



INTEGRATED DISABLED WOMEN ACTIVITIES

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S SPEECH AT THE IDPD CELEBRATIONS AT BUSOGA SQUARE GROUNDS IN JINJA DISTRICT ON 12th DEC 2023

The Guest of Honor

Resident District Commissioner

Jinja District

Hon. Gulume Balyaino

- ❖ The Resident City Commissioner- RCC
 - ❖ Local Council V Chairpersons (Iganga & Jinja District)
 - ❖ His Worship, the Mayor of Jinja City
 - ❖ Development Partners
 - ❖ Chief Administrative Officers
 - ❖ District Councilors for PWDs
 - ❖ Members of District Councils for Disability from Jinja City and Jinja District,
 - ❖ Program Partners (PWDs, especially Women and Girls) from Iganga, Jinja City, Kamuli, Kaliro, Mayuge and Bugiri Districts,
 - ❖ Religious leaders
 - ❖ Cultural leaders, and
 - ❖ The media fraternity
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- ✓ On behalf of IDIWA Board of Directors, and membership, and on behalf of the entire disability fraternity in Busoga sub region, I am happy to welcome you to this auspicious occasion of marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2023.
 - ✓ I thank you, the Guest of honor for making time to grace this occasion, especially around this period when everyone is pressed for time. I thank everyone who has made it here today. We are eternally grateful.
 - ✓ I thank the partner OPDs/CSO and Local Governments for the cordial relationship you extend to us as we implement the different projects in your areas of jurisdiction.
 - ✓ I thank the organizing committee members from Iganga, Jinja City and Jinja District. You have given this function your all. Thank you for brilliant ideas and time you spent in meetings to make the day a success. Thank you! Thank you!
 - ✓ I thank the media for giving visibility to the entire process; you have made it a success; we thank you
 - ✓ I thank IDIWA teams for the time and effort invested in organizing the event. Thank you so much.



The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is a globally recognized occasion dedicated to promoting the rights and wellbeing of individuals with disabilities, on 3rd Dec 2023, and the government observed the day in Mbarara city. IDIWA and partners have decided to bring it home for most of us who could not make it Mbarara for various reasons, but also give ourselves an opportunity to converge and brainstorm on some of the wicked challenges that hinder disability inclusion in development processes in Busoga sub region, and collectively forge forward.

I am Elizabeth Kayanga, the founding CEO of Integrated Disabled Women Activities -IDIWA. We are a part of the ecosystem of the disability and women's rights movements in Uganda and Africa. We are bold and grounded, consistent and reliable. IDIWA innovatively operates in Eastern Uganda, with strategic presence in Busoga sub region. This strategy seeks to help expand the organization's reach and imprint to ensure a wider and deeper presence across, and an understanding of the entire country.

Years after the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – CRPD and its Optional Protocol which was intended to act as a progressive process linking disability and human rights, there remains glaring gaps and priority for PWDs, especially women and girls. And despite the big number of existing policies and grave impetus for championing human rights, and efforts dedicated to mobilizing and organizing for access to social services progress has been slow and crippled by inadequate resources, persistent discrimination of PWDs in service planning, and the unwillingness to address issues related to sexuality openly and comprehensively. Women and girls with disabilities continue to suffer disproportionately from poor SRH outcomes, and experience pervasive violations of human rights resultant of traditional and cultural harmful practices such as child marriages, mostly to older men. This perpetrates a cycle of poverty, and no wonder, Busoga is permanently below the bar each time UBOS carries out an assessment on poverty and development of the different regions of Uganda.

What needs/being done

There is need to focus on Catalytic, Transformative and Systemic Change which addresses the root barriers preventing disability inclusion and gender equality, rather than seeking to change PWDs, especially women and girls to adapt to discriminatory systems. *IDIWA is engaging on Gender Transformative Approaches in the Cultural, Religious and Institutional domains to promote participation of PWDs, especially women and girls in decision making and development processes.*

Deploying a movement building approach, encouraging disability and women's rights activists and their formations to center and elevate strategies that promote inclusivity. *"IDIWA has invited OPDs, WROs, Media Houses to the formation of Busoga GBV and Disability Rights Network, to advance progress on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, especially those with disabilities".*

As a cross cutting issue, there is urgent need for civic engagement on climate action to highlight climate vulnerabilities accounting for economic, social, and geographic situations that make PWDs, especially women and girls, such as those living with albinism, more sensitive to the effects of

climate stressors. *“IDIWA is engaging on a triple nexus that connects natural resource management and disability, with particular gender dimensions. We recently (Nov 2023) made a powerful presentation on the Disability and Gender Just Climate at the Annual Human Rights Conference in South Africa”.*

The theme for IDPD 2023 is **“The role of innovation in disability inclusion”**

Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security. It is also central to the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to **LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND**.

