



# NUDIPU SDG News Letter

Issue No 1/2018



Above, Leaders of Persons with Disabilities from Wakiso District in a group photo after NUDIPU Training them on SDGs

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## Profile

**N**ational Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) is a National Umbrella Organization of Persons with Disabilities that started in 1987 to advocate for the promotion and protection of the rights of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda. NUDIPU is inspired by the Vision of ensuring that there is “Dignity for Every Person with Disability” . Being a National Umbrella Organization, NUDIPU brings together all various categories of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda including physical, sensory, Intellectual and Mental disabilities among others.



**Executive Director NUDIPU**

In 2017, NUDIPU scaled up her efforts in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Uganda with the goal of “Enhancing the participation of Persons with Disabilities in the implementation of Agenda 2030”. This is through strengthening the coordination mechanisms amongst all National and District based Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPOs) to participate in monitoring the implementation of the selected SDGs and to effectively network with government, Civil Society and the Private Sector. While all the 17 SDGs relate to Persons with Disabilities, NUDIPU and DPOs are specializing on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2 and 11 to ensure that Persons with Disabilities are not left out in the implementation of agenda 2030. Therefore, the articles herein are a representation of the efforts by NUDIPU and the DPOs in implementing SDGs 1, 2 and 11.



### **Persons with Disabilities Petition Permanent Secretary Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development over the Disbursement Guidelines for Special Grant.**

Article 176 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 as amended, provides for the principle of decentralization from higher to lower local government units to ensure peoples' participation and democratic control in decision making.

To foster the effective representation in democratic processes, Section 11 of the Local Governments Act 1997 as amended provides for the election of Councilors for Persons with Disabilities. Whereas Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) currently provide for the overall global framework for development with a vision of “leaving no one behind”, lack of awareness or limited awareness on SDGs by leaders of Persons with Disabilities has hampered the effective participation and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the SDG processes.

To reach out to a wider spectrum of Persons with Disabilities, National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDPU) trained leaders of Persons with Disabilities in Wakiso District to equip them with knowledge and advocacy skills on SDGs. This would enable them to effectively advocate for inclusion of persons with disabilities in planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of activities with specific disability indicators. These leaders were identified from all the sub counties of Wakiso District. Resultantly, Disability leadership in Wakiso district took the initiative of crafting a petition challenging the disbursement guidelines for special grant, realizing they were left behind per the SDGs slogan especially in mainstream planning and budgeting.



A group photo with the petition leaders after submission of the petition to the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

Since the directive for consolidation of funds under the vote for Community Based Services was effected, it had become increasingly difficult to track how much money is disbursed to support persons with disabilities in the districts, yet disability is not a priority in these districts. The petition was handed to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of April 2018 and serves the interests of all the disability fraternity in Uganda. The petition seeks to ensure that the funds for special grant that are sent to districts are ring fenced and also increased from the 3 billion shillings. Special grant has been in existence since 2009 with its initial funding at 3 billion shillings. The funding has stagnated at 3 billion shillings ever since the program started in 2009, which explains the valid call by leaders of Persons with Disabilities for it to be adjusted comparably. This is in light of the increasing numbers of Persons with Disabilities warranting social and economic support. After reviewing data of 2002 National Census, 4% of the total population was classified as being disabled. According to the 2014 population census results, Persons with Disabilities constitute 12.4% and majority of them are in the informal sector. This is a big number that cannot be ignored especially in planning and budgeting processes. It will be recalled that the rationale for the special grant was to boost the income levels of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda in ensuring that they start income generating

activities of their choice to reduce on the income inequality gap. This would in the long run lead to reduction of unemployment rates among Persons with Disabilities and hence poverty reduction. The question to be asked is whether this can be achieved with the current system of consolidating funds into one pool for the districts to exercise discretion on how much to be preferred for special grant to Persons with Disabilities? No.

The World Health Organization notes that Persons with Disabilities are poor among the poorest and the big number of them is in the developing countries. There is therefore need to unlock the poverty gap and this will be possible when the monies for special grant sent to the districts are ring fenced and increased from the 3 billion shillings.

