NUDIPU new Board sworn in

Woes of financial inclusion for people with disabilities

Youth with disabilities embrace self-employment

Women with disabilities offer to keep girls in school by making reusable pads
Greetings from the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU). Welcome to our first edition of the our quarterly newsletter in 2024.

As we embark on a new year filled with hope, resilience, and determination, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible progress we have made together and share our vision for the journey ahead.

The past year presented us with unprecedented challenges, yet in the face of adversity, our organization demonstrated unwavering strength and commitment to our mission of empowering individuals with disabilities.

From adapting to new ways of serving our community to championing disability inclusion in every aspect of our work, we have truly shown what it means to be resilient.

I am immensely proud of every member of our team for their dedication, creativity, and passion in making a positive impact on the lives of those we serve. Your tireless efforts have not only transformed the lives of individuals with disabilities but have also inspired countless others to join us in our mission.

As we look ahead to the new year, let us reaffirm our commitment to advancing disability rights, fostering inclusivity, and advocating for meaningful change. Let us continue to push boundaries, challenge stereotypes, and create opportunities for all individuals to thrive, regardless of ability.

In the coming months, we will embark on new initiatives, forge new partnerships, and amplify our voice on issues that matter most to our community.

Together, we will shape a future where every person with a disability is empowered to reach their full potential and live a life of dignity and independence.

Yours truly,

Ms Ketty Aero
Chairperson
As part of good corporate governance, the organization ushered in a new board through peaceful elections at the general assembly last year in December. We do appreciate development partners such as the Norwegian Association of the Disabled, Abilis, and Diakonie for sponsoring the general assembly to hold elections.

We appreciate the outgoing board for the oversight role they have played to check the secretariat and management to ensure they steer the organization in the right direction.

To the incoming board, the Chief Executive Officer Ms Esther Kyozira shared that she expects maximum teamwork as this was exhibited by the old board.

She challenged the new board that the organization has a dream to expand its office space currently to have a skyscraper building. There is a need to expand the office space and this is something the new board should keenly think about.

Mr Silvester Kasozi Country representative Light for the World Uganda representing development partners, shared that the new board should make decisions that are strategic and beneficial to the organization. He shared that the governance board should always give room to management to fully run the operations of the organization. The role of the new board is strictly advisory. The leadership role is just complementary and the new board has to know this.

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Honor Honourable Mpindi Bumali representing persons with disabilities in Parliament in his speech to the new board members also shared that being a board member is a voluntary role.

There is a need for harmony in steering the organization. The board should be open to resolving conflicts rather than escalating them for the good of serving the organization.

The new board should look forward to great opportunities and they will benefit from the great visibility the organization has created since its inception. He thanked development partners who have continuously supported the umbrella organization for persons with disabilities.

In her maiden speech, the Chairperson Ms Ketty Aero called for maximum cooperation of the board as they work with the secretariat to steer the organization.

**Key things that the new board will focus on according to the Chairperson:**

- Developing a new strategic plan since the current one is expiring at the end of 2024.
- Mobilizing resources for the organization
- Promoting the social enterprise agenda for sustainability
- Advocacy for an increase in ICT access for persons with disabilities.
Found in the middle of Lake Victoria, traveling from one sub-county to the other needs one to travel by water thus making transport very difficult and costly.

Fishing is the main activity in the district and this is restricted only to licensed fishermen to curb illegal fishing and immature fish. Hence many youths including those with disabilities have no alternative job opportunities rendering them idle.

National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) with support from the Christian Blind Mission (CBM) therefore, came up with a skilling program to train youth in Buvuma in different vocations from four sub-counties of Buweema, Nairambi, Bugaya, and Busamuzi.

The youth were trained in boat engine repair, hairdressing/ cutting, and tailoring. This was done to support youth with disabilities to have a chance to self-employment. Out of the 118 beneficiaries who enrolled for the skilling program, only 98 were able to train up to the end for six months.

According to the Chief Administrative Officer of Buvuma District Mr Issah Mbooge, who was present to witness the flagging off of the startup kits given to the youth with disabilities, was very delighted by the gesture of NUDIPU and promised to work together with the different stakeholders to support these youth to thrive in their different ventures.

“We thank NUDIPU for supporting young youth with disabilities to start up small enterprises for themselves. As a district, this indeed has supplemented our efforts to create employment opportunities for the young youth in the district more so those with disabilities,” Mr Mbooge shared.

