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Every Child Can Learn Podcast

Episode 17: Faruk on inclusive education

Intro: You are listening to the Every Child Can Learn podcast. The podcast is offered to you by Backup Uganda and Brainstud. You can listen to our podcasts online on our website, www.backupuganda.com. And if you are in Gulu, you can pick up the audios offline from Mega FM, Radio Rupiny, Divine Video and Music Library. Head teachers from the district's schools can pick this podcast from the District Education Office. And head teachers from city schools can pick theirs from the City Education Office. You can as well pick up the podcast episodes from the following schools Highland Primary School, Gulu Prison Primary School, Gulu Town Primary School, Mary Immaculate Primary School, St. Joseph Primary School, or Christ the King Demonstration Primary School. Do you like our podcast? Feel free to share it with your family, friends, or neighbors. The more people learn about learning difficulties, the better we can help our children.

Glades: Welcome to our 17th episode of every child can learn podcast. My name is Lanyero Gladys. Today, we are delighted to meet our guest, who is going to introduce himself. Tell us the name of the organisation, and then what else he thinks the listeners would want to know about him. Thank you.

Faruk: Yes, dear listeners. My name is Musema Faruk. I'm from Pece, Gulu city. My organisation is Ability Sports Africa. I am a passionate sportsperson. I love sports, it is something that has pushed me throughout my career. So I managed to use this person I have to give back to our children with disabilities because I know that they don't have this opportunity to engage in adaptive games. So I'm really happy to be here.

Glades: Thank you so much, our guest Faruk for that brief introduction. You talked about ability sports, your organisation is called Ability Sports. Could you please tell us more about what you do in general? Thank you.

Faruk: Yes, thank you. The word ability comes from disability. Because mostly now community people use that phrase disability, but as an organisation we look at the ability of the child. That is the reason why we started this organisation called Ability Sports, because we know our children with disabilities, they have ability. So that is the reason why this organisation exists. So the reason why we are doing this is because our children with disabilities, they are not given an opportunity to participate in sports. Mostly you find in schools, these children they take care of their colleagues items during PE time. So they are not engaged in any form of physical literacy. So this organisation is here to bridge the gap, because we want to give equal participation for everyone. So we, we train these children in different adaptive games, where they will be engaging with their colleagues without disabilities. And through this, they will be able to showcase their ability and also change the mindset of their peers. So this is what Ability Sports does. we also train teachers in school. These teachers that don't have the knowledge of integrating or bringing children with disabilities in their different games. So we train them in different adaptive games skills that will help create inclusion in school.

Glades: Wow, you've really shared amazing things that you do and great job there for our children with disabilities. But what do you think listeners need to understand about inclusive sports? Can you still elaborate more for listeners to understand what inclusive sports means? Tell us the categories of people with disabilities that you work with? And maybe share examples of those sports that you have, Or you do train the teachers with? Thank you.

Faruk: Yes, thank you. Inclusive sports is just majorly giving a platform where everyone participates regardless of their disability. So we have a number of games that we engage our children and youth with disabilities in the different schools. These games mostly works with the different categories of disabilities that we are engaging with. We engage children with visual impairment. There are a number of games that we include them, and we ensure that their peers without disabilities also equally participate in those games. There are games for children with physical disabilities like wheelchair basketball. These games gives them this opportunity and also we have a concept which is called reverse inclusion. With reverse inclusion we give opportunity for children without disabilities to experience how is it like to

play the different disability sports. So when a child without disabilities sits on a wheelchair and starts to will and tries to play around. This changes the mindset of the child, because you will see a child who is disabled participating with someone who, who is not disabled. And you find a child who is disabled participating, playing, showcasing all these skills, they have to challenge the other peer. So with that challenge, it will help this child to build confidence, because if I can play now better in a platform where we are equally given opportunity, and I do better than the other person that people think is normal person. Because mostly you find children with disabilities, they're referred to abnormal children, and those without disabilities, they say these are the normal children. So we give these opportunities to our children so that they can also show their colleagues that they have the ability, that's why we say there is there is ability in disability. So we work with all categories of disabilities. We don't segregate as long as the child has the ability to participate. So we work with children with visual impairment, you find a number of games like goalballs, showdown, those are blind related games, where their peers also they're blindfolded to play those games. We have games for children with intellectual disabilities. They play actually all the adaptive games, like football, they play netball, we adapt this game that fits them that makes them more comfortable participating in and plus other disabilities. So we engage all children regardless of their disability, those with physical we give them opportunity to play wheelchair basketball, wheelchair racing. There is games like boccia. Boccia is mostly, we give to children with cerebral palsy, because we know they don't have the cognitive coordination. So engaging them in boccia creates that efficacy. A child gains the gripes, gains how to roll the ball, and that one helps a child in their daily life. So what we do is we give opportunity to all categories of disabilities, who can participate in different activities that we work in. So we are really grateful because right now we are engaging children in six inclusive schools in Gulu, and most of the sports that we do have been saying it we have wheelchair basketball. Mostly we target children who are in primary school and those in community. We have a goalball, gold ball is a game for the blind children they engage. We have so down, is also a game for the blind. We have a boccia game, which is inclusive, everyone can play, it is more of a target game. Then we adapt all these other games, the mainstream games like stand volleyball, we do sitting volleyball, we do athletics for the disabled, where we use guides if the player is or

the athlete is blind. So mostly we adapt all these kinds of games which are existing, that we think our children can participate in.

