

Using Appreciative Inquiry with disability stakeholders to develop a strategic action plan towards UNCRPD implementation in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Background:

This study aimed to develop a strategic action plan for advancing the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in Namibia.

Methods:

Utilising an appreciative inquiry action research methodology, two consultative meetings were conducted involving ten purposively selected disability stakeholders who had previously collaborated but faced organisational challenges leading to group disbandment. The appreciative inquiry 4-D cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny) was used to guide the process, enabling stakeholders to leverage strengths and address challenges constructively. The appreciative inquiry approach focused on identifying successful strategies and positive attributes that could be used to effectively promote disability rights in Namibia.

Findings:

The findings highlight key enablers of action plan implementation, including collaborative work, effective use of human capital, and strong stakeholder commitment. These factors were reinforced by regular meetings, transparent information sharing, and joint awareness-raising programs. Participants harnessed their collective strengths through open communication and mutual respect, leading to the development of a strategic action plan.

Conclusion:

Appreciative inquiry action research methodology proved effective in developing a strategic action plan to promote the UNCRPD implementation in Namibia. By emphasising positive aspects and leveraging collaborative strengths, stakeholders were able to align efforts towards advancing disability rights within the country.

Key Words: Appreciative inquiry, disability stakeholders, disability rights strategic action plan, UNCRPD, Namibia

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) treaty signed by the government of Namibia in 2007 identifies the rights of persons with disabilities, including the obligations of the government to promote, protect and ensure the identified rights are upheld (United Nations, 2006). The UNCRPD compliments the occupational justice framework on navigating structural and contextual factors to redress the determinants of occupational justice for persons with disabilities. In addition, the UNCRPD affirms the centrality of occupation to health, well-being, and human rights framework (Hammel, 2017; Chibaya et al, 2018).

The lack of information on disability rights, barriers to inclusivity and the national and regional UNCRPD execution challenges faced by people with disabilities in Namibia were significant drawbacks in promoting the implementation of the UNCRPD (Chibaya et al, 2021). In addition, the fragmented Namibian disability sector kept on adopting a deficit-based paradigm creating conflicts (Chibaya et al, 2021). However, opportunities to advance the UNCRPD and national disability rights enabling strategies in Namibia were identified as positive themes promoting disability rights (Chibaya et al, 2021).

Appreciative inquiry design is based on the premise that the art of affirmative inquiry brings out positive metaphors, which leads to positive engagements (Cooperrider et al, 2008). Given that appreciative inquiry enhances the collaboration of different stakeholders in research and practice development, using this approach in the disability sector would promote sustainable practice change (Watkins, 2016). An

appreciative inquiry process was adopted to engage the disability stakeholders in compelling a positive and hopeful view in developing a strategic action plan to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD and turn that into a pattern of learning, designing, and growth (Watkins, 2001). The essence of appreciative inquiry was recalling definite, grounded and inspirational past collaborative experiences among the disability stakeholders for present deliberation and future contemplation (Giles & Kung, 2010) in accelerating disability rights. This process redirected the focus on what is positive within the disability sector in promoting the implementation of the UNCRPD (Reed, 2006). Therefore, appreciative inquiry has been adopted to facilitate the fragmented disability sector to move from a deficit-based paradigm to a strengths-based perspective. The multitude of potential benefits for the disability stakeholders could be combined to build resilience and promote growth, eliminating disunity and internal conflicts during meetings.

Research in various settings has shown that participants in appreciative inquiry were reinvigorated to perform as per the dreams and desires that were illustrated through the process (Wolf & Hanson, 2017; Clark, 2015; Maier, 2008). The disability stakeholders identified and understood what made them strong to participate effectively in promoting the implementation of the UNCRPD to advance disability rights. The authors intended to facilitate the disability stakeholders focusing on the positive themes identified in the previous collaborative activities to achieve transformative thinking. The noted previous successful collaborative activities, which indicated some positive milestones, covered towards implementing the UNCRPD, included opportunities to

advance the UNCRPD and national disability rights enabling strategies in Namibia (Chibaya et al, 2021). This research focused on identifying what worked well in achieving positive results (Surr & Gates, 2017) and what motivated the disability stakeholders to advance disability rights by focusing on their positive strengths (Thomas et al, 2000). Therefore, the authors adopted an opportunity-centric approach using appreciative inquiry to develop a strategic initiative to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD in Namibia using the disability stakeholders.

