

# UPDATE

UNAPD

A bi-monthly newsletter for Uganda National Action on Physical Disability

NOV. DEC 2010  
VOL. 8, ISSUE 06

## FALLEN HERO LAID TO REST



NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO THE LATE CHAIRMAN OF UNAPD HON. JAMES MWANDHA



**Meldah Tumukunde**

I welcome you to the last edition of UNAPD Update in the year 2010. I must say the year started and progressed quite well only to lose the long-serving Chairman of UNAPD Board of Directors, Hon. James Mwandha, two months to the end.

Mwandha who has not only been the Chairman of UNAPD but a mentor, friend, parent, hero, brother, etc, to many, passed away at Mulago Hospital on November 10, following a heart failure. News of his death was received by everybody by surprise because it was so sudden as he spent few days in hospital.

Mid this year (2010) he was admitted at the Heart Institute, Mulago Hospital and everybody got a chance to pass by and wish him quick recovery. This time it was not the case and so we could not call on you to check on him near the hour of death.

He was buried on November 14 in Namunyumya village, Busembatia, Iganga district following a funeral service that was held at All Saints Church, Nakasero, Kampala, on November 12. I wish on behalf of UNAPD and on my own behalf to extend appreciation to all of you for the condolence messages and moreso for standing with us in the difficult moment.

I wish also to convey condolence to Mr. Frede Schulz of DBIA who lost the mother-in-law at the same time of his visit to Uganda. It was a testing moment for UNAPD and her partners. May the souls of the departed rest in eternal peace.

At the time of his death, Hon. Mwandha was scheduled to meet the DBIA partners, Frede Schulz and Birgit Christensen where the two would reveal the good news about the approval of the new project. Incidentally, he passed away without receiving this good news. I thank Frede and Birgit for enduring the difficult time of their annual visit and for the condolence message.

The Board will soon sit to discuss his replacement. I appeal to the membership to remain strong and also to accord the Board all the necessary support when called upon.

I reiterate my sincere condolences to the family of Hon. Mwandha, members of UNAPD, partners and stakeholders for losing such an important person. May the good Lord comfort us and wipe all the tears in our eyes. I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

## EDITORIAL

# THE STRUGGLE SHOULD CONTINUE

This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to Hon. James Mwandha who passed away on November 10, 2010 a few days to his first anniversary as Chairman Board of Directors, having been re-elected to this position in December 2009.

During his time in the Constituent Assembly and Parliament, he played a very big role to include persons with disabilities in the national Constitution of 1995, and in the subsequent legislations. He made sure that PWDs are provided for in the various laws and legislations among which is the Local Governments Act and Parliamentary Elections Act that provide for representations of PWDs in the councils at different levels and in Parliament.

However, he still had key issues he was working on before his death including making the Accessibility Standards as part of the Building Control Act and ensuring that Uganda domesticates the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. During this period of intensive political activism, Mwandha was also working on producing a manifesto to put issues and needs of PWDs to the attention of aspiring candidate and commit them to implementing this manifesto if they win the various elective positions.

What the disability fraternity has to do is to consolidate his achievements in legislation by committing the duty bearers to implement the available laws to the benefit of PWDs. Much as the laws were put in place, their implementation is still largely questioned.

The other thing is to push for completion of the projects he started like making sure that CRPD is domesticated and implements, and the Accessibility Standards are part of the laws.

Every body should emulate Mwandha by working to improve the living conditions of PWDs without reservation and not accepting political, ethnic and cultural differences to affect a general fight for a particular cause. His character of eloquence, tolerance, persistence, perseverance, passion and assertiveness should be adopted as key important factors for successful lobbying and advocacy.

UNAPD will continue to work with all members, stakeholder and partners as we have done before the demise of Hon. James Mwandha.

## Communication from UNAPD vice-chairman

**BY ARTHUR BLICK Sn.  
Vice-Chairman UNAPD**

News of the untimely death of Hon. James Mwandha in November 2009 was received with devastation by Board, Members, Partners, Stakeholders and Staff of UNAPD.

Until his death, Mwandha was the Chairman Board of Directors. He was re-elected for a third term in December 2009 at our second General Assembly. For all this long I have been honourably serving with him as Vice-Chairman.

