

UPDATE



A bi-monthly newsletter that keeps you in touch with Uganda National Action on Physical Disability

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Some of UNAPD donors Inge Schmidt (L) and Frede Schulz (R) with UNAPD Development Worker, Troels Hovgaard. The donors, who currently support UBISP Project, visited UNAPD in May to appraise the new Labour Market Project for persons with disabilities. At the end of the visit, they were impressed with UNAPD and are making preparations to sponsor the project.

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Mr. Okebe Onya
Executive Director

The disability movement is once again awash with jubilations. At long last, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, has come into force.

Any UN Convention of this nature can only come into force and become binding to member states if at least 20 member states ratify it. This has now happened. On the 3rd April, 2008, Ecuador ratified the Convention, completing the minimum requirement for the con-

vention to come into force. This is great news to persons with disabilities world over.

The 20 countries that delivered these glad tidings to PWDs are Bangladesh, Croatia, Cuba, Namibia, El Salvador, Gabon, Guinea, Hungary, India, Jamaica and Jordan. Others are Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, San Marino, South Africa, Spain, Tunisia and Ecuador.

However, more countries have still continued to ratify the convention, after it came into force. By June 5th more seven countries including Kenya, Egypt, Honduras, Mali, Philippines, Slovenia and Qatar had signed.

PWDs in Uganda had very much hoped that Uganda, a country with a reputation for favourable disability dispensation, should have been one of the twenty countries, but unfortunately, we have been overtaken. We still have hope that Uganda will ratify this convention sooner than later.

In Uganda, PWDs gathered at Katalamwa Cheshire Home, to celebrate and made merry for the coming into force of the UN Convention on the Rights on PWDs. Res non vebra. Aluta continua.

The Editor welcomes articles and letters on topical issues in disability. Please, send them to the address below:

UNAPD Update,

P.O. Box 959, Kampala, Uganda

E-mail: unapd@utlonline.co.ug

**Offices on Namasole Road, Kikuubo Zone,
Gayaza Road, Plot 459, Kanyanya.**

EDITORIAL

It's just the beginning

The disability movement is happy the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is now in force. We chose this to be the theme of this edition of The UNAPD Update, to highlight the importance of the Convention to PWDs. Merry making started at the UN headquarters in New York and at Katalamwa Cheshire Home in Uganda. The Convention seeks to protect PWDs from discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization and ensure that PWDs are mainstreamed in all economic, social and development strategies of all the 192 UN member countries.

After ratification of the Convention, the disability movement needs to brace itself with the second major step of prevailing over UN member countries to implement the Convention. This is a crucial step because if it fails, PWDs won't adequately benefit from the Convention. There are many good laws more especially in Uganda that have been enacted but are not implement or enforced. Take for example the Disability Policy 2003, Persons with Disabilities Act 2006, and even some provisions of the Local Governments Act 1997.

Legislation alone will not enable persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights. States will need to formulate effective policies and programmes that will transform the provisions of the Convention into practices that will have a real impact on the lives of persons with disabilities. For persons with disabilities, as it is for all persons, the denial of one right can lead to the denial of other rights and opportunities since rights are invisible and inseparable.

One of the fundamental obligations contained in the Convention is that national law should guarantee the enjoyment of the rights enumerated in the Convention. The Convention has gone into history as being the first 21st human rights treaty to come into force and having received the necessary 20 ratifications within the shortest period of 14 months.

The rapid ratification is attributed to advocacy that the DPOs played to influence their respective countries to ratify the Convention. Many other countries including Uganda have signed the Convention and are in the process of ratifying it. DPOs should no sit back and just cerebrate the coming into force of the Convention. Instead, they should double their efforts to urge UN member countries to make the necessary policies and programmes to implement the provisions of the Convention and other laws about persons with disabilities.

UNAPD Update, P.O. Box 959, Kampala, Uganda
E-mail: unapd@utlonline.co.ug

What else can we do?



Hon James Mwandha
Chairman UNAPD

The coming into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on May 3, 2008 was a major event in the area of protection of human rights. This marked a major milestone in the effort to promote, protect and ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. At long last, the 650 million people with disabilities in the world have an international law, to protect their rights after a long struggle. We need to congratulate ourselves for this achievement.

Uganda participated very actively and significantly during the negotiations of this Convention from the first session in 2002 to the last session in 2006. I happen to have represented Uganda at the UN Adhoc Committee, which negotiated this Convention. With the support of PWDs in Uganda and other stakeholders, we were able to prepare for each of the sessions of the Adhoc Committee in advance and our contributions to the negotiations as a country were very much appreciated and are well documented in the negotiation records of the UN.

Many delegations at the Adhoc Committee considered Uganda as a country which was advanced in providing progressive policies and laws in the protection of the rights of PWDs. Indeed, whenever controversial issues arose in the negotiations, the Uganda delegation was consulted and its views were often seriously considered.

