For their committed gesture to employ persons with disabilities companies were recognized at NUDIPU at 36 anniversary and these included MTN Uganda, Uganda Breweries Limited, Goal Uganda, Stanbic Bank, Centenary Bank, and Makerere University Business School.

For more information, please contact National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU)
Plot 530, Bukoto-Kisaasi Road P O Box 8567, Kampala, Uganda. Tel. +256-7776044 Email: info@nudipu.org website: www.nudipu.org
Greetings from the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU). Welcome to our fourth edition of the quarterly newsletter.

As we conclude the fourth quarter of 2023, we extend our sincere gratitude to all our development partners and stakeholders for moving with us consistently to advocate for disability inclusion. NUDIPU over the past months engaged in various activities at the institutional level which included marking 36 years of NUDIPU’s existence under the theme: An accessible Work Place: My role. The theme was uniquely selected to continuously remind all sector players to be accommodative and create safe spaces for persons with disabilities to thrive and work like other people.

We are pleased to share this fourth quarterly newsletter summarizing some of the carried-out activities in fourth quarter and hope this will captivate your attention and prepare you for the next edition.

Ms Esther Kyozira  
Chief Executive Officer

Some of the key highlights of the organization in 2023

- Omoro, Kotido, and Nwoya surrendered land for persons with disabilities to establish formal setups to handle issues of persons with disabilities.
- Composing the Disability Anthem
- Marking the NUDIPU Day. Thanks to our donors, sponsors, and organizations of persons with disabilities for contributing to this day.
- Improvement in information sharing by the organization
- More Isave groups formed of persons with disabilities e.g in Terego District, West Nile
- Establishment of the Parliamentary Forum on Disability
- Establishment of the National Observatory to capture all categories of persons with disabilities
- We received a team from Somalia to do benchmarking on Disability Inclusion
- Strengthening of sub-county disability associations
- The good working relationship between the board and staff which enabled the smoothing implementation of organizational activities
- Purchase of two new vehicles to support organization activities.
- Maintaining all staff in 2023
Thousands thronged Kyambogo University to mark NUDIPU’s 36th anniversary

On 14th November 2023, as we marked our remarkable 36 years of existence, we were thrilled by the turn-up of all well-wishers to Kyambogo University Cricket grounds where the climax of the celebrations took place.

The mood was set as participants from all parts of this country actively listened to the discussions of the day that were around the theme: “Promoting Employment of Persons with Disabilities: My Role.”

We were privileged to listen to remarkable statements from the Country Director of Light for the Word Uganda, Mr Silvester Kasozi who shared that the world loses about 1.3 to 1.9 trillion dollars for not employing persons with disabilities. This is because we have not allowed persons with disabilities to show their abilities. Persons with disabilities are very innovative people who should not be judged by their disability and incapable of delivering. This is wrong and must stop.

In addition, the Executive Director Federation of Uganda Employers Mr Douglas Opio, urged the participants especially employers that employing persons with disabilities has to be deliberate. They ought to look out for them. They will not come out of the blue until you willingly identify them.

The Chief Executive Officer Ms Esther Kyoziira in her opening remarks welcomed the participants and shared how many persons with disabilities have gone to school but a few have been employed in the formal employment sector. “It’s time the employment quotas by the government be implemented rather than being on paper. We believe this is something that can be done by our government,” she shared.

However, it takes commitment, resilience, and hard work to get where you want, says Justice Willy Atono a grade one magistrate who is visually impaired.

He says persons with disabilities should not easily give up. This is a competitive world where opportunities strike for those who are ready.

The Minister for Disability Affairs Ms Hellen Asamo as the guest of honor shared, that persons with disabilities should not think that disability is a qualification. “Let their abilities speak for themselves. We need to interact more with other people to understand us and what we can do better. It is also imperative to start thinking about tapping into government programs like PDM to benefit and liberate themselves financially as they wait for formal jobs. Thank you to all our donors and sponsors for your contributions towards this noble cause.”

