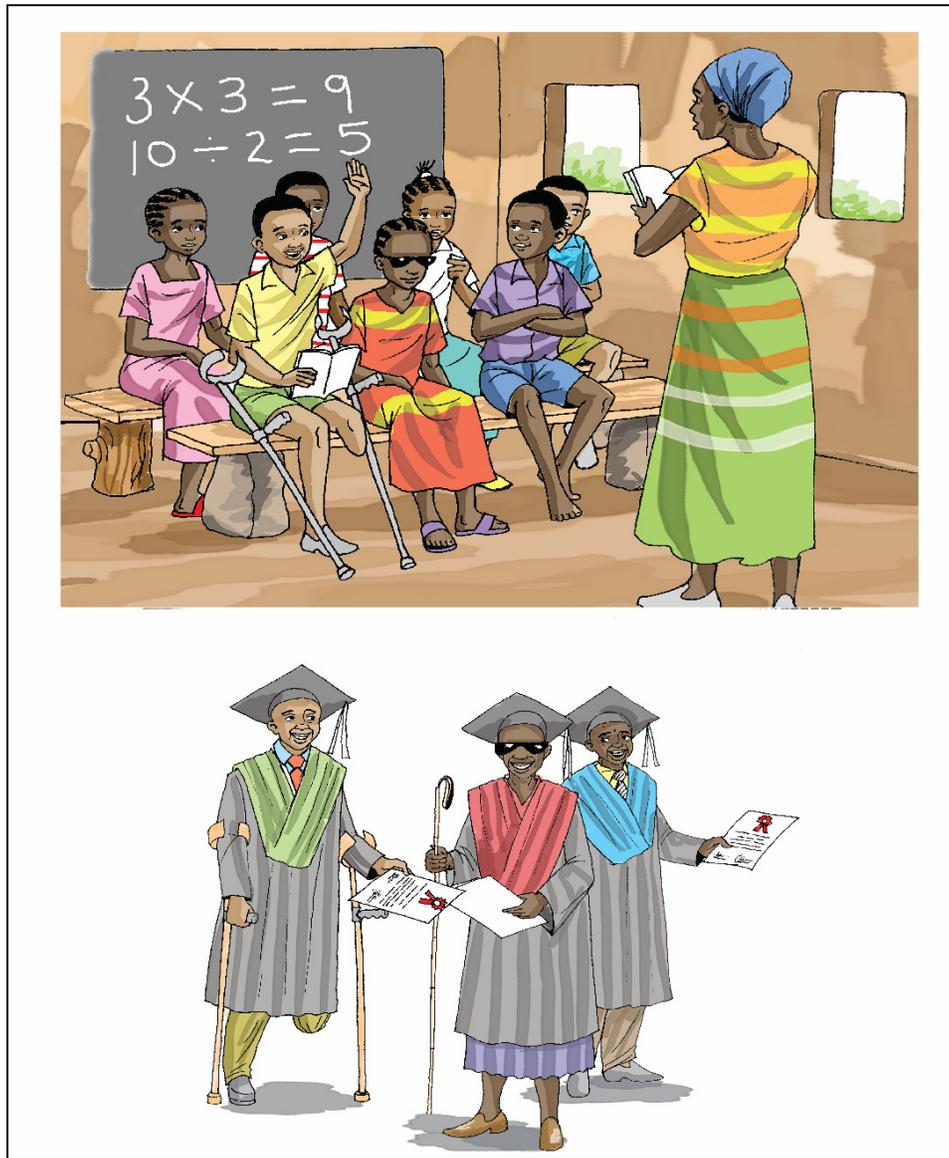


SOCIAL ISSUES TEACHING KITS

DISABILITY



Africa
Educational
Trust

50 Years Creating Opportunities
Through Education

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SUB-TOPIC 1: WHAT IS DISABILITY?