When the Convention document was open for signature on March 30, 2007, Uganda was one of the 84 UN member states which signed the Convention, signifying that they agreed with the text and were prepared to ratify it in due course. Considering the role Uganda played during the period of negotiations, it was expected that Uganda would be among the first 20 countries to ratify it and trigger its entry into force. Unfortunately, we missed that historical slot of being among the countries to make the Convention become international law.

Now as I write this article, there are 27 countries which have ratified the Convention, Kenya being the latest and the first in East Africa. On the African continent, we were expected to be the first or second country to ratify; now there are eight countries which have ratified the Convention and Uganda is not one of them.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Kampala in November 2007 adopted a resolution calling upon members states to ratify the Convention without any further delay. Uganda being chair in office of CHOGM is expected to provide leadership in ratifying the Convention. As of now, there are six countries of the Commonwealth which have ratified the Convention and Uganda is not one of them.

On the International Day of People with Disabilities which was celebrated in Nebbi District on December 3, 2007, at which the President was the guest of honour, PWDs called upon government to ratify the Convention. The President promised to take action on this matter and indeed, he held a consultative meeting with PWDs leaders and directed the minister concerned to fast track the process in order to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. As of now, we understand that the matter has been in Cabinet for several months but it does not appear to receive priority attention.

This delay in ratifying the Convention is causing Uganda to miss out on nominating a candidate to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to be established under Article 34. The committee consists of experts nominated by UN member states who have ratified the Conven-

tion. In order to elect that Committee, the UN Secretary General is expected, at least four months before the date of election, to invite States Parties to submit their nominations within two months. This means that the Secretary General may by now invited States Parties to submit nominations to the Committee. This may have excluded us since Uganda has not ratified the Convention.

We should now ask ourselves a number of questions. Have we the people with disabilities failed in our advocacy and lobbying to make government appreciate the need for ratification of this Convention? I know that we have raised this matter in meetings with ministers and officials concerned; we have raised this matter at seminars, workshops and conferences; we raised this matter at the International Day of Persons with Disabilities before the President and he committed himself to fast track the process of ratification. In spite of all of this, Uganda has not ratified the Convention. What else should we have done? Should we have gone on the streets and demonstrated like PWDs have done in some other countries or should we have gone on hunger strike like some PWDs did in one of the Asian countries?

What have our MPs representing us in Parliament done since they are near the center of power? Have they exhausted the use of tools available to them in Parliament such as raising matters in committees of Parliament or putting questions without notice or questions with notice or sponsoring motions for resolutions? Have they lobbied ministers individually or collectively?

If PWDS in Uganda and their MPs have done all this and ratification has not taken place, can we then say that may be there is lack of understanding of the need to ratify the Convention among the concerned people in government or lack of interest in the matter or could it be an indication of the priority government of Uganda puts on disability issues?

I would like to call upon the disabled people in Uganda to keep the hope alive and continue lobbying and pressing government to ratify the Convention. Never give up.

Donors impressed with UNAPD, to sponsor another project

BY HAMAD LUBWAMA

Jovial is the word that can sum up the staff mood at UNAPD secretariat. But it was more than that towards the end of May, as two development partners from Denmark visited the organisation.

The excitement was probably not because of Frede Schulz and Inge Schmidt's cheery character and white faces, but rather the forthcoming Labour Market Project (LMP), that they came to appraise. Many UNAPD board members who interacted with the visitor were equally excited by the positive progress of the appraisal.

"We are looking forward to get started with the new Labour Market Project, come January 1, 2009. We have reached a common understanding about the goals, strategy and objectives of the project. DANIDA says it is a new and good project," Schulz, said in an interview with UNAPD Update, shortly before the end of their ten-day visit.

"The project may begin in January next year because there are no more funds for new projects this year. So I have to go back and ask DPOD to fund the Labour Market Project next year." The visitors who were in the country between May 20 – May 30, 2008, met various stakeholders including employers, persons with disabilities and NGO's.

Schulz is the Project Coordinator of Danish Brain Injury Association (DBIA) that is sponsoring another two-year project, Uganda Brain Injury Support Project (UBISP). He said they are sponsoring another project because DBIA is impressed with how UNAPD is implementing its projects.

But what is LMP all about? "We want to assess the needs and skills people with disabilities should have for them to employed," Schulz said. The project, specifi-

cally targets Persons with Acquired Brain Injury (PWABIs), but all other PWDs will be considered. It intends to mainstream PWDs in formal employment and to make employers aware that PWDs, if employed, can work very well.

"Before we came to Uganda, people were not aware that PWABIs exist. Even the staff at Mulago Hospital did not know much about this. PWABIs if catered for can do a very good job," Schulz said. The 69-year-old Schulz is a PWABI but has lived and done productive work for the last 16 years since he contracted it.

However, before he tells you, you can't know that he has a disability.

"It is hard to identify a PWABI. They don't move in wheelchairs or with crutches. I contracted it following a stomach operation. Doctors forgot to tell me to take special vitamins after the surgery. Lack of vitamin B12 may cause brain damage. I discovered later that I had got brain injury" Schulz regrets.

