



COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER- 01/22

**DISABILITY INCLUSION: ABLED DOES NOT MEAN ENABLED. DISABLED
DOES NOT MEAN LESS ABLED**



We are in the thick of winter! Some of our members have experienced massive snowfalls and impassable roads, while others contended with the strong winds brought on by storms Eunice and Franklin. So, I hope you are all safe and well as you read this.

It has been a busy start to the year at the Secretariat. First, we welcomed Eleonora Pastorino, who will intern with us till early July. She has assisted in creating this newsletter, and we are delighted to have her.

Second, for the first time in EU-CORD history, we will hold a combined General Assembly and Advocacy Forum from 29-30th March here in Brussels. It will be good to see old faces again and meet new ones. We have also been involved in, amongst others, the Global Disability Summit, the EU-Africa CSO Forum and the joint International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the European Disability Forum EU submission to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Finally, the main topic of this newsletter is Disability Inclusion which is one of EU-CORD's cross-cutting themes. We start with an introduction to the CRPD before a round-up of the essential learnings from the recently completed Global Disability Summit held in Norway. Then, as usual, we spotlight some of the great work our members are doing on the identified topic of the newsletter before a caution on possible legislation regarding lobbying that affects us all in future. Finally, this newsletter ends with some prayer points on our radar.

Happy reading!

Tabeth Masengu

Advocacy Coordinator

What is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)?



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted in 2006. It is the first binding international human rights instrument to specifically address disability. Its aim is to "promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental

freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity". Inclusion Europe have created a short and catchy video that helps one to understand the CRPD [see here](#).

The Convention is a powerful tool to help people with disabilities, local communities and governments explore ways of fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities by developing and implementing legal, policy and practical measures. As a party to the CRPD, the European Union (EU) has designated such a framework for matters of EU competence, including:

- EU legislation and policy: non-discrimination, passengers' rights, EU funding, etc.
- EU public administration: personnel selection, access to documents, etc. The EU Framework complements [national monitoring frameworks](#), which are responsible for promoting, protecting and monitoring the CRPD in EU Member States.

In March 2022, the [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) starts the second review of the EU. It will examine how the EU implemented the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, since it was evaluated for the first time in 2015. The review starts with the adoption of a document called a "List of issues prior to reporting" that will ask questions on how the EU implemented each article to the Convention.

To inform the Committee, International Disability and Development Consortium (of which EU-CORD is a member) and the European Disability Forum EU submitted an alternative [report](#) which includes suggested questions for the EU.

The Global Disability Summit



The Global Disability Summit (GDS) was held [online](#) on 16 and 17 February 2022 and was co-hosted by the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the governments of Norway and Ghana. In addition, the GDS included a Youth Summit, Civil Society Forum and 91 side events. One side event was co-hosted by our members See You Foundation, ZOA and the Leprosy Mission as part of the Dutch government-funded project We Are Able!.

The Summit involved more than 7000 participants across all regions and professional sections of the world, including but not limited to the UN Secretary-General and seven UN agencies, representatives of 17 governments, and organisations of persons with disabilities (ODPs) and academia.

During the various sessions, the conversation revolved around several flagship topics.

1. The intersectionality between gender and disability. In particular, the need to empower women and girls with disabilities to realise their human rights and fight against discrimination and human rights violations.
2. Climate change and conflicts were addressed as cross-cutting challenges. People with disabilities are often left behind physically, as they might not have the 'privilege' to become refugees or IDPs.
3. The need to rebuild resilient and sustainable health systems that guarantee inclusive health to fight against inequalities between and within societies was stressed by many participants.
4. Regarding education, stakeholders reiterated Support for community inclusion of people with disabilities and strengthening community-based infrastructures, facilities, and services.

Finally, the Summit Secretariat established an accountability mechanism to implement the 1250 [commitments](#) made by stakeholders and help them achieve their promises. For example, one of the commitments was a pledge by the EU of devolving €5 million in funding for the UN Partnership on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNPRPD).