“We as youth with disabilities should not sit. Since some of us did not get the opportunity to go to school for formal jobs, we can start with the little NUDIPU has given us. If NUDIPU hadn’t given us a chance to acquire a different skill we would have been more desperate and jobless than we were. But since they have allowed us to acquire skills and gave us startup kits, why not work?” says Peter Kange. He is a youth with a physical disability.

The Chief Administrative Officer Buvuma District Mr Mbooge Issa on the left flagging of the startup kits that were distributed to youth with disabilities.

Out of the 118 beneficiaries trained only 98 managed to complete the skills training. Thanks to CBM and NUDIPU.
National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), is implementing phase two of the Gender and Disability in Practice project (GADIP 2) with support from the Austrian Development Cooperation in the districts of Nakapiripiriti and Kapchorwa.

During an inception meeting in Nakapiripiriti District the Chief Executive Officer Ms Esther Kyozira informed the participants that the main objective for this project is to address issues of Gender-based Violence among women with disabilities, inclusive education for children with disabilities and accessing Sexual Reproductive health services for girls and women with disabilities.

This is a five-year project. The first phase of the project was implemented in Kotido and Moroto districts hence the need to spread to other districts among which Nakapiripiriti was selected.

Ms Kyozira however requested total commitment from the Local government, CSOs, member organizations, and well-wishers to support the implementation of the project.

The Implementation will be done in six sub-counties hence and this calls for commitment from all stakeholders to ensure the project is a success.

Thanks to Nakapiripiriti District Union for being compliant when it comes to annual subscription.

In addition, the same project was launched in Kapchorwa District to get support from the stakeholders.

The three subcounties Kawowo, Munyukenya, and West Division were selected for the project launch.

The Vice Chairperson and district Local government promised to give free office space for the effective implementation of the project.

The CEO NUDIPU addressing participants during the project inception meeting in Nakapiripiriti District.
Have you ever imagined yourself being a secondary account holder to your bank account? All the time you need money you have to be with someone to support you to withdraw your own money.

This is what persons with visual impairment go through almost all their lives. Have you ever imagined yourself being in the shoes of a person of short stature and you can’t walk smartly to any ATM to withdraw your own money only to be told that you have to get someone to support you as if you can’t do it?

These are a few examples, but many persons with disabilities find it difficult to be part of the money economy because from the onset they have been excluded.

National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) with some of its member organizations of persons with disabilities representatives presented a petition on total financial inclusion for persons with disabilities to the leadership of the Uganda Bankers’ Association.

Key among the issues that should be addressed include;

- Most banks have inaccessible infrastructure this is evidenced by buildings that don’t have ramps and elevators among other features.

People of short stature & and those using wheelchairs can’t access ATMs not even teller tables thus do not get attention.

Access to financial information by those with hearing impairment is still challenging. Some have to move with pens & and paper to make inquiries & and the patience of bank tellers to give them attention is never there. Some staff can learn sign language to communicate with the deaf or develop key content in different formats such as video, and audio among others to help some persons with disabilities access financial information.

According to the Executive Director Uganda Bankers Association, Wilbrod Owor having total financial inclusion is a journey they want to take. They have a lot to learn about disability inclusion and they are willing to talk to their members.

As an umbrella organization for persons with disabilities, we look forward to seeing banks adjust to some of the requests of its people. We live in a world where financial independence is very important and this is not exclusive to persons with disabilities.

At an individual level, they also want to manage their finances but the financial institutions have not been welcoming to many of them.

"Having total financial inclusion is a journey that we bankers should take. We have alot to learn about disability inclusion especially in the financial sector,”

Wilbrod Owor Executive Director Uganda Bankers Association
As part of monitoring the empowered groups of persons with disabilities, the Director of Programmes Mr John Chirs Ninsima early this month made a follow-up visit to the project participants of the Disability Inclusive Livelihood Intervention project (DILI) implemented in Kasese District.

This project is being implemented by the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda with support from the Christian Blind Mission (CBM). Under this project, the project participants formulated saving groups. Encouraging persons with disabilities to join saving groups was one way of bringing them together to collectively benefit from the groups in terms of financial access and other interventions.

A follow-up visit to some of the saving groups which include Nyamugasana Thuyihimbe iSAVE Group in Kisinga Town Council, Burumbika Thukolere Hyhuma iSAVE GROUP all in the Kyondo sub-county and Thuwansane iSAVE Group in the Nyakiyumbu sub-county revealed that the saving groups were fairly doing fine though with minimal savings. This is partly attributed to the slow pick-up of businesses that some ventured in.

