



INTEGRATED DISABLED WOMEN ACTIVITIES

Plot 10, Jalum Road, Northern Division, Iganga Municipal Council,
P.O. Box 556, Iganga, Uganda, East Africa, Tel: +256 772 449 270,
E-mail:idiwa2009@gmail.com, Website: www.idiwaug.org, Facebook:IDIWA NGO, Twitter:IdiwaNgo

POSITION PAPER FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES ON INNOVATION AND DISABILITY INCLUSION IN UGANDA

Introduction

Integrated Disabled Women Activities -IDIWA is an indigenous non-Governmental Organization focused on gender equality and empowerment of Women and Girls with Disabilities through advocacy for human rights, and participation in decision making and governance processes; education, appropriate access to social services, and productive resources (ownership and control) for economic empowerment, health and reproductive rights. IDIWA operates in Eastern Uganda, with strategic presence in Busoga subregion.

Context

Persons with Disabilities in Uganda constitute 12.4% of the total population (*Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016*). According to the (National Population and Housing Census report 2014, 2.9% children with disabilities, 2% 18years- 30years, 5.5% adults 31 years- 64years, 2.1% Older Persons, 4.5% difficulty walking, 3.1% difficulty hearing. However, the Uganda (2017) Functional Difficulties Survey puts the total population of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda to 16.5%. This percentage is big enough to attract both national and international attention.

According to the World Health Organization, approximately 15% of any population has some form of disability. Women and girls with disabilities often experience heightened discrimination on account of gender and disability. Due to stigma, discrimination and inaccessibility, people with disabilities are less likely to access basic services such as education, employment and healthcare. The lack of access to these vital services and programs contributes to their marginalization and exclusion, perpetuating a cycle of long-term poverty.

Uganda is one of those countries that have been upheld for fulfilling its international obligations in regard to the protection of human rights. This commitment is reflected in Article 287 and Chapter 4 of the Constitution providing for human rights. Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

In 2009, Uganda ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and its Optional Protocol, affirming its commitment to the human rights of people

with disabilities. The Disability Act, 2020, and the National Disability Policy 2020 align with the CRPD.

The Local Governments Act, 2022, as amended, mandates Local Governments to enact ordinances to address local needs of the people. IDIWA has influenced enactment of district ordinances and policies on disability inclusive Sexual Reproductive Health, and Gender-Based Violence Services in Kaliro, Accessibility and Education in Iganga, and Employment in Mayuge districts. This has enabled implementation of the UNRCP at the local level.

There is a growing body of disability policy literature that explores the role of innovation in disability inclusion. This literature highlights the potential of innovative technologies, practices, and approaches to enhance accessibility, empowerment, and participation for persons with disabilities. It delves into various aspects, such as assistive technologies, accessible design, digital inclusion, inclusive education, employment opportunities, and social inclusion.

However, these policies have not translated into services due to inadequate implementation.

Rational for incorporating innovation into disability inclusion

We have learnt over time, that societies that are inclusive of their diverse populations are more likely to be democratic, participatory and equitable, and more likely to meet their development goals.

We are also learning that innovation plays a crucial role in disability inclusion by creating new solutions, technologies, and approaches that promote accessibility, empowerment, and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. It will help break down barriers and enable individuals to fully participate in society.

However, there are several challenges to incorporating innovative strategies in disability inclusion some of which are:

- ✚ lack clear guidelines or standards for ensuring accessibility in innovation; this hinders the development of inclusive solutions
- ✚ limited funding and support for research, development, and implementation of disability-inclusive innovation is a major barrier in Uganda

- ✚ minimal collaboration between government, private sector, academia, and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities -OPDs hinders the exchange of knowledge and resources needed for innovation
- ✚ Balancing intellectual property rights with the need for accessibility and affordability is a big challenge, potentially limiting the widespread adoption of inclusive innovations
- ✚ limited awareness among policymakers, innovators, and the general public about the importance of disability-inclusive innovations lead to a lack of prioritization and investment in this area

Position statement

Innovation has become a key component in all areas of service provision in Uganda due to a fundamental change in the way services are designed and delivered. Looking at this, the existing policies in Uganda should be amended to accommodate the aspect of innovation and disability inclusion which seems absent. We need to have a number of considerations while amending or reviewing our policies to be disability inclusive in innovations. Policies of Uganda should promote the development and adoption of accessibility standards to ensure that innovative solutions are inclusive and usable by persons with disabilities. Our key recommendations to the government of Uganda in regards to innovations that are disability inclusive, are as follows:

Addressing these policy gaps will create an enabling environment for disability-inclusive innovations in Uganda, fostering the development and implementation of solutions that improve the lives of persons with disabilities. Specifically,

1. The parliament of Uganda should ensure that all national policies and regulations include clear guidelines and standards for accessibility in innovation. This includes addressing physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility to ensure that innovations are usable by all individuals with disabilities. Uganda National Policies should provide adequate funding and support for research, development, and implementation of disability-inclusive innovations. This will motivate innovation in this area and ensure that resources are available to bring these innovations to market.
2. Collaboration and Partnerships should be Encouraged between government, private sector, academia, and disability organizations is crucial. Policies should promote

partnerships that foster innovation, knowledge sharing, and the co-creation of solutions that meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

3. Uganda National Policies should consider mechanisms that promote the sharing of knowledge, technologies, and innovations to ensure that they can be widely adopted and benefit a larger population of individuals with disabilities.
4. Uganda national laws and policies and local government ordinances should focus on raising awareness among policymakers, innovators, and the general public about the importance of disability-inclusive innovations. Capacity building programs should also be implemented to enhance the skills and knowledge of stakeholders involved in the innovation ecosystem.

PRESENTED BY

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PARALEGAL

IDIWA, Bugiri District

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

Thank you for listening