The CEO NUDIPU Ms Esther Kyoziira joined by some of the board members cut cake as NUDIPU commemorated 36 years of existence
Gender Minister commits to take lead in enrolling software in universities that helps learners with hearing impairment to read text

On 3rd December, 2023, the world commemorates the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The day is about promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities at every level of society and development, and raising awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life.

Specifically, this year in Uganda the day was hinged on the theme of the role of innovations in disability inclusion, and the main celebrations were commemorated at Rutooma Senior Secondary School, Bwizibwera, Mbarara District.

Important to note from the remarks of the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development Honourable Betty Amongi the Chief Guest shared that the President is committed to supporting persons with disabilities and extends his gratitude to every stakeholder who has geared their buildings and be accessible to all?

The Inclusive Education Policy has been shelved for a long time. It is long overdue for it to be passed. We need to help our children with special needs get a better education,” Hon. Alex Ndezi.

The Chairperson, Ms Keto Aero who also was given to speak implored the government to try and make technology not only accessible but also affordable to persons with disabilities. NUDIPU’s advocacy journey one of the thematic areas it does, will not stop and the organization will continue to remind the govt to consider disability inclusion as a priority.

The National Action Plan on Disability was also launched.

A policy brief on land rights and food security for persons with disabilities is in the offing

National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) through a consortium of partners including; ZOA Uganda as a lead partner, Light for the World, African Disability Forum (ADF) which implements through NUDIPU as a national OPD, VNGI, and The Hague Academy (THA) have embarked on introducing a policy brief on land rights and food security for persons with disabilities.

The policy brief is still at draft stage and later will be presented to Parliament for adoption.

In a stakeholders meeting held on 23rd November 2023, legislators representing persons with disabilities and legislators on the forum for persons with disabilities in Parliament, persons with disabilities local council leaders, and organizations of persons with disabilities were all present. Several concerns were shared regarding land rights and food security, especially for persons with disabilities.

“The most vulnerable people who have suffered as a result of land evictions are mothers with disabilities. This means when one has no land, they are limited to fend for themselves including growing food. Often times mothers with disabilities have been victims and have been left homeless because they do not have anyone to fight for them to get justice on their land. The worst scenario is when they lose their partners the families where some of them get married to disown them. Ownership of property especially land is very difficult. This is disheartening to see our people being disadvantaged to that extent!” Ms Esther Kyozira Chief Executive Officer NUDIPU shares.

According to Mr. Denis Obbo the spokesperson of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, they have witnessed persons with disabilities being duped of their land even by their relatives.

As Ministry of Lands the best we can do is to advise persons with disabilities to individually register their land with the ministry. In most cases, people who steal land for persons with disabilities are those that have been trusted to follow the process on behalf them. Citing a case in Butaleja where a woman with visual impairment was robbed of her land by her brother who instead of registering it in her name did otherwise and registered himself as the sole owner of the land. Such incidences are common in communities,” Mr Obbo shares.

“The policy brief is timely and we hope this will help persons with disabilities to have a say on their land. However, we need to have representatives on the district land board to handle issues of the land of persons with disabilities,” Honorable Judith Peace Acham Deputy Chair Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Disability.
Upon being briefed about the findings in the situation report highlighting the state of inmates with disabilities by the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda in collaboration with East Africa Centre for Disability Law and Policy and Uganda Media Women’s Association, the prison bosses have committed to be inclusive and accommodative of inmates with disabilities in all prisons.

Findings:
The study revealed there is lack of specialized sporting equipment for Persons with Disabilities such as the visually impaired, there are no leadership structures for inmates with disabilities, in accessible physical environment, and negative social stereotypes on inmates with disabilities.

Recommendations:
Several recommendations were made to Uganda Prisons Service including enactment of the Policy on inmates with disabilities, having a leadership structure for inmates with disabilities, improving the physical environment, awareness raising on disability inclusion, and nutritional support to inmates with disabilities who live on drugs, purchase of more indoor games including specialized sporting for equipment for Persons with Disabilities.

