- Improve accessibility in school infrastructure to facilitate education for children with disabilities, including providing specialized teachers to assist children with disabilities. Data shows that 51% of individuals with disabilities currently lack access to education due to inadequate inclusive infrastructure in schools (ramps, wide doors, specialized classrooms).

(c) Ministry of Health:

- Enhance outreach services, Family Health, and SisCA to facilitate access to health assistance for people with disabilities in rural areas. Data indicates that the majority, 79%, of people with disabilities face challenges accessing healthcare, including mental health services.
- Ensure that health posts and clinics provide accessibility for people with disabilities through ramps, specialized care, including mental health support.

(d) Ministry of Justice:

- Ensure that all locations where individuals can obtain identity cards and electoral cards, including Civil Registry offices, Electoral Commission offices, and other relevant institutions, are accessible to individuals with mobility disabilities. This includes ensuring that entrances are accessible for wheelchair users, with clear signage in accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print).
- Simplify and rationalize the application process for individuals with disabilities. This includes providing assistance to complete forms, minimizing required documentation, and allowing alternative submission methods (e.g., online applications, telephone services, or home visits for those unable to travel).
- Provide continuous training for public officials and electoral officials on how to interact with and assist individuals with disabilities. This includes training on disability awareness, accessibility issues, and legal rights according to national and international frameworks.

(e) Families:

- Educate families on the specific health needs of their disabled members and how to advocate for appropriate medical care. This includes ensuring that families understand how to navigate the health system, seek specialized care, and access therapy and necessary services.
- Assist families in understanding and accessing social services available to people with disabilities, including financial assistance, rehabilitation services, and social integration programs.
- Ensure that families are actively involved in educational journeys for their children with disabilities and support them in navigating the inclusive education system.
- Support families in understanding and utilizing the justice system to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, particularly in cases of abuse, discrimination, or legal challenges.
- Raise awareness within families and the community about the rights of individuals with disabilities to create an inclusive environment and provide support.

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