The organisation has registered tremendous achievements under our leadership as regards advocating for the promotion of the rights of people with physical disabilities and improving their livelihoods.

And as you are aware, Mwandha also greatly contributed to the enactment

of favourable disability legislations including the Persons with Disabilities Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Mwandha was a hard-working and courageous leader who diligently dedicated a lot of his time, efforts, and resources towards making the lives of PWDs better.

On behalf of the Board, I extend our sincere condolences to the members, partners and stakeholders, and the entire disability fraternity.

I can't forget to also extend my heartfelt condolences to Mwandha's children, wife and family. To many of your, Mwandha was a mentor, a friend, a hero, a dad, etc.



**Blick and Mwandha at the General Assembly in 2010**

To UNAPD members and the disability fraternity, we have to continue working together to uphold and build on Mwandha's achievements.



**HON. JAMES MWANDHA**  
BORN: 1937  
DIED: NOVEMBER 10, 2010

### SPECIAL THANKS

The Board of UNAPD, Management and Members, wish to appreciate members, stakeholders and partners who joined them during the difficult moment of bidding farewell to her beloved Chairman Board of Directors Hon. James Mwandha.

Special thanks to the Parliament of Uganda that convened a special session in his memory, and to the Disabled People's Organisations for comforting and sending condolence messages.

Special thanks also go to the Management of Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) for dedicating a programme on Star FM to discuss the legacy of Mwandha.

Condolences go to the wife Catherine, children, and the rest of the family members.

**MAY HIS SOUL REST IN ETERNAL PEACE**

# The architect of good PWDs laws

Uganda is ranked as one of the best countries in the world to have better legislations for PWDs. Hon. Mwandha was instrumental in the making of these legislations as Hon. Alex Ndeezi, one of the five MPs representing persons with disabilities writes:

The main political agenda of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Uganda was shaped and dominated by the process of making the national Constitution. Several interest groups and constituents based on geography, religion, culture, political affiliation, among others, had positioned themselves as early as 1987 to make sure that their interests and aspirations were fully catered for by the supreme law of the land (Constitution).

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) had by the year 1987 when NUDIPU was formed, emerged as one of the moderately vocal interest groups in this important process. One of the most prominent leaders in the disability movement who made a great contribution to the mainstreaming of disability issues in the Constitution making process and subsequent laws was late Hon. James Mwandha.

During the process, NUDIPU established an advocacy committee for the purpose of ensuring that the needs of PWDs were clearly articulated and presented to the Constituent Assembly (CA). The members of the committee were among others, the following: Hon. Eliphaz Mazima, Hon. James Mwandha, Hon. Alex Ndeezi, Mr. Richard Okia, Mr. James Mwesigye and Mr. Kigenyi Wansolo. The Committee members were all able to contribute to drafting of an advocacy strategy especially about the key issues and demands of PWDs.

However, when it came to the process of feeding the issues into the key Government institutions, Mwandha was the key and lead expert. Having served in several Government institutions and the then National Resistance Council (NRC) equivalent of Parliament, Mwandha was more senior than most of us in terms of how Government systems actually work and how issues

could be successfully pushed on the agenda of the mighty in our country.

Through Mwandha and Mazima, we were able to recruit a network of key allies in both the NRC and CA. We would organise both formal and informal lobbying meetings to sensitise the converts and request them to support the cause of PWDs. The task was not easy and required a lot of patience, endurance and persistence because most NRC and CA members were always too busy to meet us. Mwandha always encouraged us in this challenging task by citing examples of success scored in the past amidst challenging times.

He was always at hand in guiding us on the dos and don'ts of successful lobbying. We had only three PWDs in the NRC but by the time the NRC was dissolved, we had more than thirty of the members on our side in terms of advancing the disability cause. And sometime before the dissolution of the NRC, there was a very critical and contentious debate relating to whether or not PWDs should be represented in the CA. Realizing that our stand was shaky, Mwandha proposed a meeting of our committee with the then NRC Chairperson Al-Hajji Moses Kigongo.

During the meeting, we convinced Hajji Kigongo to accept and allow the motion on the order paper (agenda of meeting) in Parliament.