**Mr. Nangosi is a Lawyer and works with NUDIPU**  
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### **UNAPD Improves Accessibility For Persons With Physical Disabilities In Uganda**

Uganda National Action on Physical Disability (UNAPD) is a Non-Government Organization dedicated to the removal of barriers in society that hinder Persons with Disabilities from enjoying their rights through advocating for inclusive designs in the construction industry among others. UNAPD being the leading advocacy agency for accessibility inclusion in the construction industry, partnered with government and other stakeholders in 2009 to develop the Accessibility Standards in line with existing legal frameworks, especially Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11. The standards were launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development as the National Guideline aimed at guiding any stakeholder or company in the construction industry to construct an all-inclusive structures with respect to the needs of Persons with Disabilities and Elderly.

After the launch of the Accessibility Standards, the stakeholders also resolved to form a National Accessibility Audit Team which is mandated to raise awareness about the existence of the standards but also to audit public and private places or structures to assess whether they are accessible to persons with disabilities or anybody with limited movement. The work of this National Audit Team is guided by the existing Accessibility Standards with the main goal of improving equal access for Persons with Disabilities in order to enable them to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. The Standards support in monitoring the implementation and assessment of the level of accessibility of physical environment by the audit teams, CSOs and advocates for the rights of Persons with Disabilities.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> day of August 2018, Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Works and Transport released a press release informing the public that it has finally commenced the implementation of the Building Control Act of 2013 close to five years when it was signed by the president of the Republic of Uganda. The same was re-echoed in the New Vision Paper of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018. The Building Control Act has clear provisions on persons with disabilities for easy access to buildings and facilities. Among others, the Law establishes a National Building Review Board, District Building Committees, and Building Control officers. The law also prohibits construction of buildings without a building permit issued by a district building committee. It also imposes penalties on contractors and builders who do not adhere to the required construction standards. UNAPD will continue to advocate for the accessibility needs of persons with physical disabilities and by doing so will directly be implementing Sustainable Development Goal 11.

**Compiled by Mr. Mukasa Apollo, Executive Director UNAPD**



### Using skills based training to achieve Sustainable livelihoods

Having been in existence for almost fifty years now, Uganda National Association of the Blind (UNAB) developed strategic programs aimed at improving the lives of visually impaired persons in Uganda.

For quite some time, UNAB has strived to provide practical skills to many visually impaired persons who were not fortunate to attain formal education. This has been done at Nabumali training and Resource Centre for the Blind in Mbale and at UNAB computer training Centre at Kireka.

Nabumali Training and Resource Centre for the Blind was established in 1983 while UNAB Computer Training Centre at Kireka was established in 2002.

These two centers provide commendable skills to the visually impaired persons to achieve self-economic independence.



A visually impaired student practices how to use a computer at UNAB Computer training Centre in Kireka

At Nabumali Training and Resource Centre for the blind, skills based training in doing Agriculture, Poultry, Knitting, local craft making, Mobility and Orientation, General Hygiene, Bakery, Music, Dance and Drama and animal basic training is done. At UNAB computer Training Centre in Kireka, skills based training is done in Adapted computer Technology, (Screen Readers), Mobility and Orientation training and Braille literacy. The centre usually admits learners who lose sight at the later age in their lives. Some of them lose sight while at school, work or otherwise. The centre provides them with the necessary skills to cope up with the blindness describing otherwise referred to as the "Shock absorber". After recovering from the shock, many of the graduates from UNAB computer Training Centre have been able to go back to school and continue with their education and others have been able to get reinstated to their former jobs.

With the support from the SOS Ministries, the centre has established the innovation of the Home Based training. This is a type of training designed for individuals who are unable to come to the centre. The process involves sending the Rehabilitation specialist to a particular home of a visually impaired person who is unable to come to the centre or such visually impaired person was able to come to the centre but required further training at home in order to actively carry out the necessary activities in his/her life.

UNAB is determined to implement the skills based training in order to help visually impaired persons to end poverty by 2030.