According to Mr Tiyo Milton Assistant Commissioner General of Uganda Prisons Service, the findings in the report are timely and relevant. “We have already authorized the development of a national prison policy on inmates with disabilities. We want to continue working with NUDIPU on disability inclusion and have this policy in place,” Mr Tiyo says.

Mr Tiyo thanked NUDIPU for the good report. However, this would not have been possible without the financial support from the Disability Rights Fund (DRF).

The study was conducted in the Luzira National Referral prison units of Upper Prison, Murchison Bay, Luzira Women, and Kitalya Minimax Prison. There are about 334 inmates with disabilities (44 from Upper Prison, 72 from Murchison Bay, 36 from Luzira women, and 182 from Kitalya Minimax).

These included persons with physical disabilities, persons with hearing impairment, visual impairment, persons with mental disability, persons with hard of hearing, and Persons with cerebral palsy were all present in the said prison units. However, there were no persons who were deaf blind and persons of little stature.

The situation Report on the state of inmates with disabilities in prisons was funded by Disability Rights Fund (DRF)

Omoro District offered land to the union to ease activities for persons with disabilities

The Chief Executive Officer NUDIPU Ms Esther Kyozira, together with the District Union chairperson at Omoro District headquarters, received a document of the two-acre piece of land allocated to Persons with Disabilities in Omoro District by the LCV Chairperson Douglas Peter Okello.

This was during a meeting organized by NUDIPU-Uganda under the “We are Able” programme to officially receive land given to the District Union.

The purpose of the land is to aid the construction of the District Union offices and associated amenities that provide services to persons with disabilities.

CEO Ms. Kyozira thanked Omoro Local Government for the good gesture of offering land to support persons with disabilities activities in the district and I kindly request other DLGs to borrow a leaf and support persons with disabilities.

The LC5 Chairperson Mr Okello requested NUDIPU for the speedy development of the land given to the District Union.

Omoro District Union is required to take ownership by generating a master development plan, occupying the land by doing something on it and registering and acquiring its title. The two acres of land are located at the district headquarters.

Participants were shown the land and boundary opening will soon be done by the District Local Government team.

All participants inspected the land and the LC5 Chairperson guided them on the process of taking ownership.

“We thank Omoro District Local Government for the good gesture of offering land to support persons with disabilities activities in the district and I kindly request other DLGs to borrow a leaf and support persons with disabilities.

Ms Esther Kyozira, CEO NUDIPU

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Ms Esther Kyozira, CEO NUDIPU
Waive taxes on diapers to ease life of children with Spina Bifida - Minister Asamo

In a joyful mood with a song from children with Spina Bifida performing through which they passed a message to the guests to raise awareness not to discriminate or ridicule them, the room was driven to mixed emotional feelings to draw their attention and listen carefully. The children shared that all they need is love and care. Spina Bifida is a condition that unknowingly is acquired at birth and people around them ought to support to be better people in the future.

All this ushered the National Union for Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) and Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Uganda team, (SHAU) Members of Parliament, Commissioners and staff from the Ministry of Education, Health and Gender, Labour and Social development among others, to mark World Spina Fida Awareness Day under the theme: Accessibility for all, on 25th October 2023. SHAU is a member organization of NUDIPU.

According to the Chief Executive Officer of NUDIPU Ms Esther Kyozira, in the upcoming census, NUDIPU will work closely with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) to ensure all information about the different categories of Persons with disabilities is captured including Persons with Cerebral Palsy, Persons with Spina Bifida, and Hydrocephalus. These should be cost-friendly. Such decisions would not find their way to parliament if we knew how some things are important to them.

We appreciate SHAU for making an effort to handle children with Spina Bifida by rehabilitating them and supporting the parents to take care of them. We do not take this for granted and such organizations should strongly be supported," Ms Kyozira.