Background to the inquiry

This research report is part of a more extensive study aimed at developing an action plan to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD in Namibia using appreciative inquiry. It is built on the experience and perspectives of the stakeholders from the disability sector, and the same stakeholders were engaged in the appreciative inquiry to promote disability rights (Chibaya et al, 2021). The disability stakeholders included policymakers, policy implementers and persons with disabilities whose roles were diverse in promoting disability rights. These stakeholders have been brought together under Disability United Namibia to advance the implementation of the UNCRPD.

Therefore, the active involvement of persons with disabilities is essential, as their participation lies at the core of the UNCRPD and is crucial for driving disability rights reforms (Mittler, 2012). There is need for total inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities in the bodies that make decisions and policies (Chichaya, 2018). Disability United Namibia became the platform where different disability stakeholders meet.

The first author targeted participants from the three groups of disability stakeholders: persons with disabilities, policymakers, and implementers who have worked as policy implementers within the disability sector. In addition, interactions with the policymakers, other implementers and persons with disabilities occurred at various fora. This broadened the perspective, allowed the first author to rapidly adjust the research design during the process, and increased the potential for accurate interpretation of observed behaviours (Whitney et al, 2019). Each participant was allowed to give meaning to the events to address potential bias. The participants further expanded their focus points to prevent bias from the first author's personal experience. The ongoing critical analysis (meta-evaluation) and critical reflection on the intended action plan to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD by the stakeholders during the two appreciative inquiry meetings were significant sources of rigour in this research.

Themes from different stakeholders were presented, as indicated in previous research findings (Chibaya et al, 2021). The opposing themes included the contextual limitations in implementing the UNCRPD, the inadequacy of disability rights information at the grassroots level and barriers to inclusivity. The positive themes noted included (i) national disability rights enabling strategies, (ii) the UNCRPD enforcement strategies, and (iii) opportunities to advance the UNCRPD. This helped the participants to recall their perspectives and experiences.

The participants were allowed to add any missing information or correct some information gathered during the previous research findings. However, the group felt that all their issues were represented. Guided by the first author, the group

identified and focused on the best collaborative moments when the stakeholders achieved one of the positive themes (Nyaupane, & Timothy, 2013). The action plan was derived collaboratively from how the disability sector achieved the three positive themes with the idea of improving disability rights and addressing some opposing themes.

METHODS

Appreciative inquiry was identified as an appropriate methodology to bring about a sustainable change in promoting disability rights in Namibia through exploring and actively seeking what worked well among the disability stakeholders to advance disability rights. This study's questions and methods were informed by the positive themes from the previous research findings (Chibaya et al, 2021). The design was appropriate because it focused on leveraging the disability sector's positive strengths to promote sustainable disability rights. Figure 1 shows the framework that was followed.

As a tool for change, appreciative inquiry informed the co-construction of knowledge to

promote the implementation of the UNCRPD in Namibia by the persons with disabilities, policymakers and implementers within the disability sector. This model stimulated collaboration of the disability stakeholders in identifying positive strengths and strategies that promoted disability rights, analysing why these strategies worked previously, and then building on these strengths and strategy (Goldberg, 2001).

Data Collection: Flow through the appreciative inquiry 4-D Cycle

The participants were brought together under Disability United Namibia using the appreciative inquiry process to develop an action plan, accomplishing the overall research goal. Disability United Namibia became a neutral name under which participants recognised themselves as equal members with an equal voice. The meetings took place in the hall at a disability resource centre.

Ten participants representing disability stakeholders took part in the appreciative inquiry process. These stakeholders