**Written by Mr. Byekwaso Charles, Acting Executive Director UNAB**

## NUDIPU's i SAVE Model ends poverty and hunger among Persons with Disabilities

For a long time in Uganda, poverty has been the main problem impacting negatively on the lives of Persons with Disabilities. Having done many years of advocacy on the rights of Persons with Disabilities without necessarily improving their livelihoods, NUDIPU pioneered the i SAVE Inclusive Economic Empowerment Program to address their economic needs. The program ensures that male and female Persons with Disabilities and their caretakers in the targeted areas are economically independent, socially recognized and contribute to efforts to bring about sustainable change in their communities. This is through We can manage Saving Groups. It is implemented in partnership with the Association of Microfinance Institutions of Uganda (AMFIU) with support from The Norwegian Association of Disabled (NAD). As of 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018, NUDIPU had over 246 saving groups in Uganda.

NUDIPU mobilizes Persons with Disabilities to form groups and builds their capacity to access informal financial services. Capacity building happens through training and coaching members in the saving groups with entrepreneurial skills to improve on their savings base.

Angela Butoto, a woman with physical disability hailing from Manafwa district is among the beneficiaries of the i SAVE Inclusive Economic Empowerment program. While appearing in the NUDIPU Donors conference on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of November 2017 at Hotel Africana in Kampala, Angela Butoto thanked NUDIPU for liberating her from poverty and discrimination. In her own words, she said;

*"I got disability at the age of 7 years and since then, my community often discriminated against me and called me all sorts of names. NUDIPU sensitized me about savings and with the sensitization, I joined We Can Manage Saving Group to improve my household income. I started saving in 2014 with 150,000/=. When we shared the first savings, I got 220,000/=. From the 220,000/= I bought two pigs and used the balance for taking the child to school. I transferred her from the Universal Primary Education (UPE) section to the private section to get better education though other people from the community were wondering how I would pay fees. The next round, I saved 200,000/= and got 280,000/=. The community did not believe in the transformation I was going through. Whereas I had trained in tailoring, I did not practice my work but when I got a loan, I bought a sewing machine and now I am a professional tailor. My husband died when my children were very young but now I have raised them by joining income generating groups other than depending on free things. I am now able to sustain my family and can access loans because I have a running business. I also have a cow which is expected to give me milk next year. I intend to diversify my business as well as training others Women with Disabilities in tailoring".*



Angela Butoto, the beneficiary from isave Inclusive Economic Empowerment Program shares her case story in the Donors meeting at Hotel Africana in Kampala. On her right is Mr. Nangosi David translating her case story from the local language to English.

In conclusion, the isave Model has positively impacted on the lives of Persons with Disabilities and people in their communities. They have embraced the saving culture and many of them have been able to invest the savings in small economic enterprises to generate more income. This has had a positive impact in improving their lives in the community and the sky can only be the limit for their empowerment.

**Compiled by Mr. Chris Ninsima, Manager Economic Empowerment Program, NUDIPU**

### **Disability, a blessing in disguise and not a curse**

Times have changed, from the days when households of Women and Girls with Disabilities used to experience hunger, as if having disability meant having no food because they were not allowed access to land which led to malnutrition.

Efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition have advanced significantly since 2000. Ending hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition for all cannot be achieved without fully involving Women and Girls with Disabilities in production. In trying to achieve this, National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU) has through her advocacy raised eyebrows in the need to fight for access to land for production right from House hold level.

According to the Constitution of Uganda, everyone has a right to own land. But this has been violated by culture, custom and attitude towards Women and Girls with Disabilities. They have been denied ownership and access to land because of their disabilities and hence affecting the quantity of food because a woman is a pillar. Women and Girls with Disabilities have also been limited by the fact that they are not allowed to access land, inherit it or included in the will.

As a result of the different advocacy campaigns championed by National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU), parents of Women and Girls with Disabilities and their husbands now pride in their daughters and wives because of their unique contributions towards food production and hence increasing the financial base.

In spite of her disability, Namugwere Irene herein the photo below is one of the women with disabilities who has been given land and now she produces and sells her own crops due to NUWODU's advocacy.