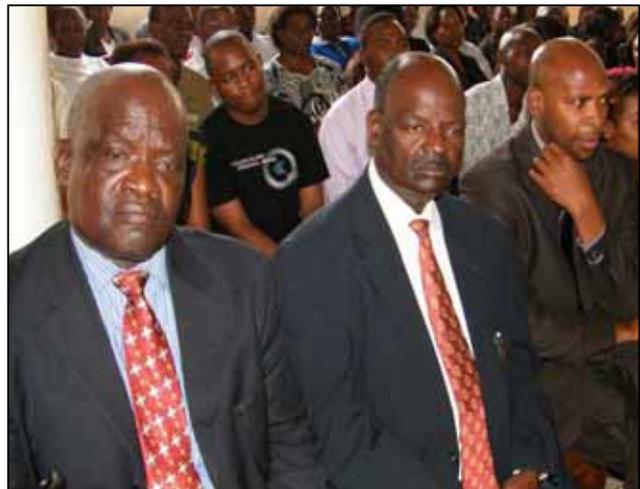
The support of the speaker is very critical on contentious issues especially when you

are not sure of who and how many will support you. Hajji Kigongo accepted and in fact during the debate, supported and sided with the successful historic motion which was moved by Mwandha. The success of this motion was a significant turning point in our advocacy work as it set a precedent in relation to direct representation of PWDs by themselves.

Following the passage of the motion, elections to the CA were organised and one of the senior members of our committee, Eliphaz Mazima, was elected to represent PWDs. Taking advantage of this new development, Mwandha proposed that our committee be expanded to include some friendly CA delegates, increase the frequency of meetings and ally with other interest groups like the women and youth in the CA. The strategy worked so effectively and partly resulted in the securing of the disability friendly provisions you read in the 1995 Constitution today.

Upon expiration of the term of the CA, Mwandha stood for election to represent PWDs in Eastern Uganda and won. He ably served in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament. It is during this period that Parliament - legislating on the basis of the

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MPs representing PWDs Hon. William Nockrach (L) and Hon. Alex Ndeezi (R) during the memorial service



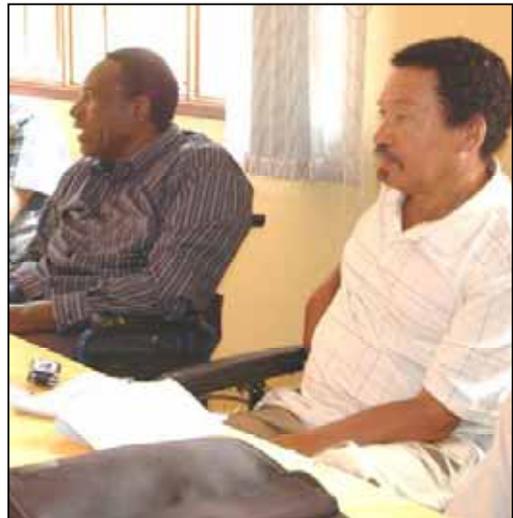
Hon. James Mwandha in 2009 with some Board Members, partners from DBIA and UNAPD staff at the secretariat in Kanyanya



Aggrey Kenn consults with Hon. Mwandha



Hon. Mwandha and partners from DBIA at an Annual General Meeting of persons with acquired brain injury and their caregivers in 2010



Hon. Mwandha with UNAPD vice-chairman Arthur Blick in a meeting with partners.



Hon. Mwandha giving a copy of Accessibility Standards to the head of Makerere University Department of Architecture in 2010.



Hon. Mwandha with Michael Larsen of DHF and Birgit Christiansen of DBIA.

**MISSION: To remove barriers in society that prevent People with Physical Disabilities from enjoying full rights on an equal basis with other citizens**



