



NATIONAL UNION OF DISABLED PERSONS OF UGANDA (NUDIPU)

SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON

AT

**THE CELEBRATIONS TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

HELD AT

STATE HOUSE - KAMPALA.

3RD DECEMBER, 2021

Your Excellence, the President of the Republic of Uganda,
Rt. Hon. Prime Minister,

Rt, Hon. Speaker of Parliament,
The Government Chief Whip,
Hon. Ministers present,
Honorable Members of Parliament present,
The Chairperson, NRM National Persons with Disabilities League,
Members of the Diplomatic Corp,
Development Partners,
Councillors for Persons with Disabilities present,
Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda,
Board members and staff of NUDIPU,
Persons with Disabilities from different parts of Uganda,
Civil Society Organizations,
Representatives of the media houses,
Well-wishers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Greetings to you all!

On behalf of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you to this year's celebration to mark the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. We thank you, Your Excellence, for inviting/accepting to host us for this day.

Today, we gather to reflect on our past performance in regard to disability inclusion in the mainstream society. We also seek to reflect on the achievements we have been able to register as a fraternity for the good of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda.

As a fraternity, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to your Excellence for appointing our very own as State Minister for Disability Affairs, this time, detached from that of the elderly because of the unique issues that each group represents. We also thank you for again appointing one of us as Chairperson, Equal Opportunities Commission. We do

appreciate all the government interventions towards uplifting the status of persons with disabilities in this country, in the spirit of economic transformation.

In addition, the NSSF Amendment Bill which was recently passed by Parliament with specific regard to a clause that allows persons with disabilities above the age of 40 to access 50% of their savings for those who have saved for 10 years; this reflects the true spirit of disability inclusion.

This year's celebration in Uganda is ran under the theme: **“Not All Disabilities are visible: A call for stronger action during and Post COVID-19 Era”**.

It challenges us to stretch beyond the physical/visible disabilities and instead challenges us to refocus on raising awareness about, and understanding those disabilities that are not immediately recognizable. It informs us that such invisible/marginalized disabilities not given attention as opposed to the visible disabilities. In Uganda, the most invisible forms of disabilities include; deafblindness, epilepsy, mental and psycho-social disabilities, down syndrome, Autism, Hydrocephalus, Spina Bifida and cerebral palsy, among many others.

Basing on the foregoing, persons with invisible disability have been marginalized for long and so, are continuously denied access to services and opportunities in areas of health, employment, education and social interaction due to their unseen disabilities and severe vulnerability.

In addition, due to fear of stigma, many of the persons with invisible disabilities have opted not to disclose their disability, and this puts their lives in a very precarious situation, hence making worse their vulnerability and low self-esteem. The level of marginalization caused by stigma results into other forms of evil like exploitation since they cannot speak up for their rights. For that reason, a reasonable number have been locked out of formal/non formal employment, thus limiting their contribution to development of this country. Many have also lost out in education, and access to health services as a result of negative attitudes or even lack of knowledge about the nature of disability by the service providers.

The outbreak of COVID-19 simply exacerbated their marginalization and discrimination levels especially in accessing basic healthcare due to challenges of mobility during the lockdown sessions. The ban on transport and limited movement meant many people with some of the aforementioned invisible disabilities could not get access to the designated government facilities namely Health Centre III's IV's for routine medication.

Looking at the woes of a person with mental/psychosocial disability for example, the medicines they use are expensive and scarce with the only government specialized treatment offered to them being only accessible at Mulago referral Hospital and yet the same facility continues to grapple with human resource issues who are not knowledgeable on this form of disability. Your Excellence, the situation is even worse for Learners with Acquired brain injury whom the education system does not totally favor or provide for.

You may recall, Your Excellence, that at a similar function in 2017 in Kamwenge, you pledged to convene a face-to-face meeting with Persons with Disabilities so that you discuss with them critical emerging issues that concern them with a view of ensuring total inclusiveness and equality. We are aware that you have been meeting other vulnerable groups like the youth and women groups.

We also know you as one who does not fall back on your promises. We therefore re-echo our request, that you accord us an opportunity for a meeting, where a bigger group can have a dialogue with you about our plight.

Your Excellence, permit me, on behalf of persons with disabilities in Uganda, make the following requests:

1. That the Ministry of health subsidizes the cost of specialized healthcare services, equipment and medicines that are used to manage specific disabilities under the marginalized and invisible categories.
2. that such services should further be extended to lower health centers for early identification, intervention as well as easy access for persons with disabilities and their care givers.
3. Increase funding to all rehabilitation centres, orthopedic workshops, physiotherapy service centers, mental health clinics at all regional referral and district hospitals.
4. Train more brain specialists as well as provide instant access to the most on-demand drugs at all low level health centres across the country.
5. Fast-truck the approval of the Regulations for the implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020.
6. Finally, that government through the Ministry of gender, labour and social development moves on to design a social protection programme that will address disability related costs, care and support for the invisible disabilities since majority of them are not able to independently cope with the formal employment programmes.

In conclusion, Your Excellence, and all members present, the issues presented herein today are very critical to Persons with Disabilities in Uganda. Steady Progress for persons with disabilities can best be achieved if the above said issues are addressed to the fullest extent possible. I wish everyone a happy celebration, Merry Christmas and happy New Year 2022. I say all these 'For God and My Country'.

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**HON MPINDI BUMALI,
CHAIRPERSON: BOARD OF DIRECTORS - NUDIPU**

ON BEHALF OF DISABILITY FRATERNITY IN UGANDA