In May 2023, as a way to support persons with disabilities, especially the youth who were part of the saving groups NUDIPU trained some in vocational skills and later given startup kits.

Meet Musa Muhindo and his team they jointly run a welding workshop in Lyakirema Parish Nyakiyumbu Subcounty called Nyakiyumbu Skills Centre. The workshop is just three months old.

He is part of Kyasindiro Tyuyibikire Isave saving group. Six beneficiaries were trained and received welding equipment. With minimal resources, they have been able to pay rent, register their business, and get clients who need their services.

“The start is not easy. But we believe with persistence and doing quality work we can break through financially. At the moment, we are already helping each other meet medical and other basic needs given the little income we are getting. We are optimistic our business will grow,” says Muhindo.

In addition, Muhindo and the team are also using their workshop as a training ground for other youth and they are training them at a minimal fee. “This will boost our earning avenues, especially during days when we have fewer clients making orders,” shared Muhindo.

However, the team was advised to keep saving. This will support them to invest in their business and keep having running capital. Keeping records of their orders is important to follow up with those who make orders on credit and monitor their business.
For many years, the central division in Ntungamo Municipality lacked a disability council due to low awareness about the importance of having one and funding shortfalls to constitute and operationalize it.

In 2023, NUDIPU supported by the Together for Inclusion Human Rights Advocacy project conducted trainings on disability inclusion for sub-county and division associations of persons with disabilities.

During these trainings, NUDIPU sensitized the committee members of this association about the definition of disability, the categories of disability recognized by the government of Uganda, and some of the laws providing for the rights of Persons with disabilities in different sectors.

A key aspect of these provisions was the provision for a sub-county disability council as stipulated in the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020. After this training, the Chairman LC3, in consultation with the committee members and sub-county councillors for Persons with Disabilities allocated funds to the disability council.

During the training of the sub-county associations of persons with disabilities, their leaders, and technical staff in May 2023, NUDIPU realized that there had been errors in the constitution of the council for example having councillors as one of the key members of the council yet they are required to be ex-officials.

They also lacked representatives of parents of children with disabilities, a youth representative, a representative of NGOs working in the division, and one person of proven integrity and commitment to the disability matters as stipulated in the Act.

Subsequently, NUDIPU advocated for the reconstitution of the council by the law and witnessed the process during the routine monitoring visit to the division in July 2023.

The division now has a fully constituted disability council with 6 members and 5 ex-official members. The concerns of persons with disabilities are well followed up in this division. The council chairperson has thus far participated in the division Technical Planning Committee (TPC) meeting to vet the groups that receive the special grant for persons with disabilities in the division.

The Chairperson of the council, Mr Katehangwa Edward thanks NUDIPU for the different training and follow-up meetings where we have learned about our rights as persons with disabilities and our responsibilities as representatives of persons with disabilities.

“We are currently supporting persons with disabilities in Kikoni ward to register and form groups to benefit from the special grant for Persons with Disabilities. We continue to strategize as a council on how to sensitize more persons with disabilities about the available government programs and will soon put these into practice,” Mr Katehangwa adds.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- NUDIPU sensitized the Municipality leaders about the disability categories and the need for the disability council
- The leaders were able to advocate and allocate funds for the council.
One stitch at a time: Women with disabilities commit themselves to sew pads to keep girls with disabilities in school

CocaCola Beverages Uganda and South Africa team paid a courtesy visit to NUDIPU in February this year.

We are glad that the partnership we had with them to train some women with disabilities to make reusable sanitary pads is creating an impact in communities.

The women who were trained to make reusable sanitary pads said the skill gained didn’t stop at only making sanitary pads, they have used the same skills now to make reusable sanitary pads in the communities and sell them at a fair cost.

We all know how menstrual hygiene is still a challenge to most households in Uganda. This is worse in rural areas. When it comes to women and girls with disabilities the situation is further escalated, first with affordability and secondly, they are persons with disabilities making them more vulnerable.

We believe this partnership has created and changed the lives of pupils and students with disabilities in some of the schools where these reusable sanitary pads were distributed.

According to Chief Executive Officer Esther Kyozira, this was just a drop in the ocean. A few girls were able to get these sanitary reusable pads. If this is scaled up so that many girls with disabilities get these reusable pads, this would partly solve the problem of dropping out of school because they can’t handle their menstrual hygiene due to a lack of pads.