Some people cannot hear, see, talk, or walk as well as other people. These people have disabilities. There are many reasons for these disabilities. Some people are born with disabilities, such as ears that cannot hear well, deformed limbs, or a brain that does not develop in the usual way. Other people may become disabled later in life, through accidents or war, or due to illness or not having enough food to eat.

Every community has some people who have disabilities. About ten out of every 100 people are said to have some kind of disability. Some people with disabilities live their lives in the same ways as others in the community. But some have problems living their lives in the same ways as others because of their disabilities. It is difficult for them to do all the activities that other family and community members do. However, it does not mean that disability is inability. Even if people with disabilities cannot do some things very well, they may be able to do other things as well as or better than other people.



THE STORY OF THE BLIND MAN AND CRIPPLED MAN

Once upon a time, there were two disabled persons. One of them was blind and the other one was a crippled man. One day, the two men needed to travel to a nearby village, six kilometres away from their home, in order to visit some elders there. The two discussed how to travel to that village. The blind man suggested carrying the crippled man on his shoulders, as the crippled man found it difficult to walk. They started their journey to that village in this way, passing through a thick bushy forest. On their way, before reaching the village, the crippled man saw a cow in the bush and informed the blind man about it. It was a pregnant, white cow. The crippled man directed the blind man to the place where the cow was, and then the crippled man took a bush rope and tied the cow. The two men then carried on their journey, pulling the cow along with them to the village. The crippled man started to claim ownership of the cow before they reached the village, saying "The cow is mine because I saw it and tied the rope to it". But the blind man said, "No, the pregnant cow should be equally shared between us, because without my support you couldn't have reached the place where the cow was found, and you wouldn't have been able to drag it to the village. Likewise without your support, I wouldn't have seen the cow". The two men carried on arguing because they both thought they were right.

Discussion

1. How would you solve this problem?
2. What lessons have you learned from this story?
3. What are your opinions about the blind man's argument?
4. What do you think the story tells us about disability?

SUB-TOPIC 2: TYPES OF DISABILITY

There are many types of disability, both physical and learning difficulties. Some people have very severe disabilities which make it difficult for them to do many activities, but other people have disabilities that are so slight that they are hardly noticed.

People with one disability may develop another, for example, a child who finds it difficult to move a leg properly may be left in one position for a long time, and as a result may not be able to walk at all. People with more than one disability are said to have multiple disabilities.

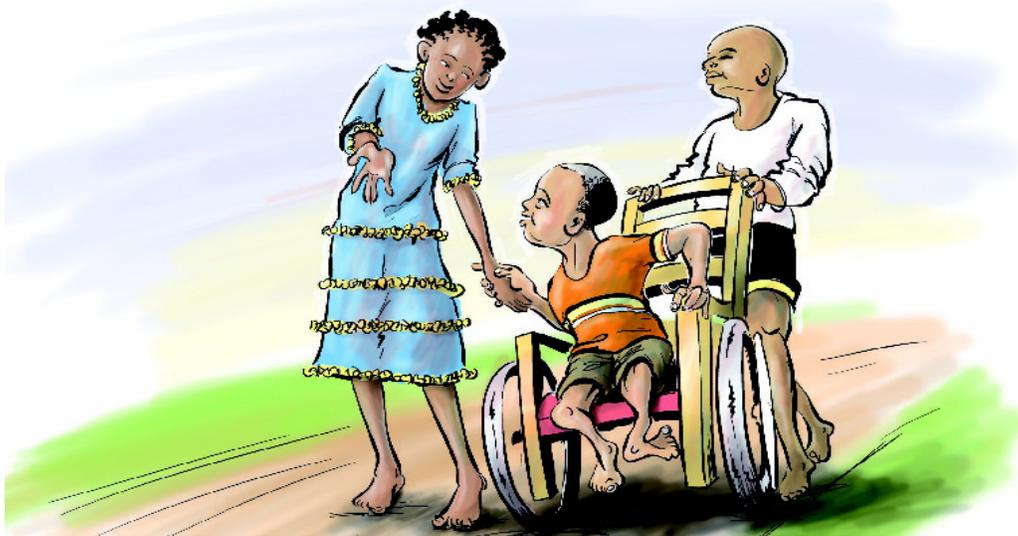
Some disabilities are permanent, but many people experience temporary disabilities caused by illnesses or accidents which can also affect the way they carry out activities. For example, someone with a sore throat may temporarily lose the ability to talk, and will have to use gestures or write things down in order to communicate. So having to carry out activities in a variety of different ways, whether due to temporary or permanent disability, should be recognised as being a part of everyday life.