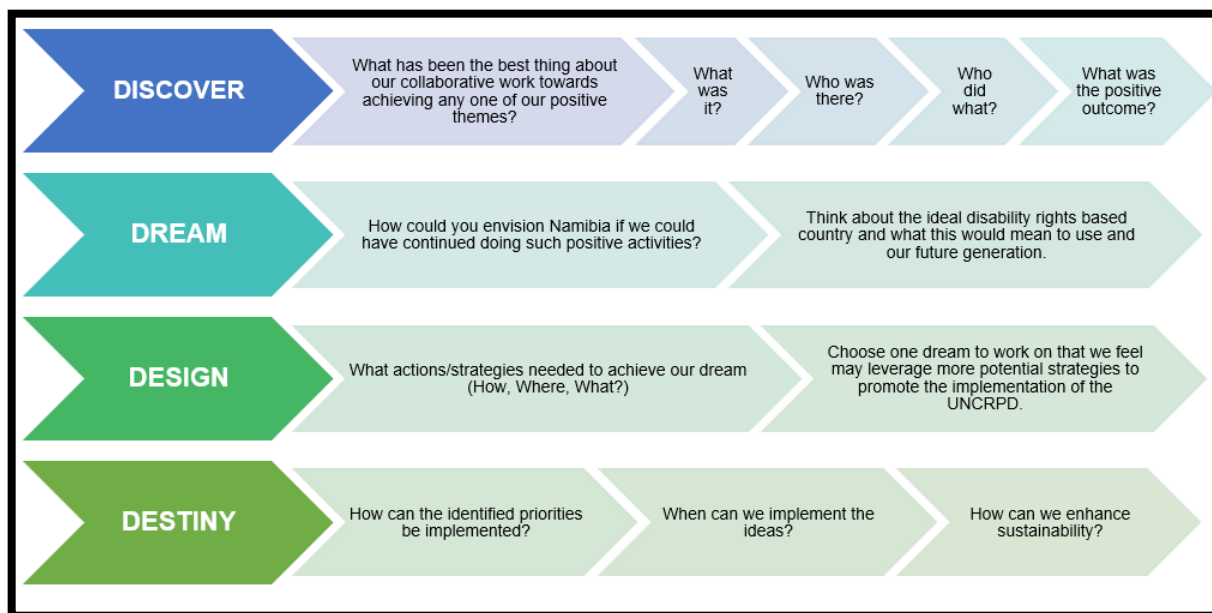


Figure 1: Four-step appreciative inquiry framework

included individuals with disabilities, their families, unpaid carers, and organisations supporting disability issues. Participants were purposively recruited from those who had previously consented to research participation and were invited via telephone to join the Disability United Namibia meetings aimed at developing an action plan.

The discovery stage forms the first stage of the appreciative inquiry. The **first** step intended to find and discuss the best aspect of the disability sector's collaborative work towards achieving any positive disability rights strategies. This included using the secondary data, which emanated from previous research findings through the engagement of the disability stakeholders within the disability sector whose positive previous findings were descriptively narrated into themes (Chibaya et al, 2021).

The participants were divided into three groups: policymakers policy implementers, with the third group of persons with disabilities. The groups were tasked to provide narratives of when they felt that their work and its relationship to the context successfully contributed to achieving the identified positive themes. The disability stakeholders sought insights into the root cause of the success of the identified positive themes. The three groups came into one leading group (plenary) and provided feedback, which the research assistant noted.

The participants went into their groups and were requested to dream about what Namibia could have been if they had continued executing their functions on disability rights. The dream forms the **second** step in the appreciative inquiry framework and considers the future if the

stakeholders are fully aligned to their strengths and aspirations. Insights were sought into the activities that led to the achievements of the three major themes ((i) national disability rights enabling strategies, (ii) the UNCRPD enforcement strategies, and (iii) opportunities to advance the UNCRPD) (Chibaya et al, 2021). This activity generated many possibilities, including increased awareness and upholding of disability rights at the grassroots level, increased political support, improved collaborative work among the disability stakeholders, reduced barriers to inclusivity and increased participation of persons with disabilities at different levels.

The **third** step of the appreciative inquiry framework, the design, involved Disability United Namibia developing a strategic action plan that needed to be taken to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD, thereby challenging the current status quo. The themes were collated and integrated from different personal experiences in line with the previous findings. The group focused on identified strengths (Table 1) that could be harnessed to develop a strategic action plan.

The **fourth** and final step in the appreciative inquiry framework is the 'destiny' step that translates the appreciative inquiry framework into action needed to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD. This is the implementation phase, during which the action plan will be implemented. This step is beyond the scope of the study as the ownership was transferred to the stakeholders, with persons with disabilities being the leaders. This included an awareness-raising programme on the contents of the UNCRPD and its implementation targeting the policymakers, developing an educative outreach tool on the UNCRPD in all languages for local media

and uses in awareness-raising at the grassroots level to promote the UNCRPD implementation.

