



NATIONAL UNION OF DISABLED PERSONS OF UGANDA (NUDIPU)

DISABILITY AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Introduction about NUDIPU

NUDIPU is an Indigenous National Umbrella Organization of Persons with Disabilities that started in 1987 to bring together all disability categories in Uganda. NUDIPU envisions a Just and Fair Society where Persons with Disabilities live a prosperous and dignified life.

NUDIPU's Mission is to advocate for the rights of Persons with Disabilities in a unified voice for improved livelihoods.

Background to COVID-19

An outbreak of Corona virus Disease (COVID-19) was declared by the People's Republic of China on 31st December, 2019. The virus has now spread to all continents and has become a global pandemic to nations including Uganda.

How COVID-19 spreads

The virus spreads so fast through droplet infection especially in crowded places and causes illness. It is spread from person to person through sneezing or coughing (droplet infection), human to human contact and contact with contaminated surfaces. It is important that the population remains on high alert and diligently exercises preventive measures to avoid contracting Corona virus (COVID-19).

Signs and symptoms of COVID-19

- Fever
- Sour throat
- Running Nose (flu)
- Cough
- General Weakness
- Difficulty in breathing
- Headache

Control Measures for COVID-19

There are a number of ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection. These include:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Also remember that some people without symptoms can still spread the virus
- Stay at home when you are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then dispose of it properly

- Use a face covering when physical distancing is difficult or when going into closed spaces
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub Hand Rub should contain at least 60% alcohol.
- Hand washing should be done for at least 40-60 seconds based on WHO's recommendations

How to support Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 pandemic

- i. Include captioning and sign language for all live and recorded events and communications. This includes national addresses, press briefings, and live social media.
- ii. Deliver information in understandable and diverse formats to suit different needs. Adopt ways to communicate that are understandable to people with intellectual, cognitive and psychosocial impairments and deaf persons.
- iii. Develop accessible information by using appropriate document formats, (such as "Word"), with structured headings, large print, braille versions and formats for people who are deafblind.
- iv. Include captions for images used within documents or on social media. Use images that are inclusive and do not stigmatize Persons with Disability.
- v. Ensure that information about the accessibility of COVID-19 health services is disseminated to people with disability and their caregivers.
- vi. Appropriate action by government to ensure continued education for learners with disability who may be required to study from home for longer periods.
- vii. Cater for the needs of persons with mental illness and Epilepsy who entirely depend on drugs to live healthily by setting up clear guidelines on how they are to access their medication while minding about their safety during this pandemic.
- viii. There should be a well-coordinated plan by the COVID-19 Task Force on how to handle persons with disabilities by engaging organizations of Persons with Disabilities at national and district levels.
- ix. Provide sign language interpreters at various isolation health centers to ensure that the deaf persons get equal access to services during the COVID19 pandemic.
- x. Efforts should be made to ensure that the national address on COVID-19 is accessible to all persons with disabilities.
- xi. Persons with disabilities that may require quarantine should be put in places with reasonably accommodative facilities like toilets, accessible infrastructure to ease their mobility among other support services.
- xii. All security agencies involved in the COVID- 19 response should be briefed at all levels about disability management on how to handle disability issues and persons with disabilities.
- xiii. Community structures to ensure support for persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak through call-ins and peer support without being discriminative in nature.

Conclusion

COVID-19 still remains a global pandemic, each and every day the Uganda's Ministry of Health pronounces quite a number of new infections with the virus. NUDIPU therefore calls upon Persons with Disabilities and all Ugandans to observe Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and follow the guideline given by Ministry of Health.

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Twitter: @NUDIPU

Instagram: NUDIPU Uganda

NUDIPU Email: info@nudipu.org