Glades: Amazing. Thank you very much. I've just been smiling and looking at the work you are doing. You are really doing a great work. I'm a witness to the games you've just been mentioning. I happen to visit one of the schools, and I witnessed the goal games you're talking about, then something to do with share games, i don't know...

Faruk: Boccia.

Glades: Boccia games, sorry, it has really been amazing, you realise that children with disabilities get excited. And the one thing that I want to share with our listeners, our listeners that have loved is the mere fact that even the able learners can play the games that children with disabilities play like them being in their shoes. This is something that we tell parents, teachers try to be in this learners shoes, and that is how you're going to have the motivation, You'll have the heart to help these children. Faruk, could you also share with us some few examples of how the different categories of sports have helped these people with disabilities or even the kids in the different schools you work with? Thank you.

Faruk: Yes, thank you so much. We, for the past two, three years that we have been working, we have witnessed change in the lives of our children. A number of children that we work with before from the start, they, lack the self esteem and confidence. You find that when we introduced our adaptive games and inclusive sports, these children were shying away, they were feeling like, I cannot do this, because I don't know anything about it. But with time when we started rolling out these trainings to these children, they started gaining the knowledge about the games. They started identifying the skills they have, and they started loving the game. But as an organisation, because we value also education, we think education is also key for the development of our children. Because we know sports, is something that can also help a child develop their physical and mental health. So we also did some small survey follow up on our children assessment, those who have been participating in sports. For example, we had a program at St. Jude primary school, these children, when we introduced adaptive games to

them, it was quite new to them and they didn't love it at first. We were struggling because when we call them come come for games, they don't feel like because one, they have self pity about about themselves. Secondly, what their colleagues were saying about them, like are you you cannot do anything or you're useless. You cannot participate in any kind of sports. So with time these students started learning. So when they started learning, it became more easier for them to open up. So this student opened up they started engaging in sports. We had inter-school competition because we do inter-school between the schools that we work with. So a number of children from St. Jude represented their school those with physical disabilities. They represented their school in boccia competition, and eventually, that that was the only trophy the school won out of the all different games, and those who won the game, were children with disabilities. These children gained confidence because everyone was praising them, everyone was very happy about them. And we just saw that leadership skills that came out of these children because we used to come, organize, but we time we these children, they're the one who organizes for us. We just come and get the field is ready, they are playing they're enjoying. So that is what we have seen the change. And also when we go to class, a number of children, actually one of our participants, that we have been supporting for long, she never had self-esteem. She was poor in class, but with her participation in sports, now she in senior one in Kampala, and we are really grateful. We are really grateful that sports can also do something, can also change a child completely because most of our children, what they lack is confidence. So there are avenues that can help a child build confidence, which is sports. So that is what we do to ensure that our children, they live a dignified life in the community.

Glades: Thank you very much again for that elaboration and that beautiful example that you gave us about that school with children that have different disabilities, you mentioned something to do with performance in classroom, how do you think inclusive sports is related to learning? I know you hinted something about it has really built the self esteem of these learners in terms of participating in classroom and also something that I wanted to add on about self pity. And now the self pity sometimes comes from the community. Parents out there who are listening to this program and then the teachers self pity usually comes from community. When you look at a child with disability, oh my god or sorry, why are you

saying sorry to this child, this child could be a child who can carry water, can sweep the compound, can do other things, but when you give them the self pity that is what they grow up developing. So this is amazing because, a lot of these learners will come out and I believe their performance will also improve. Could you add some light about inclusive sports in relation to learning?

Faruk: Yes, thank you so much. Yeah, inclusive sports actually, because sports give that socialisation avenue for our children, because when you engage in sports, you have a number of people that you will be playing with. So, learning does not take place only in class, learning takes place also outside class, because the friendships you make, the coordination, communication, the tension that you have among yourself, solving conflicts during games. Those are all forms of learning, and you find that when a child develops a skill, and starts participating in that skill, it means the child will know that he or she has something that can present to others, and this translates to their physical and mental health. So when a child is mentally stable, has no stress, there is no stigma on the child, it means the child's learning even in class will become simplified. And because of the praise, and because of the comfort that the child will be getting from his or her colleagues, during playtime, this will also translate in class. It means the child will get support from their peers, they will not be segregating them in class, oh, this is a disabled child you stay that side. They will now start helping each other because when you go out, you play together, why not support your friend in class, that is what we have seen in school. Learning is not all about classroom things, because that is the reason why we have ministry of Education and Sports. So sports move together with education. So that is the reason why we felt like, this is the best thing we can do in schools. That is the reason why we work in schools, and also we use the sports to encourage children who are still home to go back to school.

Glades: Amazing. Thank you so much. The one thing that I also want you to help us understand and the listeners out there, what do you think is the biggest myths people say about disability?

