

15th June 2023

Conference room C

Event:

Making disability rights a global pledge: Promoting ratification of the CRPD and its Optional Protocol

Dears Excellences, ladies, Gentlemen and Persons with Disabilities.

PEACE and Love.

My name is Robinah Alambuya from Uganda I do identify as a Woman with Psychosocial Disability I serve on the Executive Council of the Africa Disability Forum(ADF) which is a member of the International Disability Alliance(IDA) ,

I am also Transforming Communities for Inclusion (TCI Global) as President.

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I first want to thank ADF and IDA for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Why universal ratification of the CRPD/OP? Are national legislation and public policies enough?

The primary purpose of the CRPD is to protect, promote and ensure full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with

disabilities. Without universal ratification of the CRPD and the Optional Protocol, persons with disabilities will be left behind.

I want to give an example of the African region. To date, 34 States have ratified the CRPD, and 18 have ratified the optional protocol. Among these about 14 have been reviewed by the CRPD Committee resulting in very substantive recommendations on the rights of persons with disabilities. In my case, Uganda signed and ratified the CRPD in 2008, and in 2016, it was reviewed by the CRPD Committee resulting in very substantive concluding observations. These recommendations have been very useful in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities and more importantly the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. Beyond Uganda, we have witnessed positive developments in relation to law and policy review across the region, especially with regard to the review and enactment of disability-specific laws and review of Mental health laws. These efforts are not perfect, but they are incorporating CRPD-specific standards.

With regard to national and public policies, the majority of these were developed before the adoption of the CRPD and were based on the medical model. As a result, there are several gaps especially in relation to the enjoyment of rights by persons with psychosocial disabilities and persons with intellectual disabilities. Denial of legal capacity and substituted decision-making regimes remain pervasive. For instance, In Uganda, the Persons with Disabilities Regulations still disqualifies persons with psychosocial disabilities from vying for elective posts on the basis of 'unsound mind'. The CRPD Committee pointed out this issue and issued a specific recommendation on it. Now we use these recommendations to push for changes.

What key changes have organizations of persons with disabilities experienced in the past 15 years regarding the impact of both instruments?

As I mentioned earlier, one of the greatest gains of the CRPD was the inclusion of a specific obligation to actively involve and consult persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in decision-making processes. As a result, in the last 15 years, we have seen increased consultation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in matters that concern them as evidenced by the Global Survey that was conducted by the International Disability Alliance.

More organized and stronger movement: Persons with disabilities have also been pushed to organize themselves and engage more in the human rights movement. We have seen an increase though minimal in the number of organizations of persons with disabilities including underrepresented groups such as women-led organizations of persons with disabilities, organizations of persons with psychosocial disabilities, deaf-blind persons, and indigenous persons with disabilities among others. Women with disabilities are increasingly assuming leadership in various institutions. In Africa for instance, we have the Africa Disability Forum where am currently serving as the Vice-Chairperson. ADF is a regional umbrella of organizations of persons with disabilities whose main objective is to **'unify the representative voices of Africans with disabilities, their families, and organizations.** ADF was established in 2014 and has been key in promoting the implementation of the CRPD by bringing OPDs together.

Capacity strengthening and more informed disability movement: Through their representative organizations, persons with disabilities are enhancing their capacities and building

communities of practice. I would like to give an example of the Bridge CRPD-SDG training, a program that is offered by IDA in collaboration with its member organizations at the regional level. In Africa for instance, through ADF-IDA collaboration we now have a BRIDGE CRPD-SDG community of practice. This community of practice contributes to and influences several programs including national capacity building programs and UN agencies programs when they call for inputs on disability-related issues. As a result, we are seeing more focused contributions from an informed perspective of a human rights-based approach. We are also building an informed disability movement to influence processes from a rights-based approach and promote disability-inclusive development.

Advocacy, strengthening of standards, and substantive recommendations for national implementation: Our advocacy efforts are yielding strong standards and recommendations from the CRPD Committee. Through the country reviews, OPDs are actively engaged by submitting alternative reports and engaging in private briefings ensuring that our voices are heard, and priorities are reflected in the List of issues and concluding observations. The process of state reporting is also an opportunity to reflect as OPDs and work together towards a stronger and unified movement as we have to work together in our diversities and ensure all issues are addressed. Give example of Uganda

How organizations of women with disabilities, older persons with disabilities and children with disabilities participate in the ratification and implementation processes of the CRPD/OP? Example of working together with civil society and other stakeholders in promoting ratification

I will speak about two strategies that have been useful to us.

Dissemination of the concluding observations and creating awareness: Since 2016, NUWODU has been working closely with state agencies and organizations of persons with disabilities in the Northern region of Uganda to ensure that government implements concluding observations in relation to Article 6 on women with disabilities and Article 27 on employment. Our approach has been enhancing the capacities of OPDs at the district level to ensure that they are involved in the implementation process and with government officials to ensure that they prioritize the implementation of the concluding observations.

Mainstreaming disability in other mechanisms: We have also seized opportunities at the global level to ensure that the 2016 concluding observations remain alive and the government is reminded of its responsibilities to fully implement them. For instance, in 2022, during Uganda's review by the CEDAW Committee, NOWUDU participated for the first time ever in the private and public briefings and highlighted our concerns in an alternative report resulting in more concrete recommendations mirroring the 2016 concluding observations of the CRPD Committee. A combination of both CRPD 2016 and CEDAW 2022 concluding observations has been a powerful advocacy tool for us.