Physical Disabilities Some people have physical disabilities, meaning a difficulty in using all, or a part of the body. Such people often find it difficult to move about or to do physical tasks. For example, a child who has weak legs may find it hard to walk, and may need help. A child who has weak hands may have trouble holding a cup or a pencil at school. A person may be paralysed, which means they are not able to feel part or all of their body and cannot move it. Sometimes a person may keep falling over, which could be because their sense of balance is not working properly.

In South Sudan, children with physical disabilities have the affected part of the body massaged with oil and given exercise to strengthen the muscles. This may not help all those with physical impairments; it will depend on how severe that child's disability is.

In order to help a child whose legs are disabled, home crutches can be made, or they can be given sticks and encouraged to walk with the support of the family members.

There are some people with very severe physical disabilities, who may not be able to move around at all. Children with severe disabilities may not be able to take part in all games, but they still may like to hear stories, to have someone to keep them company and hold their hands. It can be difficult to know what these children are feeling or thinking and they may be lonely or unhappy and need friends to laugh, talk and play with them.

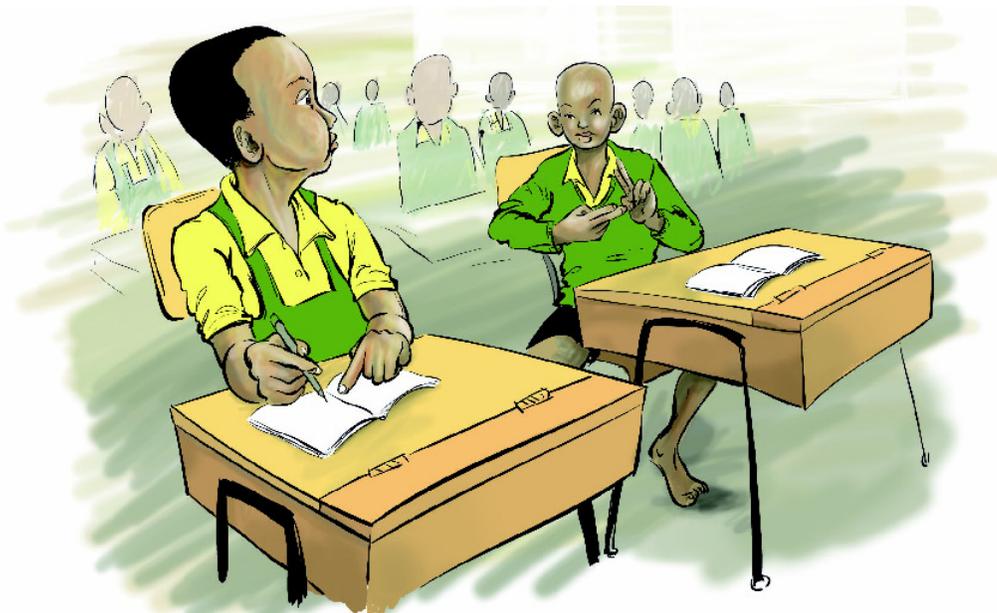


Many children who cannot talk or move well are very intelligent, and can think, feel and understand as well or better than other children. Children with severe disabilities may also be very intelligent, but in order for their intelligence to develop they need to be given opportunities and stimulated. Enabling children with severe disabilities to go to school can change their lives.