From the several interventions, Women and Girls with Disabilities now use the sustainable organic agricultural practices to yield more from small plots of land given to them. They have used the land given to them by their parents to scale up and diversify crop production for sustainable food availability and access to market for the produce. They have continuously used the monies from the sale of their produce to finance their VSLA groups mobilized by NUWODU and registered at sub county and district level. Being in groups has helped them access government resources and programs for Agricultural inputs. Because they are legitimate, this has increased their esteem and enabled them live sustainable lives in the communities.



A Woman with Disability is not only supposed to remain a beggar in the family but can be the bread winner by earning from her production. Times have changed; no more hunger in the homes of Women and Girls with Disabilities but instead a blessing to the entire village by selling to the community even in times of drought. This has improved the livelihood of Women and Girls with Disabilities and raised their esteem in the various communities.

The contribution of food by Women and Girls with Disabilities cannot be under looked. While there have been limitations as a result of their disabilities, they have played a big role in community service through crop production and hence ending hunger.

**Prepared by Mwera Scovia, Project Officer NUWODU**

### **Cerebral palsy is no more for Nabunya Hellen!!**

It is often said, "A bad attitude is like a flat tire and you can't go anywhere until you change it". Nabunya Hellen's life represents determination and hope amidst life hardships. Living with cerebral palsy since childhood did not stop her from doing a small knitting business. In a day, Nabunya makes over 7 to 10 sweaters for school children each at a cost of 15,000/= on school order and for ordinary customers each sweater costs 30,000/= Uganda shillings.

Nabunya, a 31 year old and single is a resident of Mulago parish, a Kampala suburb. She was raised by her Aunt Josephine (a Sister to her father) after all her parents passed away. Nabunya studied at Muntundwe primary school and joined Mary Reparatrix Single secondary school for girls in Entebbe where she completed her A-level studies.



Nabunya was later supported by Health Home initiative organisation in collaboration with International Labour organisation that enabled her to acquire vocational training skills in Knitting. She thanked Uganda National Association of cerebral palsy for building her capacity in managing small scale business. "This has enabled me manage my business well, meet all basic needs and get more connections to other customers". Says Nabunya.

However, Nabunya faces a number of challenges in her small business which includes; breakdown of her technical machine coupled with high costs of repairing it. She said that the knitting yarns are expensive to buy with each costing over 17,000/= and yet the price keeps increasing. She also highlighted the delay by the customers to pay her in time after taking her products yet she has to meet the rent dues. Nabunya needs another tailoring and knitting machine to open-up a small training workshop. This will enable her to train other interested persons with disabilities.

**Compiled by Mr. Bychance Emmanuel, Project Officer at Uganda National Association of Cerebral Palsy (UNAC)**

## Organized Groups, The way to go in fighting hunger and improving food security among Persons with Disabilities

The saying, “the pudding is in the eating” reverberates well with the continued efforts of our peer support groups of parents and deaf persons particularly of Masaka and Arua districts. Sign Health Uganda’s (SHU) initial efforts were geared towards mobilizing them into groups as they were so isolated with majority of them in hard to reach remote areas. Together with local community leaders and other partners, SHU is building the capacities of sustainable peer groups right from district to sub-county levels with the aim of empowering them with skills to advocate for inclusion in local and national development programs within their localities.

The response has been immense. Tremendous progress and plausible commitment by local leaders to support these groups has been generated. The once shy and inactive groups are slowly but surely become springboards of Deafness and disability advocacy, with enormous zeal to be part of ongoing discourse such as regarding their level of inclusion in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Through information sharing meetings with these groups and our observations on food insecurity apart from the dry spell of last year, poor quality seeds and farming methods were highly attributed for the poor yields. One parent in Arua said, “Because of unreliable rainfall, we need drought resistant crops, but we don't know where we can access them from and our granaries are now empty.”

With the support of Community Development Officers (CDOs) of Vurra and Aroi sub-counties, parents groups received improved seedlings and were trained in better farming methodologies. One of the leaders said, “We hope the yields will be better this time. We will also need refresher training to adapt to the changing climate trends and pests.”