Faruk: Yes, mostly the myths about disabilities, ranges from societies and families. You find in some society, they say, these are people who have done something wrong, or maybe you have done something wrong. That is the reason why you're giving birth to children with disabilities. We work with these children, we follow them in the different communities, 90% of these mothers, let me say, they are single mothers, because the moment you give birth to a child with disability, the husband says no, in our family, we don't have anyone with disability. So you'll find that they just leave them away. So these are just linked to our cultural belief. So we believe that those who have disability, they are curse, or they have done something in their past life.

Glades: Hey, thank you so much. I know after listening to this program, you will also understand well, that the myths a lot of times have made our children stay in their deep villages, not coming to school. But I know we've had series of this kind of podcasts or recordings, where we've learnt that you really need to take this child to a hospital so that they test out. Do assessment before you start pointing fingers, my co wife, this child was cursed, please, let's stop that. And maybe before we conclude this, this program, or this topic, what do you think parents, and teachers can do to support a child with any disability? Thank you.

Faruk: Yes, thank you so much. Yes, mostly you find that when a child with disability comes to school, one thing as a teacher or a parent in the school, you should understand the environment you're working in. Because let me say when a child is disabled, has physical disability, there are a number of environmental challenges that the child might face. You first look at that, that will be the first thing you should do. Look at the classroom, entrance to the classroom, is it accessible to the child? entrance to the bathroom or toilet, is it accessible to the child? Is the table where the child will be seated, is it okay? Can the child sit in front? Those are some of the environmental things that you should deal with, because that will be the first thing you will do to remove the barriers. As a parent, you have a child with disabilities. Actually, we have witnessed this, we supported and a number of, we linked a number of parents to get wheelchairs for their children. So most of the buildings that our parents construct, they are not accessible. There's a child that we gave a wheelchair and the child, when it comes in the evening hours, they want to go inside the wheelchair cannot enter.

Because that door is not disability friendly, there are no ramps even at the door side. So those are some of the things that want to think of whenever you have someone with disability in your school, or in the community. Secondly, communication. If you're communicating to a child with disability, mostly you find a child is here, instead of talking to the child, they talk to the guidance, or the parent. Is good, If you talk to the child directly so that you get most of the information from the child, not that because he or she is disabled, there is a spokesperson for that child. No, it's really important for you to speak directly to the child, and whenever you need to support the child you ask the consent of the child. If the child is on wheelchair moving or wheeling the wheelchair, you should ask because when you start pushing the child, the child will feel the pity that okay for me, people see like I am useless. I cannot even wheel myself. So those are things that parents or teachers should consider when dealing with children with disabilities. And the need of our children, because these children they have their basic needs. They need assistive devices, those who are physically disabled, they need love, you should show them love. Don't just look at the disability and you don't even smile to the child. Smiling to the child will give the child that comfort and the child will feel like okay, let me open up. That is the reason why they say our children with disabilities they don't talk. They are just quiet. No, this is because the way we have been treating them in the community, we see them like useless children. We don't we don't associate much with them. But when you show that kind of good communication, good signal between you and the child, it will make it more easier for you to work with the child, and the child will give you also solution. You might think you're in class, or this child is a slow learner cannot do anything, but you have not got even time to ask the child. How do you learn? How do you understand best? What can I do to you to make you participate like others? The child will give you his or her solution, that's why we say there's ability in disability, so we should not look at them impairment of a child and Just Judge from there. We give opportunity for our children to come out with their ideas, what they can do best to make it more easier for us to deal with these children. So my advice to the listeners, let's keep supporting our children. We are here trying as an organisation to ensure that we also show other aspects or other part of life that your child can do. That is the reason why we are doing sports. We want them also to showcase to their parent that Okay, daddy, I can play this game. I can do this because even though I have this disability I have something to play, to showcase my colleagues that I can do. So let's keep on supporting

our children. When you have a child with disability you should not just give up in life because disability sometimes it is also an opportunity. I met a disabled student in 2016. He was studying at Gulu University. He had cerebral palsy. That is what he told me for disability sometimes it is an opportunity. So I've learned I've realised that I have this impairment, but I'm using other ways of doing things. That is the reason why I've excelled in university, and right now have I got an opportunity I'm going to work with an organisation. So that boy really inspired me and made me to push and to ensure that I start something that can help dignify lives of our children. So let's keep the fire burning in supporting our children with disabilities, thank you so much.

Glades: Thank you so much Faruk, for really elaborating that, and I believe our parents out there have understood and from today onward some of these games and sports that our guests mentioned, you could do them from your homes. And please let's try, to also consider our children with disabilities. He talked of ramps, there are ramps that we can make. Even when you have no money to buy cement and other things we can do, we can get sacks and fill in sand and then you create a local ramp for your child who uses a wheelchair to move, and he mentioned something very good that sometimes we are the ones who disabled our children. When you start having pity we mentioned having self pity they have self pity. When you start having pity for these children, trust me, you disabled them, you cannot do this, you cannot do this. You are disabled, you're disabling these children, when in the actual sense they are able to do certain things, thank you so very much. This brings us to the end of this program, and as backup Uganda we usually say every child can learn. Thank you.

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