To the team from South Africa, the problems across the globe especially in Africa are the same. Therefore, being part of this partnership to support girls with disabilities to manage their menstrual hygiene is a great venture. This will keep them in school.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Coca-Cola Beverages Uganda for this gesture to support at least the making of about 250 sanitary pads that were distributed to selected pupils and students in some schools in Wakiso and Soroti.
A team of research students from the University of Exeter, Makerere University, and the Norwegian University of Life doing a course on Disability, Social Justice, and Climate Resilient Development paid a courtesy visit to NUDIPU.

From a joint field visit, the team found that there is a great need to empower persons with disabilities to deal with climate change. However, there is a need for this backed up by research on how this can be enrolled.

NUDIPU and the team were able to support and participate in field engagements in Kiboga District on how climate change affects persons with disabilities and the nature of the existing early warning systems.

We were able to engage with Kiboga District officials, district disability leadership, and selected farmers with disabilities.

What was discovered is that there are no early warning systems for persons with disabilities, there are challenges with climate budget trucking in favor of Persons with Disabilities, gaps in disability inclusion by district officials in climate change mitigation and adaptation in favor of persons with disabilities, limited consultation by the district officials among persons with disabilities in disability inclusion in climate change adaptation, etc.

It should be noted that for us to have resilient communities and for climate justice to prevail, persons with disabilities must be at the center of climate adaptation.

“What was discovered from the field visit is a true reflection were persons with disabilities are never involved in discussions about climate change. Disability is diverse and therefore when designing climate mitigation solutions there is need to be mindful about the different disability categories,” CEO NUDIPU Esther Kyozira adds.

In addition, NUDIPU trained Disability Rights Fund grantees in disaster risk reduction. The pinch of disasters can be felt so deeply. Disasters haven’t been exceptional to persons with disabilities. Therefore, they must be involved in disaster risk reduction & be part of the mitigation measures.

FACT
There is no statistical information/research about disability and climate change.
Due to the continuous advocacy by the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda, parents in Kibaale have taken on the responsibility to embrace educating children with disabilities.

Thanks to the school heads in some of the districts who have wholeheartedly provided a conducive environment for learners with disabilities to study with ease with others despite the challenges they face in implementing inclusive education.

On his monitoring visit to follow up on the progress of some of the activities being implemented by the organization in the district among which is promoting human rights advocacy, inclusive education, and socio-economic empowerment of persons with disabilities, the Director of Programs Mr John Chris Ninsiima, had an opportunity to visit St Theresa Bujuni Primary School. This is one of the schools that has embraced inclusive learning.

It has a population of about 300 pupils with disabilities who have been enrolled in this school. About 30 of these are deaf.

The head of the special needs unit Sister Jane Niyoyita and the only sign language interpreter teacher at the school acknowledges there is a gap in supporting learners with hearing impairment. Her alone she cannot be present in all classes for all subjects to support these learners.

“But as the school we manage what we can do so that these children are also integrated in the school system despite the challenges of having no teachers who can do sign language,” says Sr Niyoyita.

Employing teachers with disabilities

Mr Ninsiima in addition also visited Kahyoro Primary School Government aided school.
to the school head for employing two teachers with disabilities.

Mr Muhumuza Richard and Ms Asiima Annet are both teachers with a physical disability at this school.

Due to lack of teachers, these are sometimes constrained and find they have to teach more classes. These two however are grateful to be employed and thank the school head for believing in them to teach learners.

**PLE 2023**

In the concluded Primary Leaving Examinations learners with hearing impairment performed poorly as shown in the table below.

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### Table 7: Performance of Special Needs candidates by Divisional Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>DIV. 1</th>
<th>DIV. 2</th>
<th>DIV. 3</th>
<th>DIV. 4</th>
<th>DIV. U</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physically Handicapped</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Blind</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslexics and Those Needing Transcribers</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>611</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all the SNE candidates registered, 46 did not take the examination. The category of SNE candidates who needed only extra time have not been included in this Table. From the Table, it appears that the category of the Deaf are most affected by their form of disability compared to the others. They have the highest number of ungraded candidates. With the appropriate assistance, the dyslexics and the partially blind perform at the same level as the other candidates. The Board has taken an interest in this category and will carry out an analysis of the trends of their performance so as to find out the possible causes.