Brain injury results from getting a brain damage before birth, during birth, in accidents/ trauma or resulting from diseases such as malaria. Brain injury sometimes causes cerebral palsy, a condition where muscles are constricted and can hardly respond to how a person suffering from the disease wants to move them.

DBIA first sponsored the Uganda Brain Injury Project between 2005-2007 in two divisions of Kampala District (Kawempe and Makindye), where many PWABIs were identified and formed six Self Help Groups (SHGs).

UBISP is a continuation of UBIP, but aims at transforming SHGs to Community Based Organisations (CBOs), capable of playing a strong advocacy role and jointly create initiatives to improve the lives of their members.

China favours PWDs

CHINA: The Chinese Government has adopted a law amendment to better protect the country's more than 83 million persons with disabilities, in the run-up to the Beijing 2008 Paralympics Games in September. Under the law, 25 out of every 100 workers in governments, social organizations, enterprises, and non-government organizations, should be PWDs. Alternatively, employers should contribute to PWDs in other aspects if they failed to meet the quota. The amendment also requires government, when purchasing, to give priority to products or services provided by PWDs. Uganda could take a leaf from China.

Microsoft launches software for blind

Microsoft Corporation in May launched a new software that will make it easier for anyone to create documents and content that will be accessible for the blind and those with low vision. The new "Save as DAISY XML", designed for Microsoft Office Word 2007, Word 2003 and Word XP, will allow users to save Open XML based text files into DAISY XML, the foundation of the globally accepted DAISY Standard for reading and publishing navigable multimedia content.

The "Save as DAISY XML" can be downloaded by Microsoft Office Word users for free at <http://www.openxmlcommunity.org/daisy>. Also released in April is the latest version of the DAISY Pipeline, that supports the conversion of DAISY XML into DAISY Digital Talking Book (DTB) format. Together these technologies provide a comprehensive solution for converting text documents into accessible formats for people with print disabilities.

Compiled by Hamad Lubwama

Uganda to sign Convention of PWDs

BY STAFF WRITER

President Yoweri Museveni has directed the Prime Minister, Apollo Nsibambi, to fast-track the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The President made the directive on May 5, two days after the convention and its optional protocol came into force on May 3.

Museveni was meeting disabled people at State House, who submitted to him a list of key issues affecting people with disabilities.

The convention prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities and provides for consideration of PWDs in all economic and development strategies of UN member countries. The optional protocol relates to how individual or groups can seek redress for violations of the main Convention once national remedies are exhausted.

Uganda signed the convention on March 30, 2008 but is yet to ratify it. Signing a convention means the country accepts it while ratifying it implies that a country agrees to be bound by the provisions of that international law.

However, since Uganda is a UN member state, it's bound by the Convention even if it doesn't ratify it, as long as 20 members have ratified it. Museveni's directive to the premier followed reports that the Attorney General, Prof. Khiddu Makubuya, had cleared the Convention for ratification, and had asked the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) to submit a memorandum for ratification.

The President's meetings with DPO's were planned to follow up on issues raised at the International Day of the Disabled celebrations held in Nebbi on December 3, 2007.

After the Nebbi celebrations, NUDIPU and MPs representing persons with disabilities, organized a workshop for DPOs and other partners like ADD, Ministry of Gender and technical staff from State House. They identified key priority areas that they wanted the President to address,



Museveni: I welcome the observance of the rights of persons with disabilities

and formed a committee to come up with a memorandum to the President and to arrange a meeting with him.

At the first meeting with the President on April 15, almost all national DPOs including UNAPD, were represented. However, Ministers and Technical Staff of relevant sector ministries were not present, so the President directed that another meeting be held where all stakeholders would attend.

The President chaired the May 5, nine-hour meeting, which started at 11:00am and ended at 8:00pm.

Below is how the President reacted to some of the DPOs demands:

Regulations to operationalize PWDs Act.

It emerged that contrary to the normal process, the MoGLSD had started drafting regulations without getting the Attorney General's input. So it was agreed that the Attorney General teams up with MoGLSD and other line ministries to have regulations completed as soon as practicable.

Kampala land: It was agreed that a land title be issued to Kampala District Union of People with Disabilities on behalf of the entire disability community in Kampala. The President ordered the ministry responsible for lands to start processing the land title.

Prosperity for all: The Ministry of Fi-

nance, Planning and Economic Development and MoGLSD were tasked to develop guidelines for mainstreaming PWDs in the "Prosperity for all programme".

Special allowances for PWDs teachers:

Museveni agreed to give special allowances to special needs teachers but asked the Ministry of Education and Sports to work out modalities and costing to determine budgetary implications. He said his view is that the special needs teachers should be for children like the deaf, blind and those with mental health challenges, who cannot be integrated in mainstream schools. He said such children can be enrolled in special residential schools within regions and later sub-regions.

HIV/AIDS: The President directed the Ministry of Health and Uganda Aids Commission to grant PWDs a self-coordination entity (SCE) status at Uganda AIDs Commission. He emphasized that this should focus on people with severe disabilities like the blind and deaf who urgently need these special services and face major challenges in accessing information on HIV/AIDS.

