

# Shortage of therapists hits people with disability hard

**By Malela Kassim,  
recently in Mkuranga**

SHORTAGE of physical and occupational therapists in the country is one of the reasons for an increasing number of individuals with physical disabilities.

Had there been enough therapists, some of the so-called people with disabilities would not be in the condition in which they are.

“Despite the fact that the government policy insists that each health centre should have at least one physical or occupational therapist, there are a good number of centres in the country which lack the

experts,” said Dr Juma Kibogoto, Occupational Therapist from CCBRT who provided the training to the health workers in Mkuranga District, Coast Region.

Speaking in Mkuranga at the weekend, Dr Kibogoto said the shortage of therapists in the country has resulted in an increase of individuals with disabilities, adding that there are a good number of persons with physical disabilities who could have been physically fit if they had attended proper physical exercise offered by the experts.

“Most health workers in the country are not capable of dealing with cases of people

with physical disabilities. What they end up doing is advise the victims to visit health facilities with physical therapists. However, the problem is that most of the victims fail to visit these facilities due distance and those who manage cannot afford the expenses,” he added.

For her part, Anatolia Masembo ADD International, Education and Training, Inclusive Education Programme coordinator said that there is a need for the government to come up with a programme to produce more physical and occupational therapists in the country.

“In supporting the government, currently we are investing in training health workers to equip them with skills of rehabilitating children with disabilities,” she said.

Some of health workers admitted that they did not have enough experience to handle cases of people with physical disabilities especially patients with hearing and voice problems.

“Most of us fail to handle such cases simply because we are not experts in those areas, including patients who have speech or hearing problems,” said Dr Yanda Shabani, one of the trainees from Mkuranga District Hospital.

Following the challenge, Kingmoto Massa Mkuranga District Social Welfare development Officer promised to send a proposal to the district council to demand from the government the opportunity to employ a number of physical and occupational therapists for the district.

The five-day training was organised by ADD International — a non government organisation that deals with handling people with disabilities in the country. A total of 55 community health workers from Kibaha, Kisarawe and Mkuranga councils attended the training.