To ensure that these groups gain hands on experience, SHU encourages exchange and exposure visits between the groups so that practical farming and other livelihood skills are replicated among themselves. A parent leader in Masaka said, “My visit to Arua exposed me to a range of ideas. Upon returning, I mobilized fellow parents and we started mushroom projects using locally available resources”

More effort are being made among the deaf persons in Masaka to ensure that food and income generating projects are encouraged. After accessing special grant, the Masaka deaf youth invested it in agriculture by starting chicken rearing and piggery and shared the proceeds.

As Sign Health Uganda (SHU) and the disability movement, our strength lies within the progress made by such groups, who continue to engage local leaders so that they can benefit from government and private sector development initiatives including food security.

**Compiled by Ssenyondo Nasser, Program Officer Sign Health Uganda (SHU)**

### NAPADEC Improves communication for inclusive families

The Sustainable Development Goals currently provides for the overall global framework for development with a vision of “*leaving no one behind*”. Limited participation of Persons with Disabilities in development action platforms and activities has been proved hampered by effective communication and skill that culminates a communication gap that NAPADEC bridges in partnership with other humanitarian organizations. In containing this gap, 259 parents/caregivers have been enrolled in learning sign language in the districts of Masaka, Mukono, Jinja, Iganga, Luuka and Bududa. According to the baseline survey carried out, out of the parents sampled, 24 out of 41 parents can now sign well. Out of the 24, 17 were good, 5 were fair and 2 were weak. 19 Deaf children reported effective communication with their parents at home and inclusion in development ideas and programs and children whose parents have strived to go for Sign Language classes are reported to have improved their communication at home and inclusion in involvement in development project for poverty eradication.



The board members with the chief walker, parents, deaf children and staff during the awareness event on 14th July 2017 at NAPADEC secretariat

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Over 98 families are receiving sign language skills and 114 DCW sign language books have been distributed to community members and leaders. In the quest for basic sign language skills acquisition, 08 training centers have been formed to contain the need with 6 sign language instructors to voluntarily teach communities and parents better communication.



Parents Support Group of Luuka district with deaf children during annual monitoring visit at Bukhana sub county headquarters

The advocacy tool and nucleus for strengthening the capacities for the parents for sustainability and poverty eradication schemes in line with the human capital development has been the parents support groups in NAPADEC tentacles of Masaka, Mukono, Jinja, Luuka, Iganga and Bududa districts. Parents have been trained in group management skills, constitution writing and have been registered and linked to the respective sub counties and districts to benefit from the grants, women fund, elderly and other schemes like operation wealth creation and other programs. There are 90 active parents registered with an average of 15 per district. The parent's capacity in starting up their own initiative has been improved; for example Bududa PSG has a saving and credit scheme, brick making and poultry rearing.

Mukono parents and community members are undergoing training on income generating activities like soap, tooth paste, candles, shoe polish making, cosmetics, crafts, hair dressing, basket weaving, tailoring, books, sponge, and sanitary pads. This is done in conjunction with learning sign language. The training is aimed at reducing poverty through the solidarity and team work of the parents, enhance independence of the parents and create sustainability, improve on the market base of the parents and boost on the income as well as diversifying with agriculture.



Parents of deaf children learning how to make shoe polish at Mukono NAPADEC secretariat as a poverty alleviation - strategy

**Prepared by Okongo Julius Geoffrey, Project Manager NAPADEC**

### Uganda Albinos Association embarks on crop production to end poverty

In response to implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1, Uganda Albinos Association (UAA) prioritized training of persons with albinos, parents and care givers of persons with albinism in urban farming. This was after discovering that most people living with albinism in urban areas cannot compete favorably with their non-disabled counter parts especially in business transactions due to lack of startup capital. Access to micro finance institutions is also a challenge to persons with albinism due to limited capital base. UAA has been fundamental in encouraging parents, caregivers and persons with albinism to grow market crops like tomatoes, onions and other categories of crops from the small spaces/plots to earn a living. This is a doable business venture requiring limited capital for start-up and can be done at one's convenient time. This has resulted in many earning a living and hence advancing SDG 1 and 2.