Accessibility and information: The minister responsible for finance was directed to start drafting regulations that take into account provisions for PWDs in accordance with Act 2006 about accessibility. Ministry of information was

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Accessibility law starts to bite

BY APOLLO MUKASA

Uganda is among the few countries in Africa which have taken efforts to enact laws friendly to persons with disabilities. These include the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 and the National Policy on Disability, 2003. Uganda is also a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. All these legal documents stipulate the rights to accessibility as paramount. However, despite the existence of all these legal provisions, many people are not aware of the existence of the laws let alone their provisions. Government is not apt at implementing or enforcing them.

However, Gulu Disabled Cooperative Group took a different dimension to sensitize the banking institutions on the rights of PWDs to access their infrastructure. According to an article in New Vision newspaper of May 12, 2008, the Disabled Group sued and won a court case against Centenary Bank Gulu Branch. The group proved that the bank's Gulu branch, located on Gulu-Kitgum road, is inaccessible to PWDs and the judge directed Centenary Bank to make the place accessible and pay all court expenses the disabled group incurred. The bank's entrance had steps that made it difficult for PWDs, specifically those using wheelchairs, to enter the banking premises.

PWDs like any other clients have a right to access banking institutions as stipulated in the Persons with Disability Act, 2006, Section 19. It states that: "It shall be the responsibility of all organs in public and private institutions to provide suitable exits for persons with disabilities and universal standard designs for toilets." Failure to follow this provision is a sign that an institution discriminates against PWDs in service provision. Many other public and private institutions may find themselves behind the dock on similar charges.

The law suit by the disabled group is a good strategy of sensitizing Ugandans that the disability movement is taking a new trend of sensitizing people about the rights of PWDs to access all public and private infrastructures. It set a very big precedent and I challenge other groups of persons with disabilities to emulate Gulu Disabled Cooperative Group. To the disability activists, let's not lose hope, "Nothing For Us Without Us". Remember UNAPD slogan "Against All Barriers". We should ensure that no barrier is left standing on the way to PWDs development.

Implications of the UN convention to PWDs

BY SETH MPOOYA

The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities received its 20th ratification on the April 3, 2008, triggering its entry into force and its Optional Protocol 30 days later. This marked a major milestone in the effort to promote, protect and ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of PWDs, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

On May 12, 2008, a commemorative event at the UN headquarters in New York was held, to celebrate the entry into force of the convention. It was honoured by the physical presence of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, the acting General Secretary Hjalmar W. Hannesson and Shazukang, the under Secretary General for Economics and Social Affairs.

As of June 18, 2008, there were:

- 129 signatories to the Convention, including Uganda
- 71 signatories to the Optional Protocol
- 27 ratifications of the Convention
- 16 ratifications of the Optional Protocol

According to the UN officials, the rapid coming into force of the convention and its Optional Protocol that opened for signatures on March 30, 2007, is due to the strong commitment of the UN member countries as well as advocacy by DPOs who were instrumental in drafting the convention.

The convention aims at ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy human rights on an equal basis with others. Its other specific implications to UN member countries are:

Every Un member country will be



UNAPD Gen. Sec. Seth Mpooya

compelled to enforce the provisions of the convention, such as:

- Equal opportunities in employment
- Creation of an enabling environment in terms of accessibility to places of work and public places such as schools, hospitals, theatres, museums and super markets.
- Education to all people including PWDs

This Convention will also compel all UN member states to ensure:

- Non-discrimination of all PWDs
- Full and effective participation and inclusion of PWDs in all government and civil society programmes and activities
- Respect for inherent dignity and individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of PWDs.
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.
- Equality of opportunities
- Equality between men and women.
- Respect for evolving capacities and rights of children with disabilities and the right to preserve their identities.

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Some UNAPD staff and members who participated in an induction training in Accessibility in Kapchorwa District in June, 2008, pose for a group photo.



UBISP Programme Officer, Mr. Godfrey Basita (c) demonstrating some exercise to Erisa Ntege who suffered a stroke that paralyzed him as Inge Schmidt looks on.



UNAPD's Ms. Maria Mukisa, Ms. Olivia Nakato, Ms. Irene Namigayo and Ms. Ann Marie Nabwire (board member), seeing off Frede Schulz, after his ten-day visit to UNAPD.



UNAPD ED Mr Okebe Onya , Inge Schmidt, Troels Hovgaard and Frede Schulz in a meeting with Chairman Kampala District Service Commission, Mr. Kayondo (R) and Hon. Jacob Bona, a Councilor for Persons with Disabilities in Kampala City Council.



Children of Katalemwa Cheshire Children's Home entertain guests at the celebration of the coming into force of the UN Convention for PWDs.



UNAPD's Troels Hovgaard admires the crafts by UNAPD Chairman Wakiso District Association of People with Physical Disabilities, Mr Yokosefati Buwembo that were due for an exhibition in Italy.