The commitment to realizing the rights of PWDs is not only a matter of justice; it is an investment in a common future. Most solutions developed to address present-day challenges are not designed with PWDs in mind.

For PWDs, innovation limitations exist in form of access to information, enabling infrastructure, access to opportunities, including financial resources, education, networks, and markets.

Within the talent pool of technology creators and innovators, PWDs are marginally represented.

IDIWA believes that access to digital development is a human right

..... *that* accessible and inclusive innovation represents a massive opportunity for Uganda to ensure that its growth is genuinely inclusive and transformational.

..... *that* making ICT accessible to more people, especially those who would be able to benefit most in using digitalization to bridge existing gaps, can have a stark impact on societies and enable PWDs, especially women and girls prosper.

Digital Assistive Technology is urgently needed to:

- ✓ Promote the use of Jaws Package that is built in computers for use by blind persons at work and their personal computers.
- ✓ Develop software, apps, and websites with built-in accessibility features such as screen readers, voice recognition, adjustable text sizes and easy to navigate interfaces ensures inclusivity for users with disabilities
- ✓ Equip canes and walkers must with sensors to detect obstacles, provide navigation assistance and even alert emergency contacts in cases of a fall
- ✓ Advance gesture and voice recognition technologies enables individuals with limited mobility or dexterity to interact with devices more easily
- ✓ Use of hearing aids
- ✓ Promote digital marketing to enable PWDs sell their products online; this reduces the challenge and cost of movement for people mobility challenges
- ✓ Promote technological advancement, sophisticated and equipped with features like enhanced maneuvering and terrain capabilities, and smart control systems that enable users to operate them with minimal physical effort;
- ✓ cars need to be designed with ramps and lifts to accommodate wheelchairs or other devices allowing easier access and use for individuals with limited mobility;

- ✓ Modified driving controls such as hand controls, pedal extensions and steering aids which enable individuals with disabilities to operate vehicles safely and comfortably;
- ✓ Development of software's that can promote SRHR for WGDs like accessible educational materials about SRHR example talking cards, adaptive technology for contraception, tailored support services for those with different abilities, and efforts to ensure health care facilities are physically accessible;
- ✓ Tailoring support services for survivors with disabilities, ensuring they are accessible, accommodating various needs, including communication and physical accessibility;
- ✓ Creating specialized training program to educate both disability service providers and the wider community about the intersection of disability and GBV, fostering understanding and better support

CALL TO ACTION

1. Inclusive data collection to aid development of disability inclusive innovation strategies and planning
2. Government should reduce taxes on all gadgets, appliances, ICT equipment and sunscreen lotions that are used by Persons with Disabilities.
3. Since Digital marketing requires the use of smart phones, internet and computers, Government should fully open Facebook, but also reduce taxes that are charged when trying to operate digitally.
4. Government should equip schools and all educational/training institutions with disability equipment to support learning for PWDs e.g. hearing aids, braille machines and modern computers with inbuilt assistive technology.
5. Physical accessibility is key in ensuring that PWDs receive all the necessary services. Government should beef up efforts in implementation of the accessibility standards and the Building Control Act, 2013.
6. OPDs and CSOs at large should embark on disability inclusion advocacy agenda, and innovation to accommodate PWDs in their systems and programming.
7. Community/parents and caretakers should innovatively support disabilities or children with disabilities to live independent or semi-independent life instead of waiting for miracles and charity.

I thank our development partners including GIZ, DRF, FEMNET, AWDF, SHE LEADS, WE LEAD, HVF &KCH without whose support the work we are doing would not be possible. Thank you for supporting this event.

Thank you, Guest of honor, for honoring our invitation.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTY.