

# PWDs still marginalised in job market

By Owen Wagabaza

**A**natolia Nakimbugwe was born a healthy and normal baby. Unfortunately, she was struck by polio at the age of three and her life was never the same again.

Despite the challenges before her, Nakimbugwe persisted and went through school knowing that it was only through education that her life could improve.

In 2012, Nakimbugwe graduated with a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences at Makerere University.

Unfortunately, even after graduating with a first class degree, Nakimbugwe has never been employed.

"Whenever I am shortlisted, employers say they will call me, but they do not. Some even go ahead to give me handouts as if I am a beggar, which is frustrating," Nakimbugwe says.

But she is not alone in that situation; thousands of persons with disabilities (PWDs) continue to be discriminated against when it comes to employment opportunities, for reasons only known to the employers.

## Vulnerable and marginalised

Moses Ariho, a programme officer with the National Organisation for the Disabled, explains that generally, PWDs are vulnerable by virtue of their impairment and negative societal attitudes arising from fear, ignorance, superstition, neglect and lack of awareness.

"As a result, PWDs have inadequate access to services, information, resources as well as limited participation in the socio-economic development process. Consequently, the majority depend on their families and communities for survival," Ariho says.

According to Ariho, PWDs are not considered in almost everything. "In education for example, there is scarcity of appropriate educational, scholastic and instructional materials, inadequate training of staff handling concerns of PWDs, outdated and limited skills in vocational rehabilitation centres, and inaccessible physical structures at schools," he says.

Ariho says such factors have hindered PWDs' chances to attain education and skills training. There is also the high cost of resources and services such as guides, helpers as well as interpreters. This has left a high proportion of PWDs illiterate and unskilled.

Victo Nalule, a PWD working with Umeme as a safety administrator, says because of the limited skills, a problem most PWDs,



If everybody, especially employers, gave a hand to persons with disabilities, they would discover the ability, loyalty, creativity and hard work that is embedded in them

## COMMUNITIES OFTEN DISCRIMINATE AGAINST AND MARGINALISE PWDs BECAUSE OF NEGATIVE BELIEFS, NORMS AND CUSTOMS

accessing employment is a major challenge.

"Also, most potential employers do not give a chance to PWDs to compete for jobs, even where they have the necessary qualifications and experience. Consequently, the majority of PWDs are unemployed," she says.

PWDs are also discriminated against when it comes to social security. Ariho says PWDs in Uganda do not have access to regular incomes due to inadequate employment opportunities.

"Those that earn an income are largely in the informal sector. Existing social security schemes such as pension, provident fund and insurance services cover only PWDs in the formal sector.

"Where informal social security mechanisms exist, they are weak, unstructured, unsustainable, operate on a voluntary basis and are in any case inaccessible to most PWDs," he says.

"In health, we have a challenge of the high cost of health services and negative attitudes of some health staff, unfriendly infrastructure and equipment designs and long distances to the health facilities," Ariho says.

The group is also not catered for when it comes to HIV/AIDS. "PWDs are sexually active and because of their vulnerability, they stand a high risk of contracting as well as transmitting HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, they are not targeted by most programmes on HIV/AIDS," he says.

"For instance, PWDs have limited access to information, education, counselling services and Antiretroviral treatment. As a result the impact of HIV/AIDS on PWDs remains unknown," he adds.

## What should be done?

Stella Ssemujju, the executive director of Equality for All, a non-governmental organisation, says there is need to encourage full participation of PWDs and caregivers in planning, decision-making, designing and implementation interventions for improved service delivery.

"PWDs do not access services because of their exclusion in the design and implementation of interventions. This has greatly contributed to their inadequate participation in the socio-economic development process," she opines.

She adds that there is need to facilitate the availability and utilisation of assistive devices and services to PWDs to make them independent and productive in development activities.

"PWDs organisations should also be supported and strengthened for a stronger voice," Ssemujju says.

Ariho says capacity building for all stakeholders needs to be prioritised in all interventions, at all levels, to effectively participate in and benefit from development.

He adds: "This can be achieved by promoting apprenticeships, vocational,

functional and life-long skills training, establishing community based networks to have PWDs access services, equipping service providers and communities with appropriate knowledge and skills for effective service delivery and promoting micro-finance education and health initiatives that benefit

households of PWDs and their caregivers."

There is also need for increased awareness about disability. Ariho, says communities often discriminate against and marginalise PWDs because of negative beliefs, norms and customs. This is mainly due to the limited understanding by the communities of the causes of disabilities, rights, their potential and abilities.

"This can be achieved by promoting and strengthening awareness creation programmes on disability at all levels, designing and developing appropriate interventions by stakeholders at all levels and lobbying for the mainstreaming of disability concerns in sectoral programmes and publicity through the media such as radio, television, newspapers, brochures and posters," Ariho says.

Anneke Maarse, a disability inclusion advisor at Light for the World, a disability oriented NGO, says there is need for increased awareness of legal requirements on the side of both the employers and PWDs.

"Few employers are aware of the state of disability law in Uganda largely due to weak enforcement and the

same goes for PWDs. Unless they are informed of their rights by a charitable group or organisation, they remain largely uninformed," she says.

Patrick Ngolobe, the human resource manager at Umeme which employs up to 20 PWDs, calls on other organisations to embrace people with disabilities.

"Disability is not inability. I have seen it and I know what they can do. They are loyal, focused, highly creative and innovative and are committed to work. We are employing over 20 PWDs and we have no regrets," Ngolobe says.

According to Ngolobe, there is a way God compensates for the disability, and, as such, employers should benefit from the extras that cannot be found with other people.

Nalule calls on fellow PWDs to be confident, open minded, fight the stigma that comes with living with a disability and embrace the challenges as they come.

"When you get a job, show them that you can maneuver and give the job your all. Using this strategy, I have been able to exceed performance expectations for the seven years I have been here and I am sure, my bosses have no regrets for hiring me," she says.



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## THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION COMMEMORATES THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY



Sylvia Muwemba Ntambi (Mrs.) Chairperson EOC

Nations General Assembly in 1948. UDHR is a ground-breaking document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to by virtue of being human - regardless of birth, race, colour, gender, sex, tribe origin, political or religious opinion, national and social background.

As Ugandans engage in commemorative activities to mark the day, the global as well as the national theme for 2018 is anchored on: "UDHR@70 Promote, Engage and Reflect", a call on every actor, each under their mandate to promote, Engage and Reflect on the journey since declaration of the Universal Guiding document that sets out universal values and common standard for all folks without discrimination. The theme lays emphasis on the strong global momentum striving for full and equal enjoyment of the inherent dignity, fundamental human rights and freedoms by all persons. The 2018 theme will explore effective means of promoting and protecting rights in various aspects of social, cultural, economic, civic and political life.

The 16 days of Activism against GBV global theme is anchored on "Orange the World: Hear me too", whilst the national theme for the 2018 campaign is "Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls" - reflecting the core principle of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This year's theme is opportune as many are highly vulnerable to neglect, isolation, abuse and barriers to inclusion in many key aspects of society.

Among several other measures, Government of Uganda has responded to the need to promote inclusivity by establishing the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) through the Equal Opportunities Commission Act, 2007, pursuant to Article 32 of the 1995 National Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. The Commission exists to effect the State's Constitutional mandate to eliminate discrimination and inequalities against any individual or group of persons, and take Affirmative Action in favour of groups marginalised on the basis of sex, colour, race, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, health status and social or economic standing, political opinion or disability or any other reason created by history or custom, for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them. To this end, the Commission envisions a just and fair society wherein all persons have equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from all political, economic, social & cultural life spheres.

As a government body charged with redressing imbalances and promoting equal opportunities for all, the Commission recognizes the views of all as critical in the

Every year Uganda joins the rest of the world in commemoration of the 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), from 25<sup>th</sup> November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to 10<sup>th</sup> December, which marks the International Human Rights day (IHRD).

This year 2018, Human Rights Day marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), since its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. UDHR is a ground-breaking document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to by virtue of being human - regardless of birth, race, colour, gender, sex, tribe origin, political or religious opinion, national and social background.

Country's development process. As we commemorate the 16 Days of Activism and International Human Rights Day, the Commission focused on women and girls with Albinism, based on the fact that those with disabilities grossly suffer consequences of GBV, marginalization and discrimination which flouts the very principles of social justice, peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness.

The Government of Uganda recognizes the vital role that all persons present, and dedicates efforts to realize the full potential and involvement of all in National development. However, there is difficulty in targeting all, occasioned partly by definitional issues, categorisation - varying communal perceptions notwithstanding. The variation is never-ending - sometimes informed by contextual history, culture, tradition, economics, religion, and so on. While the UDHR and other regional and national instruments have been adopted to deal with these and similar challenges, implementation remains a challenge.

Irrespective of the definition, Uganda's vulnerable populace remains challenged by un/under employment, appallingly low incomes, unequal access to quality health and educational services, communication limitations, limited access to public information, limited political influence, access to land, insecurity and loss of lives occasioned by increased crime, violence and negligence. This situation is compounded by deeply entrenched societal prejudices against stereotypes of persons with albinism. Persons with albinism face multiple forms of discrimination worldwide. Albinism is still socially and medically misunderstood. The physical appearance of persons with albinism is often the object of flawed beliefs and myths influenced by superstition, which foster their marginalization and social exclusion. This leads to various forms of stigma and discrimination.

In our resolute effort to promote empowerment and ensure participation as a critical factor for balanced and inclusive growth, the EOC will continue enforcing Gender and Equity compliance in the plans and budgets of all Government MDAs as provided for in the Public Finance Management Act, 2015; carrying out public education programmes that promote the participation of persons with disabilities; conducting audits and reviews to ensure that policies, laws, programmes, projects and practices of all State and non-State actors are geared at promoting equal opportunities and affirmative action for persons with disabilities; administering justice aimed at ending marginalization and discrimination; as well as working with other stakeholders to ensure that no Ugandan is left behind as we journey towards a comprehensive upper middle income status by 2040. The 16 days of Activism as well as International Human Rights Day aim to remind the public of the importance of all in society, the vital role that all persons play in Nation building - the exceptional energy, talent and creativity the marginalised presents in development; hence, the need for inclusion in development.

Realisation of sustainable growth, wealth creation, employment and inclusive growth calls for equal opportunities for all in the development of policies, laws, programs, projects, plans, budgets, practices and traditions among others as a universal and fundamental human right. This, the EOC will relentlessly pursue through advocacy to ensure inclusion and participation of all - aware that investment in the marginalised is critical.

Every one of us demands equal respect and acknowledgement for their dedication and commitment to contributing to a world free from fear and want. Together we end GBV and all development actors are implored to join the struggle as we redress imbalances and promote equal opportunities for all!