Some people are deaf or blind, or have difficulty in seeing or hearing well. Children who are deaf may also find it hard to learn to speak but they are not 'dumb' or stupid. Instead they are able to learn to communicate if people make the effort to understand them.

It is very important for their development that they are helped to learn to communicate, through sign language, gestures, speech, lip reading, body language and pictures.

In South Sudan many deaf or mute children are taught life skills, like cultivating, looking after goats, cows etc, and those children who are not taught often learn by observing other children and adults. As long as parents and society are supportive and have a positive attitude, partially or totally blind children can also be taught to read by Braille and learn like any other children, they can learn to read and write by themselves.



Learning Difficulties You will notice that a few people in your community or school appear slow to learn and understand things and find simple tasks difficult. These people may have learning difficulties. Sometimes people with learning difficulties are laughed at, hidden, abused, ignored, or kept out of school. It is important to remember that children with learning difficulties *can* learn but they may need to use different methods. There is a wide variation in the abilities of people with learning disabilities, but all children with learning difficulties can improve their abilities and have a better life if they are given help and support and education. They can learn in

small steps but may need lots of repetition. Other children can help them, especially their brothers and sisters or friends.

Mental illness This refers to disabilities that affect the brain and behaviour in various ways. People with mental illness may have problems understanding situations; interacting with other people; problems with memory or motivation to do things; or may appear to be confused or disorientated. Having a mental illness is different to having learning difficulties, it is something that often develops later in life, where as children are either born with learning difficulties or develop them early in life due to certain circumstances.

Hidden disabilities This refers to conditions that do not have any outward sign, such as epilepsy or heart disease. Such disabilities may affect how a person behaves or functions at certain times, for example someone with a heart condition may not be able to take part in hard physical activities, or someone with epilepsy may not be able to drive a car in case they have a fit whilst they are driving and cause an accident to happen.

Epilepsy is often feared by people who do not understand that it is in fact a disability, and instead view people with epilepsy as possessed by evil spirits or ghosts. Sometimes people with epilepsy also have learning disabilities. Epileptic children are often among the most neglected, isolated and undervalued in society, because people may be afraid of them.

Children with epilepsy may have fits and fall to the ground and shake or appear to stare into spaces without seeing anything. It can be frightening to see someone with a fit but the fit will soon end. The child is not in pain and will not die. Keep calm, and make sure the person does not harm themselves: make sure that they cannot bang against anything that might hurt them, and do not put anything in their mouth. There is no need to be afraid; the condition cannot spread from one person to the next.

SUB-TOPIC 3: CAUSES OF DISABILITIES

Some people believe that disabilities are caused by witchcraft, or are a punishment for wrongdoing. Sometimes a family is shocked when they realise that their child has a disability. They think that other people will think they are being punished for a wrong doing. Such beliefs are not true. Disabilities are not caused by some kind of magic. No one is to blame for a child's disability, and no one should feel ashamed, except those who are unkind to them. There are several main causes of disabilities. Disabilities cannot be cured, but they can sometimes be prevented.

Some children are born with physical or learning disabilities. This is because they did not develop properly before they were born, but this is not the mother's fault. Women need special care during pregnancy, and good food to eat so that their babies are born healthy. Smoking, some drugs, and alcohol during pregnancy can damage an unborn baby's brain.

Sometimes if a birth is difficult the baby may be injured, which can lead to disability. For this reason, if it is possible, women should have skilled help when giving birth to try and avoid damage happening to the baby's brain or body. For example when a child is born and its umbilical cord is cut with an un-sterilised object or rusted razor blade, this can result in tetanus which can cause disability (or even death of the child). Or a child may be deprived of oxygen during delivery which can result in damage to the brain.

Diseases such as polio, measles, and whooping cough can cause learning difficulties and physical impairments. Polio can cause limbs to be paralysed, and measles can cause blindness, deafness or learning difficulties. Most diseases that cause disabilities in children can be prevented by immunisation, but sometimes a pregnant mother is unable for whatever reason to be immunised or to have her child immunised.

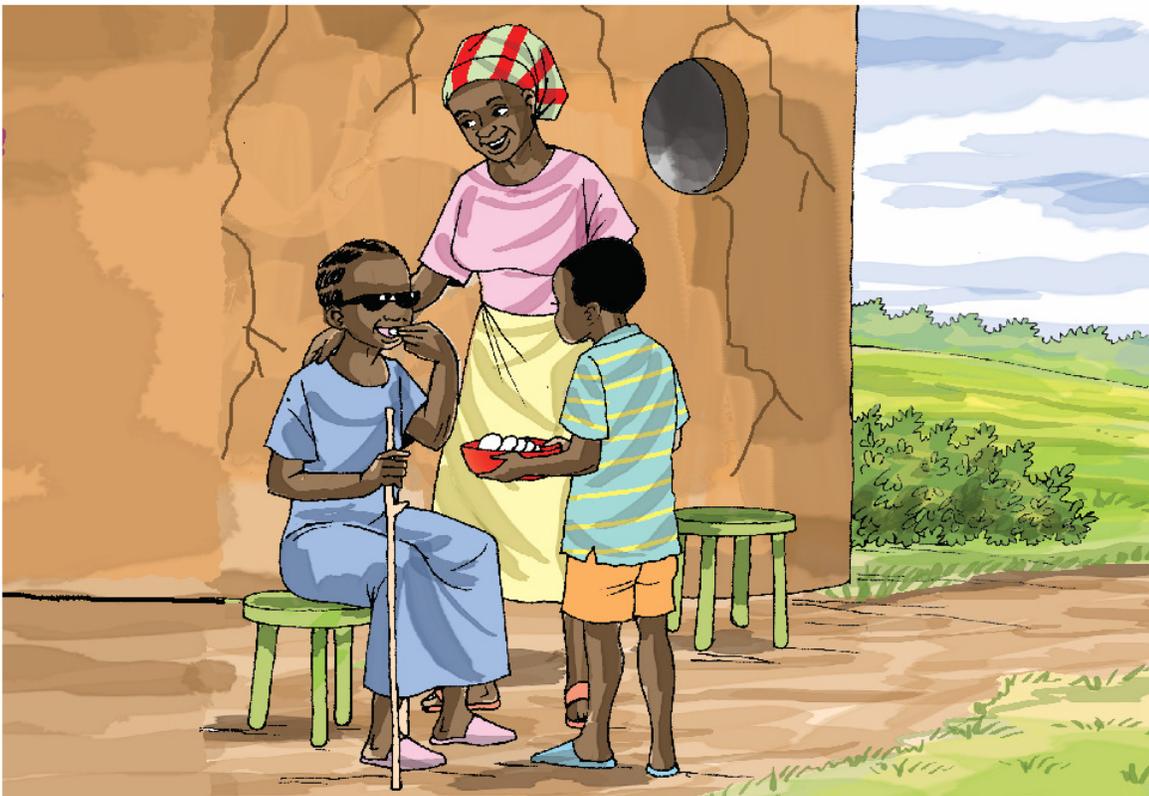
As well as being immunised against diseases, young children also need clean water to drink, good nutritious food, and they should go to the clinic for check ups. If young children have a poor diet or not enough food, they may develop disabilities, such as becoming blind or the brain not developing properly leading to learning difficulties.

Some communicable diseases can cause disabilities. For example, leprosy, a disease that affects the skin and the nerves, can be transmitted to another person through continuous contact. It can cause disability and deformities, such as drop foot, claw hand and facial paralysis. Due to lack of feeling in hands and feet, cuts or burns may occur since the affected person can not feel pain. Leprosy can be cured, but this depends on diagnosing early and good treatment.