Uganda Funeral Services staff carrying Mwandha's casket



Elizabeth Kayanga conveying UNAPD's condolences



FDCs Salaam Musumba



Minister Sulaiman Madada



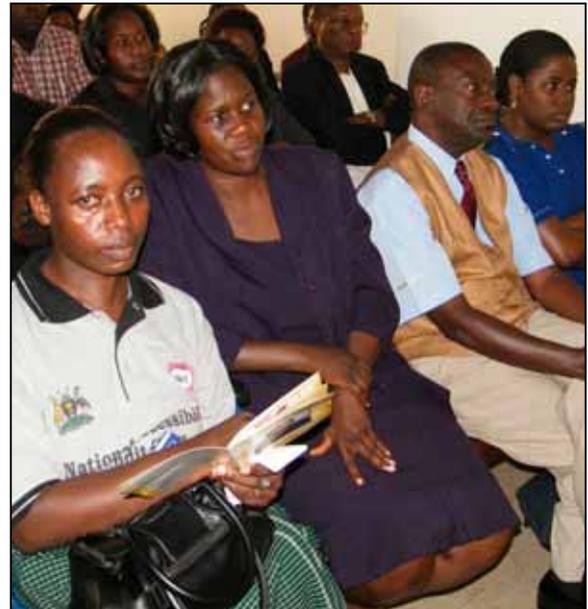
Minister Daudi Migereko



Governor Emanuel Mutebile



Some of Mwandha's children at the burial. RIGHT: UNAPD's Executive Director Meldah Tumukunde at the funeral service





Board member Candria and UNAPD's staff at the funeral



Freda, Marianne and Birgit laying a wreath on the casket



Some of the members of UNAPD, representatives of DPOs and officials from Government at Mwandha's burial

## WHO WAS MWANDHA?

### Personal History

He was Born in Bugweri County, Iganga District in 1937. He was married to Catherine Mwandha and survived by eight children. He acquired the disability at childhood after a polio attack. He initially walked with the support of calipers on the right leg before he continuously weakened and started using a wheelchair.

He was educated up to Masters degree level obtained from the University of Bath, England. He was employed as Principal, National College of Business Studies (now Makerere University Business School) Nakawa; Director, Management Training and Advisory Centre; Company Secretary of former Coffee Marketing Board; Company Secretary of former Lint Marketing Board and Managing Director of former Transocean (Uganda) Limited.

He represented Bugweri County in the National Resistance Council (Parliament) from 1989 to 1996. From 1996-2006, he represented persons with disabilities in Eastern Uganda. He owned an Accountancy and Audit company under the name MMWANDHA & CO. Certified Public Accountants.

### Involvement with NUDIPU

His first contact with organizations of PWDs was made with Mr. Ben Male, the first Programme Manager ADD, when he was co-ordinating the formation of NUDIPU in 1987 where he played several roles as a Board member (1992-95) and as Chairman of the Personnel Committee within that time. He also helped in the formations of several district unions.

### Achievements in Parliament

When he was in National Resistance Council (NRC), he pushed for representation of PWDs by Hon. Eliphaz Mazima in Constituent Assembly that made the Constitution. While in NRC during the discussions of the Parliamentary Elections Statute 1995, he pushed for PWDs to be represented by five members instead of only one as the Bill had suggested. In Parliament he was also able to lobby for improved access as a result of construction of ramps, revamping of the lifts and reconstruction of some toilets to make them accessible.

He was also instrumental in the enactment of the National Council for Disability Act 2003, National Disability Policy, PWDs Act 2006. He also ably contributed to insertion of good disability provisions in the Local Government's Act 1997, University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001 (that provides for affirmative action for PWDs during admission to universities), Parliamentary Elections Act, among others.

### UN Convention

He led the Uganda's delegation to the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Convention on the Rights and Dignity of People with Disabilities from 2002 to 2006. He was a member of a group of Parliamentarians and ex- Parliamentarians who contributed to the compilation of the Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities published by the inter Parliamentary Union.

### International leadership positions held until death

He has been the Chairman of the Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (CDPF) made up of DPOs in the 53 Commonwealth Countries to advocate for the rights of Disabled Persons and promote the ratification and implementation of the Convention. In Uganda he has been Chairman of the National Steering Committee on the implementation of the African Decade for PWDs.

# Mwandha should be declared a hero

BY ALOYSIUS KIRIBAKI

“One thing I wish the DPOs in Uganda could do and do it diligently now that the Government of Uganda has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of PWDs is shadow reporting”, said Hon. James Mwandha on September 27, 2008, two days after Uganda ratified the UN CRPD.

This statement did not make sense to me immediately and given his high IQ and ability to read people’s minds, he realised that I did not understand what he said. He reiterated the same statement the week that followed when we met over the CDPF issues and he explained in detail what it meant. I went home and never thought about it until the day we met again. He said: “Aloysius as DPOs in Uganda, we need to be vigilant and begin preparing ourselves to produce a shadow report in 2010.”