"It is absurd for government to put taxes on pampers yet these are crucial to children with Spina bifida. Let the children discover their full potential and do not be overprotective of them.

"We have realized that interventions geared towards persons with disabilities have been inadequate because there is no data on persons with different disabilities per category. This explains why the interventions are very scanty almost across all sectors. If we know what special interventions are needed per category it will guide on how resources can easily be channeled," Ms Kyozira.

State Minister for Disability Affairs Ms Hellen Asamo asked parents not to abandon children with Spina bifida. Let the children discover their full potential and do not be overprotective of them.

"We developed a National Observatory to profile all persons with disabilities countrywide and we did this in collaboration with Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) and Eightech Consultants Limited. The gathered information we believe will be used by the different stakeholders to guide policies and extend services based on the different categories of persons with disabilities. So far about 30,000 persons of disabilities of different categories have been profiled including Persons with Cerebral Palsy," Director Ninslima says.

In addition, the Director Programmes urged parents especially the men to support their women while taking care of children with Cerebral Palsy.

He said that the responsibility should not only be left to the mothers. Parents should be patient with children with Cerebral Palsy.

According to Ms Christine Kirungi the Executive Director of UNAC-Uganda, they request the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics to work closely with NUDIPU to ensure that their staff who are going to implement the national population census are trained on how to capture the different categories of Persons with disabilities other than generalizing them under one disability category. This will enable data on the different disability categories to be captured in the population census report.

**Issues affecting persons with cerebral palsy**

1. Lack of appropriate data in Uganda about the number of persons with cerebral palsy

2. Lack of accessible and affordable quality habitation and rehabilitation services, most of these services in referral, urbanized and they are costly.

3. Limited trained educators on the diverse education needs of learners with disabilities, and lack of appropriate skills to handle and ensure that learners with cerebral palsy get the appropriate education they deserve.

4. Limited awareness of cerebral palsy.

**About the Cerebral Palsy Disability**

This is a neurological condition that affects muscle tone, movement and body coordination. It is caused by damage to the brain during pregnancy, birth, and after. It is the most common childhood disability.
Ms. Teddy Lomuria, aged 23 years and a resident of Nachileta Village, Napararwangan Parish, Loputuk Subcounty, Moroto District is a survivor of domestic violence.

She is a woman with a physical disability and a mother to one. She is a school dropout. Meeting her at home, she was very happy to see a team from NUDIPU visiting her. The soft-spoken Lomuria narrates that after interacting with the Gender and Disability Intervention Project team, GADIP with support from the Norwegian Development Cooperation, her life changed.

“Close to two years my husband and family members were hostile to me. The unfortunate situation befell me when he impregnated me. I was psychologically tortured as my in-laws were never receptive at all because I am physically disabled. I was mocked and they questioned my husband why he married a woman who looked like a frog. This pains me a lot,” Lomuria says.

“I feel bad my own family take advantage of me. They only run to me when they know I have money. I do small-scale farming from which I earn some money for a living,” Lomuria narrates.

“I thank our Community Development Officer (CDO) who supported me in seeking support from NUDIPU through the GADIP program. I was able to get a wheelchair to ease my mobility. The CDO supported me to follow the GBV pathways to report my case of my hostile husband and my own family and in-laws who were stigmatizing me,” Lomuria says. The project staff reconciled her with her husband.

Lomuria says she doesn’t wish anyone to go through her situation. If you are a woman with or without disability you have to stand for your rights. Report any violations exacerbated on you to the responsible people to get help.

Legal aspect

As NUDIPU, we believe in partnerships. Through working with FIDA-Uganda (Forum for Women Lawyers in Uganda) under the GADIP program, NUDIPU has been able to jointly solve some of the GBV cases, especially for vulnerable people like women with disabilities. Women with disabilities are the most victims of GBV, especially in Moroto. Since there are few, this worsens the situation for them to seek justice. First, as women, they are a weaker sex. Most cases of women with disabilities are referral cases by concerned members of society who feel women with disabilities should not suffer at the advantage of their perpetrators.