Data analysis

The qualitative data collection involved small focus group discussions where participants reflected on their peak experiences in service. These discussions were audio-recorded and supported by notes taken on flip charts. Initially, participants shared in smaller groups before coming together in a plenary session to identify common themes. The use of flip charts by the first author and research assistant allowed for visible tracking of emerging narratives. Patterns from the group discussions were documented to support the identification of shared experiences. All three authors collaboratively analysed the method and its impact, supported by virtual meetings that facilitated consistent data generation and a systematic analytical approach. Audio recordings were transcribed and verified for accuracy, then subjected to inductive thematic analysis. Data were organised into codes, categories, and ultimately themes, which were reviewed by co-authors. Verbatim quotes were included to preserve participant voices and provide rich contextual insights. Data from both audio recordings and flip charts were integrated into the final thematic framework.

Ethical considerations and trustworthiness

Ethical approval was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Biomedical Research Ethics Committee (BE022/19) and the Namibia Ministry of Health and Social Services Research Management Committee (17/3/3GC), with all principles such as informed consent and confidentiality upheld

throughout the study. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation of data sources and transgressive validity to evaluate how knowledge was created. Credibility and dependability were enhanced through member checking, consistent questioning, and maintaining a detailed audit trail of all methodological decisions.

FINDINGS

The appreciative inquiry process revealed two key thematic areas: Action plan implementation enablers and positive shift in mindset. The first theme, Action plan implementation enablers, was comprised of three distinct categories: collaborative work, human capital, and stakeholder commitment. The second theme, Positive shift in mindset, was supported by two primary categories: regular meetings to foster collaborative planning and budgeting and collaborative awareness-raising programs. The identified themes were used to develop an action plan by the disability stakeholders forming the product of the research (Voge, 2009). The demographic details of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant demographic information (n=10)

Category	Stakeholder Representation	Participant ID
Policy Makers (n3)	Ministry of Justice	PM1
	Ministry of Health and Social Services	PM2
	Ministry of Disability Affairs in the Office of the Vice President	PM3
Policy Implementers (n=4)	Regional Occupational Therapist	PI1
	National Disability Council	PI2
	Regional Social Worker	PI3
	Representative from Organisations of persons with Disabilities (OPDs)	DPO1
Persons with Disabilities	Representative of Persons with Disabilities	PWD1
	Representative of Persons with Disabilities	PWD2
	Representative of Persons with Disabilities	PWD3

Theme 1: Action plan implementation enablers

Theme 1 is discussed under three categories: collaborative work, human capital, and stakeholder commitment demonstrated as the strength harnessed together to enable success by the disability stakeholder as narrated based on their experience, disability rights enabling environment, policy and legislative framework and disability rights enforcement strategy.

The disability stakeholders recalled the collaborative work in resource mobilisation and use in different disability activities as the pillar of their past successful disability activities. The participants from the three categories recognised that sharing information made it easier to coordinate the activities and collaborate in solving some identified complex challenges, taking the group to a level of best innovation. The disability participants reflected on their roles for the future action plan using collaborative strength in awareness-raising to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD. The policymakers have provided financial and technical resources to policy implementers, especially the OPDs, to execute their awareness-raising function. One of the policymakers said:

"In this case, you (researcher) can write a concept note to the Executive Director of the Ministry of Disability Affairs in the Office of the Vice President in which you indicate the activities to be budgeted for, and we will make those provisions based on the research conducted. We are ready to provide the budget. The signatory to this letter should be the secretary of the Disability United Namibia". The OPDs can lead the

sensitisation together with you (researcher) (PM1).

One of the group's strengths identified was the skills, knowledge and experience of persons with disabilities employed within the disability sector in conducting awareness-raising of disability rights, including understanding the UNCRPD. Based on the participants' experience of training parliamentarians and the public during awareness, the persons with a disability described the task ahead as straightforward. The participants noted the talent among themselves with disabilities from the OPDs, having skills and knowledge to tackle awareness programmes based on their experiences. *"We have done this! We know how to do it more than anyone else. If we train them (parliamentarians), it becomes easy to ask them for help because they understand what we are talking. We will be talking the same language". (PI2)*

The participants felt that the previous training on disability rights issues they gave to the parliamentarians helped them unlock political support and mobilise political leaders and resources to conduct international and national disability days as indicated on the calendar.

Commitment is the force that pushes the relationship among the stakeholders forward toward a mutually set goal that usually points to the organisation's success (Bagire et al, 2015). The stakeholders consisted of policymakers, implementers and persons with disabilities. A well-defined commitment towards implementing disability rights based on previous experience spelled out different roles for the disability stakeholders. As reflected in the new task ahead, the disability stakeholders developed a clear action plan. The stakeholders indicated their collective

commitments through sharing responsibilities. The policymakers demonstrated their commitment and obligation to take over the signatory role for the letters addressed to the speaker of the House of Assembly (parliamentarians), and the National Council (House of the Review) on the need to sensitise them on the UNCRPD. The Ministry of Disability Affairs stakeholder in the Office of the Vice President indicated they would mobilise the resources needed for the project. The policy implementers have indicated using their experience in awareness-raising to politicians and communities. One of the leaders of the OPDs reflected on their experience when they collaboratively sensitised the politicians from the House of Assembly on Article 2 of the UNCRPD with a focus on reasonable accommodation. The participant said the following:

"We were a committed team and we shared information. The deputy minister organised the parliamentarians and they came to the hotel. We taught them on the issues to do with reasonable accommodation. Most of them are not aware but I can see after training that they were excited to support us. If we train them, they will support us with resources and them just being there to support in community" (PI1)

The success of the implementation of the UNCRPD is reflected in stakeholder commitment as a positive strength. Distinct roles and collaboration between policymakers, implementers, and persons with disabilities may result in clear, distinct roles and collective achievement. Collaborative work with high commitment among the disability stakeholders is a

fundamental enabler of implementing the action plan.

Theme 2: Shift in mindset

The second theme is discussed under two categories: regular meetings to foster collaborative planning and budgeting, and a collaborative awareness-raising program. The three categories were identified as strengths possessed by the stakeholders during the peak of their collaborative work that could be harnessed to enable the success of the disability stakeholders during the development of an action plan.

Effective meetings that are conducted regularly provide a forum for open discussion and a shared understanding of the work ahead, resulting in increased engagement and collaboration of stakeholders (Boyd, 2015). The persons with disabilities applauded regular meetings because they generated a shared sense of purpose and improved accountability among stakeholder commitment.

"We used to meet and discuss everything. We would sit and discuss what to budget from all of us doing something for people with disabilities. This was good because we will have enough information and resources to work together". (PI3)

The stakeholders believe there is a need to urgently revive regular meetings in planning and budgeting as game-changers to develop an action plan. Information sharing was identified as one of the strengths that improved the collaboration among the stakeholders during the peak of their function.

"We used to share information as a team without thinking that this one is

from the physical disability group. Once we stopped no one knows what was happening so we stick to my OPDs. We want to go back to those days.” (DPO 1)

The group agreed to collect and file data on processes followed in collaborative work. This will make it possible for future use and reference apart from consistent information sharing among stakeholders. Interpersonal connections among the stakeholders strengthened during group interactions. Appreciative inquiry improved group cohesion, triggering the group's willingness to agree to work together again towards a common goal. This included regular meetings to collaborative planning and budgeting of the intervention strategy on accelerating the implementation of the UNCRPD through awareness-raising activities: targeting both lower house and upper house on the UNCRPD under United Disability Namibia.

The identified collaborative strength brought a shift in mindset triggering memories of joint planning and budgeting and a collaborative awareness-raising programme using top-to-bottom approaches.

‘We are ready to do work even without pay. It is our thing. It's for us. We will do it because we used to volunteer, and things work. If they need us to work together as we did before we are here’. (PWD 1)

The narrative of what went well, as reflected in participants' experience in collaborative work, triggered enthusiasm through appreciative inquiry, cultivating commitment and a strong desire to achieve the shared dream. The participants discovered their strengths and the action plan they wanted to accomplish by harnessing identified

strengths. The stakeholders agreed to raise awareness of the contents of the UNCRPD, including its implementation as the best strategy to advance disability rights. The participants will first target the policymakers from the House of Assembly (parliamentarians) and the National Council (House of the Review) as a strategy to mobilise resources and leverage political support. This will be followed by developing an educative outreach tool that will be used to raise awareness on the contents and implementation of the UNCRPD at grassroots level.

DISCUSSION

This paper documents how appreciative inquiry action research methodology was used to develop an action plan to promote the implementation of the UNCRPD in Namibia. Appreciative inquiry is an opportunity-centric method focused on elevating the identified strengths to empower (Paranjpey, 2017) the stakeholders in developing a strategic initiative. Focusing on the positive strengths enabled the acceptance of participation by stakeholders across the disability sector and the development of good relationships among the disability stakeholders through group cohesion and open communication (Whitt, 2006).

The participants were allowed to reflect on the thought-provoking questions presented (Gonzales & Leroy, 2011). The disability stakeholder participants provided inputs during the development of an action plan based on their experience, helping them to discover their positive strengths. Significantly, persons with disabilities who are at the 'heart' of the UNCRPD participated as stakeholders. Therefore, the appreciative inquiry effectively elicited UNCRPD beneficiary requirements (Gonzales & Leroy,

2011), fulfilling the clarion call by persons with disabilities, "nothing about us without us".

The authors were mindful of the questions crafted in the interview guide, focusing on eliciting positive strengths that enabled the stakeholders to redefine the current implementation of the UNCRPD and imagine a new social reality (Whitt, 2006). Collaborative work, human capital, stakeholder commitment, regular meetings to foster collaborative planning and budgeting, information sharing, and collaborative awareness-raising programmes were identified as positive strengths within the disability stakeholders that redefined the implementation of the UNCRPD in Namibia.

The findings from the participants' narrative through appreciative inquiry have shown that the disability sector is endowed with stakeholder commitment, skill and knowledge to conduct training on the UNCRPD and collaborative strengths that can be used to harness resources together towards the implementation of an identified action plan aimed to raise awareness of the UNCRPD. The findings of this appreciative inquiry study are consistent with the research by Fifolt and Lander (2013). Appreciative inquiry equips participants with the skills and resources to build on strength and to endeavour towards becoming competent organisations that are cross-functional and propel the team (Fifolt & Lander, 2013)

The appreciative inquiry-generated a positive shift in participants' perspectives on advancing disability rights rather than being stuck in identified negative themes. The identified themes and the categories were identified as catalysts that yielded potential benefits from the disability stakeholders

generating resilience and growth while eliminating disunity and internal conflicts. Therefore, the identified themes (positive mindset shifts and action plan implementation enablers) should be consistently employed while focusing on strengths and capabilities during the implementation of the action plan.

The disability stakeholders' mindset was changed, and they were compelled to implement UNCRPD awareness-raising sustainably (Whitt, 2006). The generated positive perspective became the source of why change could happen and the process to follow for the transition (Jamir Singh & Azman, 2022). Therefore, through collaborative work, support and significant commitment, the stakeholders within the disability sector developed an action plan shown in Table 2.

The findings of this study confirm that targeting the parliamentarians first increases political support and resource mobilisation. The participants' experience has shown that the actions of policymakers and implementers towards implementing the UNCRPD affect the nation's approach and conduct in disability rights discourse. Furthermore, the findings of this study have shown that awareness-raising is a key to advancing disability rights, as indicated in their narrative. According to the UNCRPD Article 8, the States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures to raise awareness throughout communities on the contents of the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006).

Table 2: Proposed strategic action plan

GOAL: To promote the implementation of the United Nations Conventions of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in Namibia				
IMPACT: Inclusive Development				
Action description	Output	Outcome	Responsible department/ actors	Required resources
To hand over a strategic action plan to the Executive Director of the Ministry of Disability Affairs in the Office of the Vice President.	Action plans given to the National disability focal office.	Disability focal office takes responsibility for activities in the Strategic Action Plan for budgeting and execution purposes.	The principal author	Strategic action plan
To mobilise resources for policy makers awareness raising activities	Resources mobilised	Available budget for awareness raising programme	Deputy director Ministry of Disability Affairs (Office of the Vice President)	Budget allocation
To mobilise resources for the development of an Education and Outreach Tool for the Namibia Grassroots Disability Community	Resources mobilised	Available budget for the development of an educational outreach tool	OPDs, Disability Affairs Department (Office of the Vice President)	Budget allocation
To educate policy makers from the House of Assembly (parliamentarians) and the National Council (House of the review) on the contents and their role on the implementation of the UNCRPD.	Awareness programme conducted	Increased knowledge, Increased political support and increased implementation of the UNCRPD.	The National Federation of Persons with Disabilities in Namibia.	Training toolkit on implementation of the UNCRPD, time, conference facilities, refreshments
To develop an Education and Outreach Tool for the Namibia Grassroots Disability Community.	An education and outreach tool developed	Availability of informative educative outreach tool	The National Federation of Persons with Disabilities in Namibia (may consult the principal author)	Budget for consultation, developing, four workshops with disability stakeholders, printing, translation
To budget for awareness raising programme at grassroots level	Budgetary provisions done in 14 regions	Available resources for advancing disability rights in all 14 regions	OPDs and policy implementers	Finance, material supply and transport
To roll out awareness raising activities using the educative outreach tool at grassroots level.	Number of awareness programmes on the UNCRPD content conducted each financial year	Improved knowledge on the UNCRPD	OPDs, volunteers and policy implementers	Education and outreach tools in different languages, transport, Subsistence allowances

The action plan developed during appreciative inquiry process was aimed at conducting awareness-raising on the contents of the UNCRPD and its implementation, targeting the policymakers from the House of Assembly (parliamentarians) and the National Council (House of the Review). The disability sector, based on previous experience and perspective, anticipates that this strategic intervention from the action will unlock political support and mobilise resources while uniting the stakeholders. Furthermore, the mobilised resources and political support will be the pith in developing

a second strategic intervention, an educative outreach tool on the UNCRPD in all languages for local media and use at the grassroot level to promote the UNCRPD implementation. The tool will then be used to replicate sensitisation programmes to traditional leaders, the business community, and local communities at the grassroot level, promoting the implementation of the UNCRPD at all levels as part of awareness-raising.

As part of the appreciative inquiry process of discovering, dreaming, and designing, key strategic opportunity areas were identified as crucial to the future success of the disability sector: collaboration, resource mobilisation,

development of an educative outreach tool on the UNCRPD and awareness-raising of the UNCRPD contents and implementation strategies. This occurred during the two consultative forums where participants constructed their aspirations based on their strengths. The participants developed an action plan and deliberated on identifying responsible parties and timelines for specific activities. The policymakers took responsibility for budgeting and organisation of the awareness-raising activity, which involved the members of the House of Assembly (parliamentarians) and the National Council (House of the Review). The OPDs were tasked with leading the sensitisation activities arranged, including media coverage for every awareness programme. The OPDs were encouraged to contact the United Nations partners to assist with the sensitisation activities. The group agreed to use appreciative inquiry principles in the implementation and evaluation process. Therefore, appreciative inquiry was adopted to develop the disability sector and advance disability rights using a hopeful vision in the action plan for an ideal future.

Limitations

The disability stakeholders were unfamiliar with the appreciative inquiry-based research, and the participants wanted to use a deficit-based approach, which made it challenging during the introductory and discovery stages. The first author acknowledged the persistent effect of the old paradigm thinking and explained how it holds on to the progress of the disability stakeholders. The appreciative inquiry was implemented within a short period, given that the participants were unfamiliar with the appreciative inquiry. The appreciative inquiry was timed during the beginning of the financial year after the national budget was complete. This may

delay the implementation of the action plan immediately, while the stakeholders are highly excited since the action plan could not be part of the current budgeted activities.

CONCLUSION

During the appreciative inquiry engagement, collaborative work and stakeholder commitment in planning and budgeting were fundamental in raising awareness of a nationally recognised UNCRPD treaty to the policymakers and actors from the House of Assembly (parliamentarians) and the National Council (House of the Review). The top-to-bottom approach will significantly improve the unlocking of political support and mobilise the resources needed to develop an educative outreach tool that promotes the UNCRPD at the grassroots level. The educative outreach tool will be implemented across the country. This tool will be used to empower the grassroots communities with disability rights as enshrined in the UNCRPD. This will promote the implementation of the UNCRPD, fulfilling the objective of the research. Appreciative inquiry enabled the disability stakeholder participants to create new ideas and foster possibilities of a collective future in promoting the implementation of the UNCRPD.

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