



# PEOPLE GROUP:

Photo: AIM Stories

## THE INTELLECTUALLY IMPAIRED

Among every people group and every community are people of all ages who are differently-abled intellectually either from birth or due to injury. Often, these brothers and sisters are hidden out of shame or remain at home, especially when their condition is coupled with other complex or mobility impairments.

Perceptions about individuals with intellectual impairments vary widely - from beliefs of curses and demon-possession, to feelings of shame of having a defective family, and in some cases, indifference. Families of persons with intellectual impairments often face crushing medical bills, along with societal stigma. This stigma can lead to severe consequences, such as losing housing or income because landlords, business owners, or customers do not want to associate with intellectually disabled individuals, fearing it will bring bad luck or harm their businesses.

Unfortunately, few communities genuinely welcome or support these individuals. This lack of support extends to medical professionals, who often dismiss them and fail to offer parents hope for a fulfilling or meaningful future.

It is vital that our churches recognize that our brothers and sisters with intellectual impairments are made in the image of God and include them in the community. Depending on ability, they can be given opportunities to serve, such as passing out programmes, singing in the choir or greeting. Even those who cannot serve in traditional ways can still minister to the congregation through their enjoyment of worship. We must make sure that each person has the opportunity for a spiritual relationship and to gain spiritual habits which are useful and encouraging.

### AT A GLANCE

- Muslims often treat the intellectually impaired with great kindness because they are instructed to do so by the Sunnah and the Hadith.
- Divorce rates are higher among parents with disabled children because of financial and emotional stress, and community rejection.
- Early intervention and therapies can greatly increase a person's abilities and opportunities. Valuing them is a great testimony to the value God places on each life.

### PLEASE PRAY FOR

- The families of persons with intellectual impairments to get needed community support, especially from the Church, to care for their loved ones with dignity.
- Understanding that each person, no matter their abilities, is an image-bearer of God.
- Churches to avoid labelling them as cursed or dismissing them if the leaders have not managed to "heal" them, and for intentional ministry to them and their families in ways that honour God.

Source: Yesutor Gbewonyo Amedofu, Founder & Head of interventions, AIDDIN.



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