EU-CORD has committed to reducing discrimination and stigmatisation by promoting attitudinal change in communities and across all development cooperation and addressing intersectionalities. To do so, we will move beyond the rhetoric and toward genuine efforts to counter bias around disability, incorporating disability inclusion as a cross-cutting theme in our work, and commit to disability-inclusive humanitarian and development action

MEMBERS IN ACTION

We Are Able!: A five-year programme for the inclusion of people with disabilities in African countries



1 - Training with a group for people with disabilities in South Sudan. Photo by ZOA

Everyone – regardless of disabilities – should have access to basic services and participate in society. That is the aim of We are Able!, a [programme](#) the inclusion of people with disabilities in DR Congo, Ethiopia, Burundi, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda.

The five-year-programme, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, helps people with a disability achieve a sustainable, fully-fledged place in their community to have greater food security. We are Able is a consortium of organisations: ZOA, African Disability Forum, SeeYou, VNGI, The Hague Academy for Local Governance, and The Leprosy Mission.

Lobby and advocacy are important tools for We are Able! to achieve its goals. In 2021, WaA!’s first year, lobby and advocacy focused on connecting with other organisations on three levels.

Firstly, We are Able! works with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in the project countries. For example, We are Able! has provided training to leaders and workers in OPDs and CSOs, and training of trainers, volunteers and community leaders about negotiation skills for disability rights and food security in Ethiopia. In South Sudan, a training was held on lobby and advocacy and accessibility for OPD participants and representatives from WaA! and governments. Similar training has taken place in Burundi and DR Congo.

Secondly, WaA! focuses on connecting local and national advocacy with the international level by sharing good practices with local communities and dialogue with United Cities and Local Governments. During a side event of the Global Disability Summit on 17th February, WaA! organised a panel discussion about “Co-creating inclusive governance for access to basic resources that leaves no one behind”.

Lastly, WaA! carries out lobby and advocacy in The Netherlands by setting up meetings with 11 consortia about disability-inclusive programming and advocacy. The first in this series was held on 1st February, with the director of ADF as one of the speakers.

FIDA focuses on Violence against Women and Girls living with disabilities



2 - Photo taken by FIDA in the DRC

Fida's development cooperation programme ensures that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in and influence the Country's Programmes and their communities. Fida's disability policy confirmed as early as 2010, sets targets for this activity. To realise the rights of persons with disabilities, the intersectionalities in discrimination, particularly based on young age, gender and ethnicity, and the factors that lead to it, are also considered.

In 2021 Fida's advocacy initiatives were also directed towards the often invisible and silent emergency of violence against women and girls with disabilities. For example, Fida was one of the lead partners in an advocacy initiative in the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) in conjunction with the National 16 Days of Activism Campaign on Gender-based Violence (16 Days Campaign). As a result, together with two other Finnish Development Organizations, Abilis Foundation and Felm, a collaboration with the National organising body, the MKUKI coalition, was established. MKUKI coalition consists of 130 key Tanzanian Gender-Based Violence (GBV) stakeholders, including OPDs, in mainland and Zanzibar.

Before the national 16 Days Campaign, Fida, Abilis and Felm supported the MKUKI coalition to conduct accessibility training for GBV stakeholders in URT. The training included contributions from Tanzanian women and youth-led persons with disabilities (OPDs), the Embassy of Finland in Dar es Salaam, Sense International and UNFPA. The purpose of the training was to bridge knowledge gaps on disability-specific violence as a form of GBV experienced by women and girls with disabilities and introduce the stakeholders to tools for ensuring campaign accessibility in physical and virtual spaces.