Parents and caregivers of persons with albinism trained on how they can benefit from the Kampala Capity City Authority Urban Agriculture Fund (crop farming, poultry, piggyery and urban fish farming)

**Compiled by Mr. Hassan Mulondo, Deputy Executive Director UAA**

## **My Story Initiative gets the conversation around Mental Health started**

The genesis of My Story Initiative begun with a lived experience of mental ill health. It was founded three years ago to address the challenges of mental ill health and mental wellness. To create support and conversation around mental health and mental wellness, a support group dubbed heart to heart was birthed.

### **Heart to heart chat**

With the objective to champion rights of people with psycho social disabilities, My Story Initiative holds monthly meetings where caregivers, survivors of psychiatry and mental health service users and mental health professionals give each other support. Anne Muhumuza, a care giver, says that she finds the meetings helpful. She is able to help even those in the community understand mental health.

Maureen Ainembabazi, a mental health service user and a mother of two is also happy to attend since this makes her feel better and encouraged to face another day. The monthly meetings also birthed a whatsapp group that is 2 years old which enables mental health professionals, care givers, survivors of psychiatry and mental health service users to share experiences on a daily basis at their convenience.

### **Partnering with organizations**

My story Initiative has made partnerships with organizations like Bernice Women, the Cradle, the Remnant Generation and Pill power to engage our members and the public on recovery. This process is facilitated by American doctors with the aim of creating mental health awareness by using education manuals through art therapy. The focus is primarily on women with the aim of using art therapy as a way of them enjoying recovery, raising awareness to empower and end stigma surrounding mental ill health.

My story Initiative also engages with the Soul Studio through Zumba, a rigorous dance exercise to reach out to inpatients in Butabika National Referral hospital once every month. The dance is a tool for helping people to improve their mental wellness. On every Wednesday of the month, my story initiative also talks about mental health without the label of shame.

### **Advocacy**

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My story Initiative engaged with the Health Committee of Parliament on mental health concerns in line with the mental health bill. My Story Initiative was joined by the fiery Stella Nyanzi, an activist and Heartsounds Uganda to make contribution to the mental health bill in ensuring that human rights of people with psycho social disabilities are respected.

NUDIPU has played a fundamental role in helping increase the visibility of my story Initiative by creating space to engage in a public dialogue with NTV at the People's Parliament on disability inclusive budgeting. The aim was to influence the budget process so that the component of disability is embraced when allocating national resources.

On World Mental health day commemorations, my story initiative is aimed at engaging the Ministry of Health and different stakeholders to increase invisibility of issues on Mental Health talks through television and radio programmers (check out the SP). It is also an opportunity to lobby the government to give mental health priority when allocating financial resources by also showcasing what we offer especially empowering people with psycho social disabilities.

Like the Chinese saying goes; 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step'. My Story Initiative is set to make a mark and leave a legacy in the history of Uganda by normalizing issues surrounding mental health.



Members of My Story Initiative in a mutual support meeting sharing experiences



Members of Parliament in a consultative meeting on the Mental Health Bill with My Story Initiative, Heart Sounds Uganda and Stella Nyanzi. The meeting was called by the Health Committee of Parliament.

We are determined to make the population of people with psycho social disabilities one that is distinctively productive towards National and International development.

**Compiled by Angella Nsimbi, Executive Director My story Initiative**

### Ending Malnutrition among Children with Down syndrome through good feeding practices

In a bid to implementing SDGs in Uganda, The Uganda Down Syndrome Association with the help of Brood Baking Company decided to provide bread to its members most especially parents of children with Down syndrome to cater for their breakfast and "evening tea". The Uganda Down's Syndrome Association is ensuring that every family with Down syndrome child benefits and none is left out. The Association has gone ahead to sensitize parents using different platforms for example general meetings, television programs and conferences to feed their children on nutritious foods like silver fish, greens among others in order to sharpen their minds.

As the Association, we know that this is not enough to help in ending malnutrition. However, every journey begins with one step and one mile. The Association plans to scale up the feeding habits of children with Down syndrome to provide more food categories in a bid to fighting hunger/malnutrition among children with Down syndrome. This is important for awakening their brains and minds for holistic development.



Children with Down syndrome receiving bread



I conclude by calling upon the general public to work together to achieve SDG 2, in a bid to end hunger among children with Down syndrome by 2030 so as to live a healthier and happy life, hence not leaving them behind per the SDGs principle.

**Compiled by Mr. Baguma Derrick from Uganda Down Syndrome Association**

## Youth with Disabilities Excluded in Civic Spaces in Uganda: A case for National Youth Council Act

On 12<sup>th</sup> August 2018, youth with disabilities in Uganda joined the rest of the world to celebrate the International Youth day under the theme "Safe Spaces for Youth". The day was internationally designated by United Nations to draw attention to a given set of cultural and legal issues surrounding the youth. This undertaking does not exclude youth with disabilities.

While there have been efforts to include youth with disabilities by government and Civil Society, the participation of youth with disabilities in civic spaces is still a big concern. This is due to the deficiencies in the National Youth Council Act that have hampered progressive and sustainable participation of youth with disabilities in electoral democracy contrary to protecting them from manipulation per the Objects of the Act.

First of all, effective and inclusive participation of all youth in their diversities in electoral processes connotes to the election of a Member of Parliament for youth with disabilities by youth with disabilities themselves. While Section 15 of the National Youth Council Act on the election of representatives of youth in Parliament is gender sensitive in terms of representation, it does not take into consideration the equitable representation and participation of youth with disabilities and this has hampered effective and representative voice of youth with disabilities in decision making processes. Since the submissions by the mainstream youth Members of Parliament are generic, they need a colleague who can help them understand disability issues to strengthen the representative voice in Parliament. For effective involvement of youth with disabilities in democratic governance and decision making processes to suffice, an amendment of Section 15 to include a representative of youth with disabilities is critical to ensuring that they are not left behind per the SDGs slogan.

Secondly, there is lack of and non-participation of youth with disabilities in the National Youth Council structures. There are no structures to facilitate the participation of youth with disabilities in electoral processes due to lack of legislative provision in the National Youth Council Act. Utmost, the National Youth Council Act instead provides for the nomination of a youth with disability by the organization of persons with disabilities in certain circumstances. This is not the case for youth without disabilities because their colleges are well legislated for in the National Youth Council Act. The end result is to completely deter the participation of youth with disabilities and ensure that youth without disabilities make decisions for them even when they have not consulted them and consultation not being a mandatory requirement.

Thirdly, is the Composition of the National Youth Executive Committee as in Section 9 of the National Youth Council Act. The Act is explicit about the participation of other youth categories on the National Youth Executive Committee but directly omits the participation of youth with disabilities yet this is necessary to enhance their participation and inclusion in the day today running of the affairs of the Council. Several decisions reached are either not favouring youth with disabilities or totally disregarding them since they do not have a voice on the Executive Committee. It is high time the Act is

It is high time the Act is amended to enable the representation of youth with disabilities on the National Youth Executive Committee. Youth with disabilities should be given an opportunity to think for themselves and decide for themselves because they have individual autonomy.



Youth with Disabilities in a group photo after celebrating 2018 International Youth Day at NUDIPU

The non-representation and participation of youth with disabilities in youth electoral structures has affected their social economic well-being. Youth with disabilities cannot hold their leaders accountable because they don't vote for them. Besides, their participation in monitoring social economic empowerment government programs like Youth Livelihood Program, Uganda Women Entrepreneurship program among others is equally lacking. This has made them be treated as objects of pity making them more vulnerable and less productive members of society and hence not benefiting from the national cake. There is therefore need for deliberate efforts to ensure inclusion and participation of youth with disabilities in various youth electoral processes in order to ensure full inclusion and effective participation. This is key to not leaving them behind.

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