**A COMMUNITY PROMOTED INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROJECT – 2010/2011 ;**

**By**

**Stella Oyesigye Foundation (SOF)**

**Executive Co-ordinator;**

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**Introduction;**

A community promoted Inclusive Education project has been developed by Stella Oyesigye Foundation (SOF) to enable learners with disabilities access educational services at their community schools with support from the entire community.

A school can not exist independent of the community in which it is. Reducing exclusion elements at the community level means increasing inclusion of the child who will ably attend school and benefit from the school programmes.

The project covers two sub counties of Ntungamo Sub county & Ntungamo Town Council.

**About the Foundation**

Stella Oyesigye Foundation (SOF) is a registered Community Based organization (CBO) with Ntungamo District Local Government.

SOF exists as an advocate for vulnerable children, to release them from their economic, social and physical poverty and enable them to become responsible and fulfilled independent adults.

The CBO was founded to make a contribution to the existing initiatives but with a bias on a child with a disability. SOF tries to have such children benefit from existing social services and or initiate programmes that would enable them live humanly.

SOF has a network of Family Support Groups (FSGs) built around a family with a child with a disability

The CBOs name comes from the late Stella Oyesigye who had devoted her life to serving orphans and children with disabilities but died a day after her graduation with a Bachelor of Education Degree as a teacher for the deaf from Kyambogo University on 10th February, 2008.

**Location;**

SOF’s coordination offices are on Muko hill, Muko Ward Ntungamo Town Council, next to Ntungamo District Court on P.O.Box 125, Ntungamo, Uganda

**Vision**

A fully included child with disabilities.

**Mission**

To lay a foundation for a fully sensitized and supportive community for a child with special needs towards his/ her all round development.

**Aims and objectives of SOF**

The Foundation works to achieve the following objectives;

* To advocate and or organise for inclusion of children with disabilities into the community facilities including schools
* To Produce HIV/AIDS awareness materials for children with special needs that can not easily interpret the generally used ones as a means of preventing HIV/AIDS.
* To provide the necessary support to HIV/AIDS affected and infected children with disabilities, other orphans and their families; counseling/psycho social support and health and disability related problems.
* To carry out values education in the schools as a strategy for AIDS prevention among the youth
* To mobilise sponsorships for the helpless AIDS orphans and children with disabilities.
* To organise for vocational training through apprenticeship and/or establish a Vocational training centre for the orphans and disabled children.

**Management;**

The Organisation has a Board of 9 and a council of 15 people that serve as a supreme body.

The Board has an Advisor; His Grace Paul Bakyenga, the Archbishop of Mbarara, Uganda

**Project staff**

* Oyesigye Robert Stuart M.A (SEN), B.Ed SNE, Dip SPED, Cert CBR - Executive Co-ordinator
* Mugumya Nelson B.D.S, Dip Project Planning – Programmes Officer – Outreach
* Natuhwera Winnie, B.A (SS) – Administrator - Centre projects
* Agabiirwe Rosette, B.B.A(Accounting) Dip B.Studies – Accountant
* Twebaze Benon, Dip SPED (Sign language) – programmes Assistant
* 13 Community Inclusion Volunteers (CIVs) and 27 Inclusion Teachers (ITs)

**The project;**

**The concept of Inclusion;**

Inclusion is ‘a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education’. UNESCO (2005) guides that Inclusion may call for changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range bearing in mind that all children should be catered for in the regular system.

This implies that efforts are on working on the environment so that the child fits in not the medical approach of ‘working’ on the child to enable him/her to fit into the situation.

Inclusion for a child with Special Educational Needs must mean that every child is and feels included within the community……..is and feels included within the School…….is and feels included in the Class…….is and feels included by his teacher.

All this of course can only happen when such a child is loved, appreciated, and supported by members of his family at home. Without the confidence that this will give him, he will be quite unable to feel an important and valued member of the School community.

Inclusion depends most of all on the child’s teacher and this teacher’s feeling that this child, with whatever difficulties he has, belongs to her. If she always has this sense of including him totally, she will welcome him back into class from home and or after any additional support teaching elsewhere and make sure that he is helped to understand enough of what has been going on in the class in his absence so that he does not feel left out.

The combination of the confidence a child brings from home and his all round involvement in the learning process through his teacher’s empathy and support will build into this child a capacity for living a rewarding and creative life all of his own.

