

# Speech-Language Therapy in Sub-Saharan Africa: Development and Sustainability of Services for Persons with Communication Disability

## Abstract

*Background:* Speech–language therapy (SLT) is an emerging profession in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Recent developments in SLT training in several countries including Uganda, Togo, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Ghana will gradually improve the regional availability of speech–language therapists (SLTs). However, for this relatively small number of therapists to effectively develop and influence services for persons with communication disability, consideration needs to be given to how the profession can develop in ways relevant to African contexts. This chapter raises issues surrounding the development and sustainability of the SLT profession in SSA and considers the potential contributions of the profession to the rehabilitation services for persons with communication disability. *Methodology:* An in-depth mixed methods survey combining both open- and closed-ended questions regarding the SLT workforce in SSA was employed between April 2012 and March 2013. A review and synthesis of the relevant literature including workforce development and rehabilitation models in the region is also included. *Results:* Thirty-three respondents provided information regarding availability, accessibility, acceptability, and challenges for the development and sustainability of rehabilitation services for persons with communication disability, such as job insecurity and opportunities for professional support. *Discussion:* The discussion integrates the implications for an emerging SLT scope of practice in SSA, issues influencing this workforce sustainability in the region, and original research from an SLT workforce survey in SSA, as well as the challenges to the development and sustainability of rehabilitation services for persons with communication disability. Recommendations are made for SLT development in countries in SSA, such as job creation in equitable service sectors.