During the 16 Days Campaign, with the support of Fida and Felm, speakers highlighted the vital role of religious leaders and faith-based organisations in ending GBV against persons with disabilities was highlighted. On 29 November, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) and the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT), a long-term partner of Fida in Tanzania, co-organised an event entitled 'A wealth of knowledge and a wealth of care'. Mr Jonas Lubago, SG of Tanzanian Federation of Disabled People's Organization, made a strong statement about applying 'nothing about us without us' to the research on GBV of women and girls with disabilities. The following day the Tanzanian disability movement and many stakeholders, including UNFPA Tanzania and the Embassy of Finland in Dar es Salaam, held the first-ever national dialogue on ending GBV against persons with disabilities. The event included vital advocacy messages directed at decision-makers from young persons with disabilities from the Youth with Disabilities Community Centre in Tanga, Tanzania. A Policy brief on ending GBV against women and young persons with disabilities, with a clear framework for action, and one of the primary outcomes of the national dialogue. This brief will be used to inform policy and practice in Tanzania.

The Leprosy Mission: championing the rights of persons affected by leprosy

A victory for leprosy voices at the UN's Disability Conference - June 2021

More persons affected by leprosy spoke at the Conference of State Parties (COSP14) than any previous UN Conference. With two side events (one hosted by TLM) and two contributions at the plenary sessions, the voices of persons affected by leprosy were heard at this central disability rights forum like never before. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented TLM from attending the conference in New York. Still, it has opened up new opportunities to have contributions from more people than had been possible pre-Covid. You can read more [here](#).

Taking a petition to the UN Human Rights Council

There are over 100 laws worldwide that explicitly discriminate on the grounds of leprosy. These laws are in countries as varied as India, Singapore, Namibia, the USA, and UAE. In 2021, TLM ran a petition campaign in countries across the world. This petition was then presented to Members of the Human

Rights Council in Geneva at the same time as the UN's Special Rapporteur on leprosy presented to the General Assembly on the very same issue. TLM called for the HRC to remember and bring attention to these discriminatory laws when reviewing the offending countries. TLM are already in initial discussions with one of the countries that may repeal their discriminatory law. Read more [here](#).

In other news- IJM Germany sounds the alarm on a new Register for Lobby Transparency

On March 25, 2021, the German Bundestag passed a law introducing a lobby register to represent interests vis-à-vis the German Bundestag and vis-à-vis the Federal Government (in German: Lobbyregistergesetz).

The public lobby register aims to register interest representatives who contact members of the Bundestag or the federal government to directly or indirectly influence their decision-making processes. The background to this is various situations in the past where politicians were lobbied by NGOs, which were in return funded and “influenced” by corporations. One example often given in this context is to prevent large corporations – such as British Tobacco - from indirectly lobbying politicians through NGOs that are funded by a corporation without publicly available information and directly representing its interests. The lobby register is intended to help strengthen public trust in politics and the legitimacy of the decision-making processes of parliament and government. The aim is to create more transparency regarding the involvement of interest representatives in these processes.

As the law came into force on January 1, 2022, all NGOs in Germany that aim to influence the political decision-making process have to register electronically. The registry is published on a platform with a search function. The registry includes information on:

- Information on all employees in contact with the German government
- Information on annual financial expenditure focusing on lobby work
- Information on annual government grants and subsidies above 20.000 Euro
- Information on annual donations from third parties above 20.000 Euro
- Annual financial statements/accounting report

However, there are some worrying effects as the law means that all annual donations from third parties above 20.000 euros have to be made public. This is critical as not all donors – especially large-scale private donors – want their name, address, etc., to be made public.

While this is currently not EU-wide legislation, history has shown that EU member states often follow the lead of Germany. Despite the departure of Angela Merkel, Germany is still a heavyweight member state in the EU. The adopted lobbying legislation is bound to have ripple effects in the EU. Member states may seek to clamp down on opaque funding of political groups, thus catching innocent NGOs in their crosshairs. It is worth keeping an eye on this possibility in your member state.

Pray



As we all watch in horror as Russia continues to advance on Ukraine, we would like to ask you to pray earnestly. We have members who have local partners in Ukraine, and there are millions of citizens we do not know personally who deserve to live free of war and intimidation. So let us continue to pray for peace, for a cessation of hostilities, for President Putin's heart to be touched with compassion and mercy and for wisdom for allies and other concerned global leaders.