As early as that, this gallant legislator (emeritus) was envisioning the DPOs role in making Government implement the CRPD for the benefit of PWDs. This is one of the things that Mwandha wanted to be done before death stole him away from us. I believe it is something that the disability movement can work on every time Uganda is supposed to report to the UN Committee. We also need to closely monitor Government as it implements the CRPD because we all know that if it is fully implemented, PWDs will live in paradise.

One great thing I liked about Mwandha was his respect for the rights and positions of the people he interacted with. As an intelligent fellow, he was aware of my political stand even when I did not actively participate in the political activities. While he belonged to FDC, no single day did he even say a word to me that I should cross and join him, yet we interacted almost on a daily basis doing disability works both at national and international level. This kind of under-



**Hon. Mwandha (seated) with Disability and Elderly Affairs Minister Hon. Sulaiman Madada during celebrations for Uganda’s ratification of CRPD**

standing and respect for the opinions and rights of others is the legacy I see that as a disability movement should emulate and take on. Divisive politics should not be brought in the vicinity of disability agenda and work.

Mwandha did several great things for this country and the international community. We should therefore request Government to declare him a national hero. We can also come up with an annual memorial lecture held during the disability month (November 3rd – December 3rd) or we come together and author a book about him. All these can be done but it only takes courage and a willing heart.

I request all those reading this article to come up with more ideas that can be shared for the benefit of the many young people Mwandha had a heart for, so that they come in his footsteps and continue advocating for the rights of PWDs.

**Mr. Kiribaki is the Development Manager, Sense International**

## PWDs legislations

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Constitution - enacted several Acts of Parliament providing for protection, promotion and consolidation of the rights of PWDs. The most famous of these laws is the Local Government Act under which we secured a representation of more than 50,000 PWDs in the local councils.

Another important piece of legislation is the PWDs Act 2006 which guarantees a wide range of PWDs rights and which is actually the source of the current special grant for PWDs. The others are Universities and Tertiary Institution Act under which our children, brothers and sisters with disabilities, gain Government sponsorship and admission to universities on affirmative action ticket. The National Council for Disability Act, the Communications Act, Traffic and Road Safety Act are among the many laws to which Mwandha made a great contribution.

It is in view of the above and may other achievements that Parliament in November convened a special session to pay tribute to him. During the debate, the Speaker of Parliament Hon. Edward Ssekandi and many members praised Mwandha for having diligently served not only PWDs and marginalised groups but the entire country as a capable, wise and skillful legislator. Mwandha is no longer with us. However, the legal framework to which he contributed with zeal is still alive and strong. The country and the disability community will miss him while at the same time remain grateful to him for generations to come.

The greatest challenge that he leaves behind remains that of uniting the disability movement to support and consolidate the achievements in the current favourable and positive legal framework to which he enormously contributed.

**Hon. Ndeezi is one of the five MPs representing PWDs in Par-**

# What they said about Mwandha

Hon. James Mwandha died on November 10, 2010 in Mulago Hospital following a heart failure. Many people especially from the Disability Movement sent condolences to UNAPD and to the entire Disability Fraternity some of which are published below:

I received the news of his death with great sorrow having lost Mr. George Daniel, First Deputy Chair of Disabled Peoples' International, Deputy Chair of the Commonwealth Disabled Peoples' Forum and Chair of DPI North America and the Caribbean from Trinidad and Tobago 7 months ago. Allow me to offer comfort to his family, friends and colleagues at home and around the world who respected him for his devotion to working for the continued improvement of the status of persons with disabilities by defending their human rights. We will miss him.

**Leslie A. Emanuel, Regional development Officer Disabled Peoples' International North America and the Caribbean.**

(Mwandha's) friends from the Pacific Disability Forum are saddened by the news of his untimely passing away. We were looking forward to meeting with him at the meeting of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum he was so keen to organise in Australia in the coming year. May the rest of us continue the legacy he has left behind. May his soul rest in peace! **Se-tareki S. Macanawai, Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Disability Forum**

He was such a strong and fruitful man. In fact, he was such a fertile Tree with fruitful branches in the Garden of UN-APD. Where every member from that Garden really enjoyed its fruits. Since the tree bore sweet fruits, whoever ate from it made sure that he/she spread the seeds in the same garden and others spread them outside other



**Ruth Nabasiye**

small gardens, where forever and ever the fertile tree will never be away.

**Ruth Nabasiye, Secretary Wakiso Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities**

Let me give you snippets of what defined this man. We all know he was disabled right from his childhood but what most don't know is that his disability gave him hell during his school days. Young children used to hide the stick that aided his walking, forcing him to frantically look for it while the children laughed at him.

In 2005 Shs5 million was offered to parliamentarians by President Yoweri Museveni as a "sweetener" to remove the two-term presidential limits. Mwandha, a parliamentarian then, refused the sweetener. Now compare him to the clowns we have today who not only avoid parliamentary sessions in droves, but have even toyed with the idea of having their salaries increased. That was the caliber of the man who passed away.

**Part of Robert Kalumba's newspaper column called Common Sense, published in the Daily Monitor of November 23, 2010.**

UNAPD membership and leadership, thank you also for the publicity of the legacy of late Hon. Mwandha. My chal-

lenge which I also think is yours and the entire disability movement is how do replicate those good ideals that the late cherished and lived. How can they shape our own character as organisations and our personalities as individuals in pursuit of building a just and fair society that is free of greed and full of love for one another. I find these ideals to be in short supply in our society.

**James Mwesigye**

It is very sad to see great people such as Hon. Mwandha disappear. He has been a genuine, brilliant, and warm human being. He will be missed for the great work he has done for Uganda and the disability fraternity.

**Anthony Lusaagi, National Coordinator—NADBU**

Indeed death has robbed us of James. He will always be remembered for his wisdom and guidance. May his soul rest in peace!

**Esther Kyoziira, Human Rights Advocacy Coordinator, NUDIPU**

The eloquent honourable Mwandha will be remembered for the many selfless, bold, wise, and courage while fighting for PWDs in Uganda and elsewhere.

**Julius Kayiira, Mental Health Uganda**

It's indeed shocking to learn of the death of our mentor and strong advocate. We as youth with disabilities will greatly miss his expertise and professional guidance. Heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family. May the good Lord rest his soul in eternal peace. The struggle continues.

**Robert Nkwangu, UNAD**

Dear colleagues, as I join U with condolence messages, let me share that His great works have been the highlight of today's Parliamentary Session. All speakers have acknowledged him for shaping and mentoring many legislators, bankers, chartered accountants and

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“He was a disciplinarian,” says Peter Mwandha, one of his sons. “Every end of term, we had what we called a ‘court martial’ at home, where all of us stood in front of him with our school reports and explained every decline and teacher’s comments. Every child had their turn to explain themselves.”

“For starters he was a politician, I’m not. He worked in Parliament, I don’t. He helped so many relatives despite the fact that his immediate family too was big. He was unique. I know I can’t fill his shoes. But I will try my level best.” – **Mwandha’s heir David.**

“Actually we were preparing to leave the hospital that day. He was talking, laughing, the normal him. But death can be so cunning. No one could tell he would leave us that day.” – **Catherine Mwandha – the wife.**

“He was so stubborn. Once he made up his mind, then that was it. He also took his time to make a decision. I would ask him something expecting a quick answer, but he would take

## WHAT THE FAMILY SAID



Some of Mwandha’s daughters and heir David.

his time mauling over the issue!”

Martha Mwandha (his daughter) was in Zambia when the dreaded call came through. “I was in a meeting when I received a call from my husband. He told me my father wasn’t feeling well and had been rushed to the Intensive Care Unit. I thought, ‘Okay, things will get better,’ and I got back to the meeting.”

10 minutes later, her husband called again this time with the dreaded news. “I felt like collapsing. I wanted to leave Zambia as first as I could. I enquired for the first flight out but they told me it was full. I enquired for the next flight and they told me that too was full. I returned to my hotel room. That night was the most difficult night for me,” said a subdued Martha.

“Two things were always on his mind. FDC and the disability movement,” **Rachel his daughter told mourners at a requiem service at All Saints Cathedral.**

### From Page 9

and administrators and human rights/disability activists over the years with his skills, with, commitment and steadfastness in articulating disadvantaged peoples concerns. I pray that we explore and promote his wishes for a better, inclusive and informed disability movement among other works - one of the last thoughts he shared was a program on disability rights and education.