Accessibility Project gets to grassroots

BY APOLLO MUKASA



Apollo Mukasa

I greet you in the name of UNAPD with our inspiring slogan "Against All Barriers". This is my first official communication as the Assistant Programme Officer for Accessibility Project through our common voice, the UNAPD Update. This is an opportunity to share the achievements of the Capacity Building and Accessibility Project. I am very optimistic that the collaborative effort is going to continue.

It's now eleven months since the inception of the project, several achievements have been registered both at national and district level. As reported in the previous edition, April began with the recruitment of the Assistant Programme Officer for Accessibility and Information Officer, to boost project activities. The strength and success of this project will be realized when there is full involvement of UNAPD district and sub-county member associations. Without their full participation, less impact will be made by the project. With this theoretical understanding, the district associations have to be very active and work as a team to render the project a success.

One of the objectives of the project is to strengthen the organizational and institutional capacity of UNAPD at local level, to implement activities and lobby for services and resources. To realize this objective, the project has to empower district and sub-county associations in advocacy and lobbying skills for physical accessibility.

Members from three districts and 15 sub-counties have so far been inducted into the project and trained in several advocacy and lobbying skills to spearhead accessibility and other disability issues in their areas. These districts include Wakiso, Kapchorwa and Soroti, which have been the first to benefit from the capacity building activity of project implementation.

Trust Fund

The districts are quite positive and excited about the project, which will boost disability activities. Among the impressive initiatives of the project is the Trust Fund. The fund under the project is given to a district and sub-county associations to boost their activities. After training, member associations may apply for the fund. The application forms are obtained from UNAPD secretariat. Best applicants are selected on merit.

The fund will address the perpetual problem and complaint of inadequate funds allocated to disability activities by District Local Governments. The funds are used to streamline activities aimed at advocating for physical accessibility, among other crucial issues affecting PWPDs in districts and sub-counties. Therefore, time has come for districts and sub-counties to be more active in advocacy and lobbying while uplifting the dignity and human rights of PWPDs.

The Chairperson, Wakiso District Association of People with Physical Disabilities (WAPPD), Mr. Yekosafati Buwembo, could not hide his joy during the induction workshop in Wakiso induction training: "UNAPD has never forgotten us and this project has come at the right time when (WAPD) has a gap in advocacy skills and limited resources."

Commendation

The Vice-Chairperson, Kapchorwa District Local Government, Mr. Francis Chelengat, who was guest of honor at the induction workshop of Kapchorwa District Association of People with Physical Disabilities, said: "The District has interest in disability but has always been hampered by lack of enough resources. This project will, therefore, boost the district efforts. Thanks to UNAPD for choosing Kapchorwa as one of the project districts."

On the other hand, Soroti District Action on Physical Disability (SODAPD), is strong at district level but needs to mobilise sub-county associations and make them



UNAPD General Secretary Mr Seth Mpooya (2nd R) chats with KADAPD Chairman, Mr. Labu Arap Labu (2nd L), as others who attended the induction look on.

stronger on ground. SODAPD Chairperson, Ms. Jane Alum, committed herself to actively mobilize sub-county associations to become more active on the ground.

We therefore, encourage disability leaders in the project districts and sub-counties to use this golden opportunity of the accessibility project to make an impact on their members. This is the only way disability leaders will leave a legacy of advocating for physical accessibility of PWDs to public and private infrastructure. It is one of the important human rights enshrined in the Constitution and Persons with Disability Act, 2006.

We shall carry out training workshops in the remaining five project districts of Masindi, Hoima, Yumbe, Nebbi and Kampala. By September, 2008, all the project districts are expected to have the institutional and organizational capacity to advocate and lobby for physical accessibility of PWPDs in public and private infrastructure in their areas.

Accessibility guidelines

UNADP is working around the clock to draft simple accessibility guidelines, which will be used in accessibility auditing of public and private infrastructure. The guidelines are aimed at empowering the districts to advocate for physical accessibility from an informed point of view. With flag word "Against All Barriers", we shall lead the campaign to ensure that all public and private facilities are accessible to PWPDs.

New project in offing as PWABIs analyse health system

BY GODFREY BASOITA



Godfrey Basoita

It gives me much pleasure to reach and keep in touch with you through our bi-monthly newsletter, The UNAPD Update. It is only here that I can be able to keep you informed about what has/is or will be going on in the Uganda Brain Injury

Support Project (UBISP). Among the things we have done, two significant activities stand out clearly:

1) The pre-appraisal for the Labour Market Project for PWDs

As you may recall, in the last edition, I mentioned about this project which is being developed, and I promised to keep you updated. Two of our partners from Danish Brain Injury Association (DBIA), Frede Schulz and Inge Schmidt, visited UNAPD to appraise for the project.

The visitors were joined by four UNAPD staff and formed an appraisal team of six members. The team started work on May 21, 2008 and wound up activities on May 30. The ten days were quite hectic! The activities consisted of mainly meetings with various stakeholders and other persons we considered to be resourceful in providing information that would enrich and improve the project idea.