In Uganda, there is a considerable number of children with special needs that is not in school. Reasons for this being the community’s negative attitude on children with special needs and most particularly impairments. Children still are still seen as a source of wealth; when girls get married, bride prize is paid and boys provide labour for the family. A child with a disability therefore is seen as a loss as it is felt that she might not fetch anything.

Some children experience problems going to school each day and back especially children with mobility problems. Children with hearing and visual impairments respectively are not served appropriately at school because teachers lack skills such as of sign language and Braille and as a result children refuse being retained in schools as they feel they are wasting their time. Teachers too on realizing there is little to offer frustrate the children through labeling which ‘encourage’ them to drop out of school.

A child with a disability feels unaccepted as the environment both the physical and the welcome ness of the staff and other children are unfriendly. Whenever a child with whatever special need is admitted in school, he/she remains an ‘actor’ on stage as all will make her or him their entertainment.

In Uganda like many nations of the world are special schools which admit children with special needs. Because of poor road network and limited means of transport children can not travel to school and back each day. Many parents who afford to meet the food contribution to the special schools opt to have them to the schools as they feel it is a relief to them. They ‘dump’ the children only to check on them at the end of the term or at worst leave them there till the following term while others pretend to be good Samaritans who have found a child with special needs on the road and have just helped to transport him to the special school when they are actually the real parents!

Ntungamo District with a population of 477,500 has 15,900 children with disabilities and out of these 8,200 are in schools while 7,700 have not accessed school (Source; DEO, 2008). Considering special needs, there are other many children with diverse special needs like the abandoned total orphans, street children, traumatized children etc.

For the purpose of this project however, only children with disabilities are being thought of.

**The established structures;**

The project area has 2 sub counties with 7 parishes and 4 Town wards. There are 24 Government and 10 Private Primary schools and 12 secondary schools.

The area has five health centre IIs, and one health centre III. A District referral Hospital – Itojo Hospital is in a distance of 4 kms from the project office

SOF has 13 Community Inclusion Volunteers (CIVs) and 27 Inclusion Teachers (ITs) that were identified following their previous involvement in child welfare and support.

The Volunteers have been offered some training in identification and assessment of children with disabilities.

Around each home with a child with a disability is a Family Support Group (FSG) of 5 families that helps the ‘special family’ to support her child

So far, 215 children have been identified.

Home and school visiting is done by the Volunteers and the project specialist staff. A visitation card is used that indicates the interventions and recommendations.

Where the project staff can not offer appropriate interventions, referrals are made to other service providers.

**Strategies**

The strategies hereunder mentioned shall work on attitudes so that community members appreciate and support their community’s children and through working together and supporting the special families have all the children in school.

Knowledgeable teachers will have a package to offer and may not frustrate the children which has often led to the children dropout.

Children that wont be go on with academic work will learn vocational skills that will make them self reliant. Other children are attached to community artisans from whom they acquire skills such as blacksmiths, carpentry, shoe repairing.

A resources mobilization drive helps to get scholastic materials (books, pens, uniform and school bags) to enable them keep in school.

1. **Community sensitization**

**Purpose;**

* Attitude change on disabilities
* Prevention of disabilities
* Prevention of HIV/AIDS among children with disabilities

**Activities;**

Concerts, public addresses, newsletters

1. **Knowledge & skills development (teachers & Community Inclusion** **Volunteers (CIVs)**
2. **Purpose;**

* Empower the teachers & CIVs with knowledge & skills to increase their confidence & capacity

**Activities**

* Training in Sign language, Braille etc
* Training in Instructional materials production
* Training in Identification & assessment of special needs in children
* Training in Specialized guidance & counseling

1. **Vocational skills to children & youth with disabilities**

**Purpose;**

To equip the children with vocational skills for their future self reliance

**Activities**

* Institutionalized training
* Artisan apprenticeship

1. **Child support**

**Purpose;**

To enable the children live full lives by participating in almost all activities both at school and back home

**Activities**

* Mobilizing for appliances & assistive devices for the children
* Mobilizing Scholastic materials
* Making referrals for appropriate services such as the medical interventions i.e collective surgery

**The urgently needed resources for the project**

* 40 bicycles for the Inclusion Volunteers
* A computer for storing and organizing data
* A printer
* A photocopier
* Two motorcycles
* 30 wheelchairs