



Sightsavers



#EqualWorld

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE NEED TO PRIORITISE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE VACCINATION AGAINST COVID 19 IN UGANDA

On this day, **the 13th August 2021**, the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) is calling this Press Conference to call for more reasonable accommodation to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left out during vaccination processes and for all vaccination campaign messages to be made accessible to enable persons with disabilities to take part. This is in collaboration with Sightsavers on their Equal World Campaign which is calling on governments around the world to vaccinate people with disabilities as a priority at risk group, as the world faces a historical moment to test existing commitments to equity, equality and universal health care.

NUDIPU applauds the Government for having launched the COVID-19 mass vaccination campaign in March 2021, which started with the essential groups who were healthcare workers, teachers, Police & the Army and the elderly as they were considered among high-risk groups. With these efforts in place, the Government vaccinated 1,152,874, people and had registered 87,633 recoveries from COVID-19, 2,752 died and 4,519 were undergoing treatment by end of July 2021. However, persons with disabilities have not been able to fully benefit from the process due to limited priority given to them and number of outstanding challenges faced by persons with disabilities such as: inaccessible vaccination sites; long waits in line to be vaccinated; and limited awareness on the ongoing vaccination campaigns due to the inaccessible information.

According to the Uganda National Expanded Programme on Immunization, mass vaccination will prevent and reduce severe COVID-19 disease and deaths, sustain national health system response and restore health and productivity of the Ugandan societies and the economy.

The Government is in the process of securing more vaccines through procurement and donations and according to Dr Jane Ruth Acheng the Minister of Health, Uganda aims to vaccinate at least 49.6% of its population (21,936,011) with COVID-19 vaccines in different phases.

Therefore, vaccination centres have been put up by government at Health Centres II, III, IV in all 136 districts to bring services closer to the people. In order for persons with disabilities to be able to benefit from such services, there is need for Government to;

Provide for reasonable accommodation in the vaccination campaign to allow persons with disabilities get access to the vaccine to reduce the burden that covid would add to disability. This can be achieved through:

- Working closely with organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left out through mobilization to get vaccinated.
- Providing information on vaccination against COVID-19 in accessible formats so as to benefit those with hearing and visual impairments. For example, through the use of audio-visual information in the vaccination exercise.
- Ensuring that vaccination centres are accessible to persons with disabilities. This is applicable to both the physical environment and the communication services.
- Providing sign language interpretation services to assist deaf persons during the vaccination exercise.
- While updating the public on the number of people who have received vaccines government should document and indicate the number of people with disabilities who have been vaccinated so far.

Esther Kyozi
Chief Executive Officer
National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda
(NUDIPU)