We met with potential beneficiaries (PWDs) from whom we got ideas about what can practically be done to curb unemployment problem of persons with disabilities. We also held meetings with several employers and discussed their hindrances, feelings and ideas about employing PWDs.

However, though we talked to the employers themselves, we felt we had to hold discussions with the body that brings all employers together and acts as their mouthpiece – The Federation of Uganda's

Employers (FUE). This discussion was quite interesting because FUE was not only found running similar programs promoting the employment of PWDs, but it was also implementing a project that specifically addresses the employment and employability of women with disabilities. So, you can imagine the enormous lessons the team got from there.

We also consulted resourceful persons, specifically those who have worked either on projects that promote the employment of PWDs or those that are running programs related to poverty eradication among vulnerable groups. They helped us to envisage the various approaches/strategies that can be used by the project to address the problem of unemployment and poverty among PWDs. The team wound up its meeting programs by holding fruitful meetings with some of the biggest stakeholders – Kampala City Council - and UNAPD Board Programmes' Committee. This was the last day of the pre-appraisal activities and it was the day when our DBIA partners went back to Denmark. KCC leaders expressed their willingness to cooperate with UNAPD to make sure that the project in offing succeeds. The project's committee also blessed and inaugurated the project.

The pre-appraisal scored additional two important achievements: The project idea was uniformly conceived and synchronized

by all partners, that is DBIA and UNAPD. They now both have the same perception and understanding of the project. Important knowledge about the project idea was gained and a strategy was drawn. The next step is for the Director of Strategy Research and Development together with the Development Worker and other relevant staff to sit down and put those ideas together and write the project.

Analysis of Health Referral System

The other activity I would like to highlight is the workshop that we held to analyse the Health Referral System. This was conducted on June 6, where health specialists, self-help groups' leaders, community volunteers and some local leaders within the project area, participated. The meeting was meant to help participants and particularly Persons with Acquired Brain Injury (PWABIs) to clearly understand the Health Referral System in Uganda and how they can maximally utilize it to address their daily health challenges. It also aimed at discovering the gaps in referral system so that appropriate lobbying and advocacy strategies can be made to plug them.

Workshops of this nature do not only help to bring all the stakeholders together to deliberate on issues concerning the project, but also act as a forum for interaction between different players, thereby closing gaps that may exist between them.

Reports about the Labour Market Project pre-appraisal and the Health Referral System analysis have been written and can be accessed in UNAPD resource centre.

Much as the two activities above took much attention and were more time consuming, other activities remained moving. Community volunteers and UBISP staff continued with Community Based Rehabilitation activities, and revalidation of the leadership of self-help group of Mpererwe. Regular meetings of other self-help groups went on.



Some of the participants in a workshop to analyse Uganda's Health Referral System listen attentively.

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Wings project takes off

BY MELDA TUMUKUNDE



“Wings!!! What is that?” This is the question that most people ask about the new Wings Project. I now have the pleasure through this edition of The UNAPD Update, to inform you about the project.

Meldah Tumukunde

The project targets special branches of UNAPD that mainly include the youths, women polio survivors and people with rheumatism. These branches are special in a way that their issues still remain unique to UNAPD as an organization that serves the interests of all people with physical disabilities.

The structures of these branches have been in existence and recognized by UNAPD but they have been less operational. Therefore, the project is intended to bring these branches on board by integrating them and strengthening their capacity to effectively advocate for their full representation and inclusion in UNAPD

structures and activities. The project also seeks to advocate for mainstreaming of issues specific to these branches into national development programmes and to ensure that they have access to facilities and services that will improve their quality of life.

The two-year project (2008-2010), is supported by UNAPD's long-term donor; Danish Association of Physically Disabled (DHF). It focuses on four key issues:

- Building the capacity of the National Steering Committees of these special branches to advocate for the rights of their members, lobby and fundraise .
- Enhancing partnership and involvement of existing national organizations of people with physical disabilities such as Spinal Injury Association commonly known as 'SIA'.
- Advocating for integration of the branches in the organizational structure and activities of UNAPD.
- Increasing knowledge and information on post polio and rheumatism challenges in Uganda.

Several activities aimed at building capacity of members of the Wings Committees will be carried out. In order to create dynamic and vibrant Wings, a Trust Fund will be introduced to facilitate

members gain practical experience in implementing activities related to lobbying, advocacy, leadership, organisational management, project formulation, project implementation and fundraising. It is hoped that the work with projects financed by the Trust Fund will give the Wings opportunity to interact and a good reason to work with UNAPD.

It is hoped that after the project, UNAPD:

- Will be an organisation with structures allowing integration and participation of people with specific types of physical disabilities.
- Will have built the capacity of the National Steering Committees of the Wings to advocate for the specific needs of their members.
- Will have established partnership with existing national categories of people with physical disabilities.
- Members and stakeholders will have gained increased awareness about post polio syndrome and rheumatism.