Many disabilities are caused by war and accidents, as people may sustain injuries, which may result in amputation of some body parts such as arms or legs. Children may be caught in conflict, and be injured by gunfire, mines or bombs, leaving them with disabilities. The availability of weapons may mean that people might carry around guns; reckless use of these weapons might leave individuals in the communities with injuries. If a person is shot in their knee they may no longer be able to walk using that leg as their joint has been destroyed. Children may also have accidents where they injure their eyes, burn themselves, or fall out of trees, which can damage their bodies forever.

SUB-TOPIC 4: INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Inclusion means full and equal participation in, and contribution to the community and culture to which people belong. To enable inclusion of people with impairments, the attitudes and practices of individuals and groups may have to change, so that they respect, understand and value differences. An inclusive society has to tackle discrimination against people with disabilities in its practices and policies.



People who are perceived as 'different' because of a disability often face discrimination, which can have an influence on all aspects of their lives. They may be excluded or marginalized from their communities. They often have less access to education, employment, information or to essential goods, and are often among the most disadvantaged in society.

People may have negative reactions to those who they perceive to have disabilities, ignoring or ill-treating them. They may be viewed as incapable or seen as a burden, or as unable to improve their own economic or social status.

Children with disabilities are sometimes discriminated against; they may not be given the opportunity to participate in playing with their siblings and other children. They may be prevented from participating in social events, or kept out of school.



SUB-TOPIC 5: DISABILITY IS NOT INABILITY

People with disabilities can achieve as much as anyone and should be given the same chances as other people. Communities have a duty to do their best to make sure that people with disabilities can lead happy, fulfilled lives and are able to contribute to their communities. Sometimes the biggest difficulty that disabled people face is the attitude of their own community, and the most valuable help that can be given to any disabled person is the love, acceptance and encouragement of their families and communities.



Disabled children like to laugh, play, have friends and learn, just like other children and should be treated equally at in play and in school. Schools should aim to be inclusive, and open to all children. Children with disabilities have the same right as any other child to go to ordinary school. They should not be isolated and should be able to socialise and learn with other children. Schools and teachers may need to change to accommodate the diversity of needs that children with different disabilities may have.

Disabled children do not wish to be considered as 'special', but would rather have help to overcome the problems caused by their disability, such as not seeing, hearing, understanding, or moving about in the way that other people do. There are many ways in which people without disabilities can help those with disabilities to learn and develop. Sometimes, children with disabilities are overprotected and not allowed to go out for fear of hurting themselves or being hurt by others. This creates fear in the children and as a result, their opportunities to develop through coping and learning from others are limited. It is important to help disabled children to gain confidence by letting them take risks just like other children do; they should not be too protected or they will always feel afraid.

In school, teachers and other children should make children with disabilities feel wanted. Instead of concentrating on what they cannot do, concentrate on what they can do, and what they are good at. For example, a physically disabled child may be very good at maths, a blind child may be very good at singing. A child who learns very slowly may be very kind and helpful. Disabled children should be given responsibilities just like other children. There are things that they can help with, and feel proud to achieve. Often very simple actions can change disabled children's lives; for example, accompanying a child with visual impairments to school or making sure that a child with hearing impairments is sitting close to the blackboard and able to see the teacher's face clearly.

All children learn and develop through play. Disabled children should not be excluded from play, as they can be helped to participate. Teachers and parents can help non-disabled children to understand and include disabled children. Children without disabilities need to accept disabled children as friends, and can learn when and how their friends with disabilities need help. When necessary disabled children should be helped, but never pitied. Unless a disabled child really needs help with something, it is better to let them do it themselves, even if they do it slower or not as well as other people.

Disabilities need not prevent people from doing what they want to do, accomplishing many things and living a fulfilled life, as long as disabled people are given opportunities. There are many disabled people who are teachers, politicians, religious leaders, and scientists among other professions. Many disabled people marry and make good parents. People with disabilities should have 'full and equal enjoyment of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms' with 'respect for their dignity'.



Discussion

1. Imagine what your life would be like if you could not walk. What would be the consequences?
2. How could parents, teachers and friends help to reduce the negative consequences?
3. Now imagine if you could not hear very well, think about the consequences in school, and list the ways of reducing the negative consequences.

GLOSSARY

Amputation	To cut of a part of the body, usually because it has a disease
Attitudes	A feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this
Availability	When something is able to be used, reached or obtained
Bacterium	A type of very small organism that lives in air, earth, water, plants and animals, often one which causes a disease
Braille	System of printing for blind people, where each letter is a raised pattern which can be read by touching with the fingers
Burden	Something difficult / unpleasant to deal with or worry about
Claw hand	A condition that causes curved or bent fingers
Communicable	When a disease can pass from one person or animal to another
Communicate	Sharing information with others by speaking, writing, moving your body or using other signals
Confused	Unable to think clearly or to understand something
Continuous	Something that keeps happening, existing without a pause, break or interruption
Contribution	Something that you do or give to help produce or achieve something together with other people
Crutches	A stick with a piece that fits under the arm, which you lean on for support if you have difficulty in walking
Deformed	Something with a shape that has not developed normally
Deprived	Not having the things that are necessary for life, eg. enough money, food or good living conditions
Disability	An illness, injury or condition that makes it difficult for someone to do the things that other people do
Disadvantaged	Lacking the standard of living conditions, education, etc. that most people have
Discrimination	When a person or group of people is treated differently, especially in a worse way from the way in which you treat other people, because of their skin colour, religion, sex, etc
Disorders	An illness of the mind or body
Disoriented	Confused and not knowing where to go or what to do
Diversity	When many different types of things or people are included
Drop foot	The inability to lift the foot and toes when walking

Epilepsy	Condition of the brain causing a person to lose consciousness for short periods or to move in a violent and uncontrolled way
Essential	A basic thing that you cannot live without
Excluded	To keep out or omit something or someone
Facial paralysis	When part of all of the faces cannot be moved
Fundamental	Something that is more important than anything else
Gestures	Movement of the hands, arms or head, etc to express an idea or feeling
Heart disease	Illness causing the heart to suffer, stop or work less effectively
Immunise	Giving protection against a particular disease by introducing a special substance into the body, usually by injection
Impairment	Something that has been spoiled or weakened so that it is less effective
Incapable	Unable to do something
Inclusion	To contain something as a part of something else, or to make something part of something else
Inclusive	A group or organization which tries to include many different types of people and treat them all fairly and equally
Injury	Physical harm or damage to someone caused by an accident or an attack
Interact	To communicate with or react to someone
Limbs	An arm or leg of a person or animal, or a large branch of a tree
Marginalised	To treat someone or something as if they are not important
Measles	An infectious disease with small red spots all over the body
Mental	Relating to the mind, or involving the process of thinking
Motivation	Enthusiasm or a reason for doing something
Mute	Unable or unwilling to speak
Oxygen	A colourless gas that forms a large part of the air on Earth and which is needed by people, animals and plants to live

Paralysed / paralysis	When a person, animal or part of the body has lost the ability to move or feel, inability to move the body
Partially	When something is not complete
Participation	When you take part or become involved in something
Permanent	When you take part or become involved in something
Physical	Connected with the body
Polio	A serious infectious disease that can cause permanent paralysis
Punishment	Making someone who has done something wrong or committed a crime suffer, by hurting them, forcing them to pay money, sending them to prison
Reckless	Doing something dangerous and not caring about the risks and the possible results
Repetition	When something happen, or is done, or is said, more than once
Severe	Causing very great pain, difficulty, anxiety, damage
Stimulated	To make someone excited and interested about something
Sustain	To cause or allow something to continue for a period of time
Temporary	Not lasting or needed for very long
Umbilical cord	Long tube-like structure connecting a baby which has not yet been born to its mother's placenta (the organ which provides it with food and oxygen)
Un-sterilised	Something that has not been made completely clean and free from bacteria
Variation	Things that differ from each other
Weak	Not strong
Whooping cough	A highly contagious bacterial infection of the lungs

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