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**Recommendations by NUDIPU**

NUDIPU therefore calls upon the government to be intentional in improving the education system to meet the individual needs of learners with disabilities by:

- Conduct investigations on the mediocre performance of candidates with disabilities at PLE for 2023 and support them to re-sit.
- Expediting the passing of the National Inclusive Education Policy.
- Improving the in-service teacher training curriculum to give teachers knowledge and skills to support learners with disabilities and other learning special needs.
- Supporting continuous teacher capacity development to enable them to deliver equitable education to learners with disabilities in an inclusive setting across the country.
- Providing boarding facilities for learners who cannot easily commute from their homes to school to encourage their retention and enrolment.
- Providing learning and teaching materials in the schools to support the learning of learners with disabilities (Parkins braille’s, braille paper, sign language dictionaries and charts, sign language instructors, captioners, sign language interpreters, braille instructors)
- Providing medications like anti-convulsant drugs for learners with seizures and epilepsy, sunscreen for the albinos, accessible wash facilities to allow learners with hydrocephalos to carry out the procedures of easing themselves, and pampers to enable them sit in the same class with their peers.
- Promoting accessible school environments for learners with disabilities.
The National Population and Housing Census Report 2014 by the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) reveals that persons with disabilities aged two years and above makeup 12.4% of Uganda’s population, about 5.8 million people. This percentage has increased due to various causes, and Uganda must ensure that it includes this population to achieve an inclusive digitalized society.

Despite Uganda’s progress in the use of ICT, persons with disabilities still face significant obstacles to accessing information through digital technology. This is due to barriers related to affordability, usability, and availability. As a result, they are denied opportunities and struggle to live independently in society. Therefore, ICT skills like essential ICT hardware operation, typing, document creation, and safe use of the internet and computers are crucial skills in today’s technology-driven world.

In 2020, the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) granted the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) and Eight Tech Consultants Limited (8Tech), a technology partner, a three-year inclusive ICT project for persons with disabilities. The project aims to enhance knowledge management, ICT adaptation, digital skills, and access to e-services for persons with disabilities. The project has already yielded significant results in just two years of implementation.

As we joined to commemorate UCC’s 25 years of existence, we recognize the strides made in promoting ICT access for all, including persons with disabilities. We can only hope that the future will bring even more significant advancements in this regard, as we continue to work towards a fully inclusive digital society.

**NEXT IMPLEMENTATION PHASE**
- Continuous programme awareness and stakeholder mobilization
- Continuous digital skilling programme implementation
- Continuous operationalization and upgrade of the digital observatory (web and mobile app)
- Digital observatory continuous profiling awareness
- National assistive technology strategy development
Recap of some of the organisation activities

Some of the OPDs executive directors and NUDIPU pose for a photo moment with the British High Commissioner Kate Airey. She recognised some youth promoting disability inclusion.

Staff have a light moment after the annual planning and budgeting meeting early this year in January.

A team from Malteser International paid a courtesy call to NUDIPU secretariate last month.

Some of the staff represented NUDIPU at the annual employer awards organised by the Federation of Employers of Uganda (FUE). NUDIPU was recognised as the best NGO, 2023.

The Programme Officer and the District Union leaders of Omoro District on monitoring visit to one of the iSave groups Nen Anyim meaning “future is bright” supported by the We are Able consortium.

NUDIPU & OPDS presented a position paper to the Parliamentary committee on Gender and call for actual disability inclusion which should be spearheaded by Ministry of Gender.
Special thanks to all NUDIPUs Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)

In this concluded quarter, the different OPDs have exhibited maximum support and thus have guided NUDIPU to implement some of its programme activities to serve the disability fraternity diligently. We do not take this for granted and we appreciate you for your commitment.

Join or renew your membership call 0777250444 or send email to membership@nudipu.org for inquiries
To our donors:

In a special way we want to express our deepest gratitude to our donors. Your generosity is truly inspiring and plays a vital role in our mission that is creating a just and fair society where persons with disabilities live a prosperous and dignified life.

It is because of donors like you that we are able to implement some programs and initiatives supported by your donations. Your contribution directly impacts the lives of persons with disabilities in the communities we serve in and for that, we are incredibly thankful.

Please know that your generosity has made a tangible difference, and it will continue to have a lasting impact for days to come. We are committed to ensuring that every dollar is utilized effectively and efficiently to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

“Catch up on all the latest news and insights in our next edition.”