The activities of the project started with my recruitment as Programme Officer in May, 2008. I hope that with your full support, cooperation and participation, the project will be a success. You will hear from me again in the next issue.

President Museveni promises to meet PWDs demands

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directed to enforce provisions of PWDs Act 2006 that provide for a sign language interpreter or captioning of news on television stations.

Education and Public Service Commissions: The Minister of Education reported that the Education Service Commission is working out mechanisms to employ teachers with disabilities. The Public Service Commission was also tasked to kick-start a similar process.

The Ministry of Health was directed to:

Work out mechanisms for inclusion of orthopedic appliances and drugs for epilepsy and mental health on the list of essential drugs funded / subsidized by government.

- Consider vaccination against rubella in its immunization programme to reduce deaf-blindness.
- Workout mechanisms for inclusion of sign language in the curriculum for medical personnel.
- Consider strategies for inclusion of at

least two sign language interpreters during campaigns against communicable and other diseases.

Affirmative action in universities: The President said all universities should emulate the example of Makerere and Kyambogo and admit students with disabilities on affirmative action. He asked the Ministry of Education to invite all vice-chancellors and remind them that it is a legal requirement to admit PWDs on affirmative action.

Born prematurely, Wasswa copes with disability

BY HAMAD LUBWAMA

Lying on a piece of mattress where he spends all his day time and does all his activities, the seven-year-old boy is excited to see one familiar face out of the three guests. The second, a white Muzungu face, is more strange and unimaginable for this kid since he has never seen one of this kind. Nonetheless, he is so strong.

With a wide smile coupled with much excitement, the first born of the seemingly happily married couple calls out "uncle Mpagi, uncle Mpagi," though with difficulty in speech. As his mother welcomes in guests inside the house, she asks the child what he knows about Mr. Mpagi: "He gave me a wheelchair and a pig," the kid that his father describes as genius and jolly, stammers.

This is Wasswa Timothy Kabuye, born three months before the normal maternal period of nine months. His was almost still birth at six months. Wasswa, as he is popularly known, is a child with multiple disabilities. Both of his legs and hands are crippled, and can hardly speak. He spends most of his time lying down because he can neither walk nor crawl. He also has difficulty in using a wheelchair. Wasswa suffers from cerebral palsy, a condition where muscles are constricted and can hardly respond to how he wants to move them. His nervous system is not normal. UNAPD staff Godfrey Mpagi, Hamad Lubwama and Troel's Hovgaard, visited him.

Wasswa's father, Mr. Moses Salongo Kasule, a teacher by profession, explains the cause of his son's predicament: "During pregnancy, his mother developed severe malaria. I underestimated its impact and I took her to a small clinic. Her situation continued to worsen. She started bleeding. I rushed her to Mulago Hospital and I was told she was bleeding from the uterus. She had a near still birth to twin brothers at six months."

Brother's death

Unfortunately, Kato, the other twin, did not live to tell the story.

"His was not a normal delivery. The legs came first instead of the head. I think he was very tired. After a few days, his skin became pale and eventually died after two weeks. Doctors told me he died of respiratory failure," Kasule recalls every moment of the fateful birth, April 11, 2001.



Wasswa and sister Nanfuka, on his mattress where he spends most of his time because he cannot sit, walk or crawl.

Because the twins were born prematurely, they were kept in an incubator under intensive care. After one month, Wasswa looked so healthy and they were seen off from the hospital. "It took us seven months to realize that Wasswa had a physical problem. His muscles were so weak; he could not sit even at seven months when healthy kids are crawling. We took him back to Mulago Hospital to seek medical advice from the physiotherapy department. The doctors examined him but did not find anything wrong. They advised us to keep checking with the department once every month. We did it until Wasswa was four years. By this time my business had collapsed, so our resources were low. We stopped taking him to hospital," Kasule, who had a shop then laments.

At four years, Wasswa could still not sit down, crawl, walk or talk. This is the time when his parents started suspecting that their son had some kind of disability. "It now started to come to our minds that we were to stay with Wasswa when he is physically handicapped. It took him four and a half years to start talking," Kasule noted.

Education

Wasswa has two younger sisters, Danielle

Nagayi and Dartiver Nanfuka, who love him so much despite his disability. However, though his junior sister Naggayi is already enrolled into school, Wasswa stays home.

"I tried to get him a place at Kampala School for the Physically Hand capped but they told me they had no more vacancies for labour intensive children. They referred me to another school where I was told they no longer admit pupils and advised me to try next term," Wasswa's father who is determined to give him the best says.

However, school will be a big challenge to Wasswa, his parents and teachers, as he can only be lifted to change him from one place to another and can't sit by himself. He spends most time lying down. Meanwhile, his father and aunties occasionally give Wasswa some lessons.

Wasswa's best moment is when he eats bread with blue band, plays with toys, watches TV or when he sometimes goes out to watch his piggery with seven pigs.

Mpagi, who works with UNAPD and is the area councilor for persons with disabilities in Wakiso Town Council, delivered the pig and the wheel chair to Wasswa.

