

15th June 2023

Event: From Beijing to the CRPD and beyond: How women with disabilities are shining a light on intersectional gender rights

Dear Excellencies, Ladies, Gentlemen and Persons with disabilities here today.

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)

Also am the Transforming Communities for Inclusion (TCI Global) as President.

The African Disability Forum (ADF), established in 2014, is the continental membership organization of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Africa.

ADF follows a twin-track approach to affirm and empower women and youth with disabilities in all its structures and activities, and to increase their participation in women and youth organizations and African decision and policy-making at national, sub-regional and continental levels. The ADF Strategic Objective 4 addresses EQUALITY: "Empower African women and girls with disabilities to promote, respect, protect and fulfil of their rights and inclusion, and

to ensure equality between women and men within the African disability movement”.

When we come to the situation of the continent, the 2021 African report of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty stated that women and girls with disabilities in Africa carry a multiple burden of discrimination, by virtue of their age, gender and their disability. The report further clarifies that (quote/unquote) “80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries and women and girls with disabilities represent more than half of all persons with disabilities worldwide and almost 20% of all women.”

The issues of women with disabilities are not fully addressed by both the disability and the mainstream women movements. They are suffering from lack of inclusive social protection, health particularly sexual and reproductive health services, education and livelihood services and opportunities. They shoulder deep-rooted family level and societal stigma and discrimination.

The African disability protocol (ADP)

ADP was adopted in 2018 as the Disability Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (Banjul Charter) and it is now waiting for ratification of 15 member states of the African Union (So far, such countries as Angola, Burundi, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Mozambique, Niger, and South Africa have ratified ADP). ADP ensures that no one is truly left behind. It is unique to the continent and takes African practices and concerns into consideration so that the lives of people with disabilities improve.

It tackles the ingrained issues of disability discrimination so that everyone can access health, education and employment without stigma. Like the UNCRPD Art. 6, ADP in its Art. 27 talks about the rights of women and girls with disabilities too.

The protocol addresses and encompasses specific issues such as customs, traditional beliefs, harmful practices and the role of the family, caregivers and community. It also deals with community-based rehabilitation and minority groups within the African disability community, including people with albinism. Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of this century, it does not address the unique challenges like the African Disability Protocol does.

The protocol takes into account the general comments and observations of the UNCRPD. It builds on the rights enshrined in the UNCRPD and Universal Declaration of Human Rights but uses a rights-based approach, but is more detailed and illustrative in representing the uniqueness of the African context.

While this is the fact and reality, ADF aims to increase the number and skills of women with disabilities as leaders in ADF member organizations (national and sub-regional OPD federations and continental OPDs) to strengthen the disability movement in Africa and enhance the ability of OPDs to advocate for the rights of women with disabilities effectively. One of the practical undertakings in this regard is its program on promoting the leadership capacities of young African women with disabilities. The program addresses issues of underrepresented and

intersectionality. It is crafted with the ultimate goal of voicing the voicelessness.

Saying this, I would like to call for fighting stigma and discrimination, promote disability inclusion, foster partnership and collaboration, fair resource allocation that allows meaningful engagement and participation of representative organizations of persons with disabilities in Africa.

I thank you all!