**Paul Ssenteza**

He was frail in body but strong in character and a diplomat in style. The contrast between his personality and physical incapacities was striking... His disability however did not deter him from achieving so much in life... That he was an industrious, honest and a dependable employee is all told by the institutions he worked for through his life, before joining politics as a full time trade in 1989. **Excerpts from obituary published in Daily Monitor, November 22.**

He was a man who was in for “change in the way Uganda is governed” and whose death had left a “bigger burden of saving Uganda from the group of

greedy men and women.” - **Dr Kizza Besigye’s message delivered by Sam Njuba (FDC) at the burial.**

“Government will miss one of those that belonged to the opposition but was very objective in his ideas.” - **Minister of State for Elderly and Disability Affairs Sulaiman Madada.**

It is a great loss to the entire disability rights movement, especially to some of us who have been learning from him on a daily basis. James has been like a father to the young generation of PWDs in Uganda and we will always miss his wise counsel, wisdom and direction. He has served the movement without any reservations and I hope we can be able to continue his legacy.

**Medi Ssengooba, American University, Washington College of Law**

James was a friend and colleague to all of us in the work on the CRPD. I saw him last at our WNUSP general assembly in Kampala in 2009 and wish there could have been more time to spend with him.

**Tina Minkowitz**

He was very well known for his public service, ground-breaking work and

perseverance. His example will be always with us. Let’s work together so the fruits of his dedication remain alive for the posterity. We will send our condolences to his family on behalf of all members and friends of the GPDD. **Maria Reina, Global Partnership on Disability Development**

I have received the shocking news from Uganda of the Death of Mwandha. He has been suffering from Post Polio Syndromes and pressure. The World Disability Movement has lost an asset....Personally Mwandha inspired me and he always welcomed my idea of inclusion of youth with disabilities in the development programs. We shared the same name and he used to tell me in workshops that work hard to impact the world.

**James Aniyamuzaala, Rwampigi, Human Rights programme coordinator Youth with Physical Disability Development Forum**

I have received sad news that Hon. Mwandha passed away. I send my condolence to the staff of UNAPD. My his soul rest in eternal peace.

**Harriet Zansanze**

# UNFINISHED BUSINESS

## The key issues Mwandha did not complete

BY HAMAD LUBWAMA

I was in Masaka representing UNAPD in a meeting organised by NUDIPU to sensitise HIV/AIDS services providers about disability when I got a phone call that Hon. James Mwandha had died. The news was so strange to be true but I had to believe it since it came from an authoritative source. I passed it on to the participants in the meeting but they too hardly believed it for no one had heard that Mwandha was previously unwell.

I had last met him at his home two weeks before when we worked on his article that was published in the previous edition of the newsletter. He told me that he had suggested that the disability fraternity develops a manifesto highlighting their needs and concerns that they want candidates at various political levels to address when they win the elective positions. He was concerned that other vulnerable groups like the women and youth had produced their similar documents but the PWDs who are more vulnerable were silent.

He told me that he was frustrated that no body seemed to have taken on his suggestion as a matter of urgency. He asked me if I could be of any importance to him in this regard and we started debating the matter. That was one of the four most important issues in disability that were on his menu. This very important advocacy innovation died with him as no body is now pushing for it.

The second was making Accessibility Standards part of the forthcoming Building Control Act that is in offing. UNAPD spearheaded the process of developing the National Accessibility Standards that guide players in the construction industry on how to construct buildings and facilities accessible to all people. For these guidelines to be effectively enforced and implemented, there is need to make them part of the law. By the time of Mwandha's death, UNAPD was arranging a meeting with the Ministry of Gender and Ministry of Works and Transport over adoption of the Standards in the Act.

The third issue was the domestication of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that was signed and ratified by the Government of Uganda in 2008. He led the delegation that represented Uganda in the making of the Convention in New York between 2002-2006. He also played a key role to make Uganda ratify the Convention and those of you saw how happy he was when the disability movement was celebrating Uganda's ratification of the Convention and handed over a petition about the same to the Speaker of Parliament in 2008.