Father's love

Kasule wants his son to be entertained: "I bought a TV set specifically for him. That is why it is in his bedroom. He can watch while lying on his bed. I don't have electricity in my house but I bought a generator to make sure he watches TV and doesn't get bored. I have to love him to prove to people that having a child with disability is not a curse to the family."

Wasswa is very lucky to have caring parents, friends and family. Many parents discriminate, marginalise or even outrightly abandon their own kids with disabilities. Others hide them away from people and even fail to take them for medical care or school or live them to die slowly, believing them to be curse to the family and society.

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Born prematurely, Wasswa copes with disability

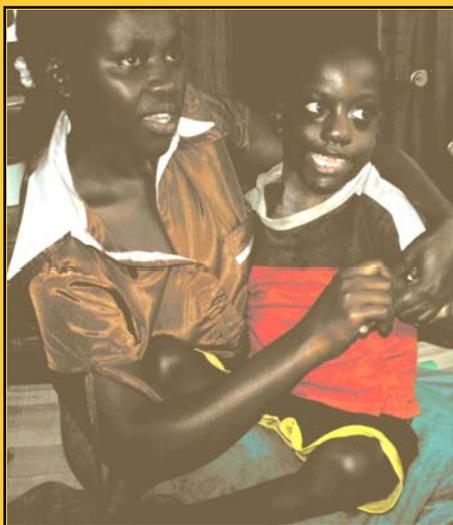
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“People love Wasswa so much. They bring him presents and give him money. He has an auntie who is now in Denmark. She has supported him since infancy and sends money to cater for him. Many other relatives have also been supportive,” the father notes. “He has very good brains. When you bring him a present or when you wrong him, he will never forget you.”

What surprises his parents is that Wasswa can tell any time of the day without looking at the clock (moreover he cannot read the clock). To prove his genius, I asked him what time it was when we were interviewing his parents. “Kkumi” (four o’clock), he answered, when the clock was reading 3:48pm.

Witchcraft?

However, there are other people who think and advise Kasule otherwise. “Some people advised me to chase away my wife reasoning that there are no persons with disabilities in our family. I can’t divorce Nalongo because she is the only woman who can look after Wasswa. I



Nalongo Kasule with her son Wasswa

can’t marry another woman because a new woman can’t afford to look after him,” Kasule adds. “We were forced to bear other children as soon as possible to prove to people that my wife and I are okay.”

But what makes Kasule so strong?
“I come from a Christian background that

is God loving. Secondly, Wasswa is the only son we have. Thirdly, we don’t create life. Why must we destroy it? And at Mulago, I saw many disabled people who are far worse off than my son. Many are so much crippled and can not even speak. My kid can speak,” strong Kasule says.

What caused Wasswa’s disability?

Because Wasswa’s mother got high fever during pregnancy, the malaria parasites affected the kid’s brain, leading to brain injury. The part of the brain that controls muscles was affected leading to a medical condition called cerebral palsy.

With this condition, a person can not control the movement of muscles like contracting or expanding them because the nervous system is not normal. Brain injury can also lead to some other parts of the body like the hands or legs to fail to develop or poorly developed.

Other causes of brain injury that can lead to Wasswa’s similar situation are diseases like fever, accidents, trauma/shocks, drugs and prolonged stress. It is advisable that you rush a person to hospital if you suspect any weird behaviour.

UBISP future plans

From page 9

- We plan to identify some self-help group members for training in CBR at COMBRA to be accomplished within the month of June so that they start training.
- We also hope to hold our second quarter National Steering Committee meeting.
- I am also happy to note that we plan to soon re-start our program of getting drugs from Butabika Hospital to our members.
- Lobbying for improved services to PWABIs at various levels is continually being done by self-help-groups and project staff. We hope to continue with it.

Lastly, we got a volunteer from Action on Disability and Development (ADD), Moses Bogere to supplement the efforts of a single Programme Officer. You will hear from me again in the next issue, as we work together for the wellbeing of PWABIs. The struggle continues.

Implications of UN Convention

From page 6

The convention entered into force on May 3, 2008, becoming the first binding human rights treaty of the 21st century. It is now incumbent on all the 192 UN member countries including Uganda to start implementing the convention.

Uganda subscribes to the UN, and bravo to the Ugandan government to have already signed the convention. We all have high expectations that government will still go further to ratify the convention, although it is already binding to our country. By June 5th, eight African countries had ratified the convention. These are:

- Gabon - October 1, 2007
- S. Africa - November 30, 2007

- Namibia - December 4, 2007
- Guinea - February 8, 2008
- Tunisia - April 2, 2008
- Mali - April 7, 2008
- Egypt - April 14, 2008
- Kenya - May 19, 2008

The convention’s entry into force in just over one year since it was open for signature and ratification highlights the importance of this treaty specifically to the UN member countries. Because at least 10% of the world’s population are PWDs, all efforts must be made to ensure that our rights and dignity are preserved. It is time for Uganda, to make disability issues a priority in all government institutions and to ensure that PWDs access these institutions without any hindrances.