According to counsel Mable Buyi FIDA-Uganda, they have been able to mediate cases of GBV of persons with disabilities. However, due to constraints in resources, only a few persons with disabilities have been supported.

“When we get overwhelmed, we refer some of these cases to courts of law where mediation fails and to police,” Counsel Buyi adds.
The Chief Executive Officer of NUDIPU Ms. Esther Kyozira in her opening remarks on Radio One 90 FM, on 26th October, 2023 shared that disability is something we need to take seriously.

Now and then the population of persons with disabilities keeps increasing. According to the 2014 population census report the percentage was at 12.4%. That is about a total number of about 5.8 million people. But as we speak there is a likelihood that this has increased to 16%. Bringing the population of persons with disabilities to about 6.5 million people.

Technology is important to this population. We need to invest in technology to ease the lives of persons with disabilities. Applications like Talk Back, and Jaws among others have been helpful to persons with visual impairment too.

According to the baseline survey done by NUDIPU and Eighteck 54% of the persons with disabilities did not own smartphones not even a “Kabiriti phone” to start with.

To Ms Kyozira the cost of technology is high and accessing software applications such as Jaws and Talkback to be installed on computers for persons with visual impairment to use and support them in reading is costly.

But the journey is still on. NUDIPU and Eighteck in collaboration with Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) are exploring possible ways to support persons with disabilities to make use of their smartphones, especially for those who have them.

“Our smartphones have accessories which can help persons with visual impairment and others to easily communicate and read. However, we continue to request the government to put waivers on technologies that support persons especially those with visual impairment. Software like Jaws is used for reading by the visually impaired but it costs about 3 million,” Ms. Kyozira says.

“The dilemma we have is that smartphones are also expensive and these come at a cost like other people without disability. There is a need for the government to revise this and enable persons with disabilities to have access to smartphones and other software for reading, braille machines among others at an affordable cost. Only one braille machine costs about 6 million shs. This has to be revised,” she added.

There should be a deliberate move by the government to waive taxes on ICT assistive devices to help persons with disabilities with different impairments.

According to Ms Rebecca Mukite the Head of Public Relations at UCC, they indeed acknowledge that assistive devices are expensive. They are working in collaboration with local innovators to empower them to develop local innovations to address the needs of special persons.

“We need to invest in technology to ease the lives of persons with disabilities. Applications like Talk Back, and Jaws among others have been helpful to persons with visual impairment.
As part of networking, board members from Humanity and Inclusion, Belgium, paid a courtesy call to board members of NUDIPU.

NUDIPU participated at the exhibition at the International Day of Persons with disabilities organized by Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development to remind people what it will do.

NUDIPU with support from Christian Blind Mission (CBM), distributed start-up kits to youth with disabilities in four subcounties in Kasese district. These were skills such as welding, carpentry, hairdressing explaining and these received items each according to the skill that they trained in.

One of the saving groups Ngolo Pe Goro iSAVE group in Lamola Parish, Odek Sub-County Omolo District receive saving kits from NUDIPU under the We are Able programme.

In collaboration with Coca-Cola bottling Company, NUDIPU distributed sanitary towels to teenage girls with disabilities in selected schools.

NUDIPU had a staff retreat were the organisation with board members reflected on what strategies will push the organisation come 2024 and what the organisation was able to achieve in 2023.

Delegates from all regions turned up in Kampala to vote for leaders at the General Assembly held on 7th December, 2023 to join the NUDIPU board to steer the organisation for the next five years.

Some of the MDA's with member organization of persons with disabilities and NUDIPU convened to track the progress of the Global Disability Summit held in 2018. In the progress report shared by National Council of Persons with disabilities the commitments are scantily being implemented explaining why disability inclusion in all sectors is poor.