Domestication of the Convention may be a far thing but at least he would get some more satisfaction if he had died after Uganda and the disability movement had submitted their reports to the UN about how far the country has implemented the Convention. The Government is making its official report and the disability fraternity is also making their shadow report. Both reports were due for submission in 2010. Mwandha had already started to actively participate in this process but died shortly before it was accomplished. NUPIDU is working on the shadow report while the National Council for Disability was working on the Government's official report.

"Bearing the torch for the disabled," was the headline of an article published about Mwandha in 2009 in the Daily Monitor newspaper. In a song by UNAPD Youth Wing Drama Group - about the many legends in the disability fraternity - he is referred to as "Kamanda waffe" (Our Commander).

Now the torch bearer is gone but we should not allow the torch's light to extinguish because we can not afford to move in darkness. When the Commander dies in a battle field, the good fighters don't withdraw but just get more courage and take over from him. The challenge is up to the disability fraternity to quit the battle of fighting for their rights and all "get killed" or sustain the fight and win. The choice is easy! Isn't it?



Hon. James Mwandha with Michael and Hans Moller of DHF

**MISSION: To remove barriers in society that prevent People with Physical Disabilities from enjoying full rights on an equal basis with other citizens**

# PERFECT CATCH

## Wife Catherine says Mwandha was the best husband

This is part of an obituary published in Daily Monitor after Mwandha's death. His wife, Catherine described him as intelligent, soft-spoken, very understanding and unassuming.

By the time of his death on November 10, 2010, Hon. Mwandha was the Chairman of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum (CDPF), which among others seeks adherence of governments of member countries to international legal instruments on disability. He was also instrumental in the establishment of Busoga University and more recently Busitema University.

One thing many will remember about Mwandha was his eloquence in parliamentary debates. He plunged into political life in 1989, when the then National Resistance Council, the administrative organ of the National Resistance Movement was expanded to include elected members.

He represented Bugweri county in Parliament until 1996 when he relinquished the seat to take up the Eastern seat for PWDs. He had apparently been instrumental in the Constituent Assembly making special provisions for PWDs to have their voice heard and concerns attended to. His crusades on matters of disability cannot be over emphasised. He was most noisy on matters of design of public buildings, which made no special provision for access of people with disabilities. Consequently, where existing buildings only provided for a staircase, new buildings within the city must make provision for either an elevator or a slant elevation for those confined to wheel chairs.

A woman lawyer and activist, Laura Kanusu - who also has a disability - did her clerkship at Parliament. She narrated how almost all institutions including government ones were reluctant to admit them. Their group walked to his office and presented their problem. He quickly made arrangements with Parliament to enable them do their internship. He also got them an office near his. Unfortunately before they could complete their internship, the political tide edged him out of the House in 2006.

Those who remember Mwandha of the House's Committee on Statutory Authorities, Commissions and State Enterprises of 1998 will agree that the late was a figure to reckon with in the anti-corruption fight— always out for transparency and truth. He presided over many probes including one that finally edged then NSSF managing director Abel Katembwe because he was implicated in corruption for the award of the Workers' House contract to Alcon.



Catherine laying a wreath on her husband's casket at All Saints Church Kampala

Before his death he was a silent but very influential member of the FDC. Family members narrate that in spite of his limitations, he always attended meetings especially with FDC leader Dr Kizza Besigye until late hours.

"Two things were always on his mind: FDC and the disability movement," Rachel his daughter told mourners at a requiem service at All Saints Cathedral. It was no wonder that Dr Besigye in a message that was read by party chairman Sam Njuba referred to the late as a man who was in for "change in the way Uganda is governed" and whose death had left a "bigger burden of saving Uganda from the group of greedy men and women".

Minister of State for Elderly and Disability Affairs Sulaiman Madada said, "Government will miss one of those that belonged to the opposition but who was very objective in his ideas." That is something that his wife agrees with. "He was so stubborn. Once he made up his mind, then that was it. He also took his time to make a decision. I would ask him something expecting a quick answer, but he would take his time mauling over the issue!"

When asked how they met and if she received any hostility for dating and eventually marrying a disabled man, she says, "I think people feared to come to me questioning why I was marrying a disabled man. But his character matched the kind of person I wanted. He was intelligent, soft-spoken, very understanding, unassuming! He was the perfect catch."

No doubt these qualities were being honest, objective and fighting for the disadvantaged in life. Mwandha leaves behind a widow and eight children. May he rest in peace.