

**THE STATE OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION BY WOMEN & GIRLS WITH  
DISABILITIES**

**THE CASE OF UGANDA**

**A PAPER submitted  
TO  
THE 58<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UN COMMITTEE OF CEDOW**

**On 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland**

**by:  
Guzu Beatrice  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR DISABILITY (NCD)  
P.O Box 26080  
Tel: +256-414-372339  
Cell: +256-772-643084  
Email: [info@ncdug.org](mailto:info@ncdug.org) or [beatriceguzu@gmail.com](mailto:beatriceguzu@gmail.com)**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Council for Disability (NCD) is a public institution established by an act of Parliament cap 114 (The National Council For Disability Act 2003).

NCD is mandated to monitor and evaluate Government and non- Governmental organizations to ensure that policies and programs designed are offering quality service and promoting full participation of persons with disabilities. To do this work well, research studies are commissioned to get deeper insights of the situation at hand.

In this regard, in the year 2011, National Council for Disability conducted a study on the state of Education of Girls with Disabilities in particular and Children with Disabilities in general in four Districts of Uganda (Arua in Northern region, Lyantonde in Central region, Kamuli in Eastern region and Kisoro in Western region). Targeting 200 respondents.

This write up therefore is presenting the findings of the research carried out by NCD, information from Ministry of Education and Sports including abstracts from Uganda Bureau of Statistics, highlighting the state of education for Children with Disabilities in Uganda and factors affecting the right to education by Women and Girls with Disabilities. It will then conclude with recommendations for improving access to education by women and girls with disabilities in Uganda.

### 2. The state of accessing education by Women and Girls with Disabilities in Uganda:

In Uganda, education for Persons with Disabilities was mainly through Special Needs Education which started in 1952. The Colonial Government began providing separate 'Special Education' services for a few children with visual, hearing, learning and motor impairments, since many children and youth with disabilities were not benefiting from the existing educational provision. However, Persons with Disabilities were still generally marginalized by beliefs and attitudes in society, and so developments in this 'Special Education' moved slowly.

The Government introduced Inclusive education in 1997 through the introduction of the Universal Primary Education Policy followed by Universal Secondary Education policy in 2007. This has subsequently become seen as the way to ensure that all learners access and participate in education. All teachers are central to the implementation of this strategy. Steps have been taken to ensure that

Uganda's teachers are better able to teach children with special needs - all those who experience barriers to learning and development - in an inclusive setting.

From 1990 to the time when this research was carried out, Government of Uganda had trained 716 in-service teachers through the full-time Bachelors and Diploma courses, and between 2000 and 2003, 1,451 were enrolled on the Distance courses. The number trained, however, is just a small proportion of the estimated total of 130,000 teachers employed in primary schools.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports, Kyambogo University conducted In-Service Training for teachers at Regional level.

The Government of Uganda has formulated and enacted various Policies and Legislation to promote education of Children with Disabilities and Women and Girls with Disabilities in particular. A few examples are sighted below:

### **The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995)**

Human rights are a central element of the Constitution of Republic of Uganda (1995) which emphasizes protection of human life, and dignity. Objective XVI, under the national objectives and directive principles of state policy, states that society and the State shall recognize the right of Persons with Disabilities to respect and human dignity. Under objective V the State pledges to guarantee and respect Institutions which are charged by the State with the responsibility for protecting and promoting human rights by providing them with adequate resources to function effectively.

An objective xviii (ii) emphasizes the commitment by the state to afford every citizen equal opportunity to attain the highest educational standard possible. Individuals, religious bodies and other non-governmental organizations are accorded the freedom to found and operate educational institutions if they comply with the general educational policy of the country and maintain national standards.

Article 30 provides for right to education for all and states that 'All persons have a right to education'. Article 32 further provides for affirmative action in favor of marginalized groups, including those with disabilities and clause (1) states '... the State shall take affirmative action in favor of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by

history, tradition or custom, for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them. Finally article 35 provides for the rights of persons with disabilities and states in clause (1) that ‘PWDs have a right to respect and human dignity, and the State and society shall take appropriate measures to ensure that they realize their full mental and physical potential

### **National Education Policy 1992;**

The overall policy of the Education and Sports Sector derives from the recommendations of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC 1989), that was subsequently refined into the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE 1992). The policy is under pinned by the current vision and mission of the sector. The vision of the Ministry of Education and Sports is “Quality Education and Sports for All “and the mission is to “guide, coordinate, regulate and promote quality education and sports to all persons in Uganda for National integration, individual and national development”. The GWPE states that PWDs have the right to join a school and level commensurate with their qualification, interests and abilities; choose any subject they are able to do including sciences and be availed equal opportunities for education, training and employment. Hence, the MOES, as the main provider of educational services, recognizes that the Special Needs of PWDs for learning must be met to enable them to participate equally in attaining full education at all levels.

### **The Persons with Disabilities Act (2006)**

The Persons with Disability Act is a good document providing a comprehensive legal protection for Persons with Disabilities.

The Act is in accordance with Article 23 and 35 of the Constitution; to make provisions for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities towards equalization of opportunities. Part 2, Article 5 of the Act provides for a right to quality education by PWDs through inclusive education at all levels. It further provides for formulation and design of educational policies and programs that promote the special needs and requirements of PWDs and give PWDs access to relevant education at all levels, paying particular attention to the requirements of Girls and Children in rural areas. The article also provides for the provision of learning and instructional, materials and assistive devices suitable for learners with special needs. There is provision for structural and other adaptations of all educational Institutions to the needs of PWDs, commitment of not less than 10% of all educational expenditure to the needs of PWDs at all levels and provision of assistive services during examinations.

## **The Universal Primary Education policy (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education policy (USE)**

This provides that parents should give priority to CWDs and the girl-child, while enrolling their children in school. <sup>1</sup>

The University and Tertiary institutions Act 2001 and its amendments. This provides for affirmative action for enrollment of girls and children with disabilities in public universities and Tertiary institutions.

**In order to supplement the Government effort of accessing education to Children with Disabilities, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs and Disabled Peoples Organizations DPOs have contributed greatly as illustrated in the examples below:**

ANMPCAN plays a role in prevention against child abuse and neglect through research, advocacy, service delivery and networking with other agencies working with children and communities for sustained impact.

Operation Days Work (ODW)

It's a project under Uganda National Association of The Blind (UNAB). Its aim to promote inclusive and quality education for young visually impaired learners in Northern Uganda. The project operate d in 6 districts

Arua, Gulu, Lira, Apac among others. ODW offers quality education to young learners between 6 to 22 years. It procures learning materials such as Perkins Brailers to blind learners which are costly to students at a cost of shs2.5 millions. OWD aids CWDs to learn practical science by providing adapted Skeleton for visually impaired learners, dental formulas and goal balls for sports.

Arua district for the deaf offers Sign language trainings to improve communication and learning of deaf children.

Arua association of the physical disabled carries out advocacy to increase the number of children with disabilities in school.

Doctors with Africa pay fees for disabled children, provide scholastic materials and medical care, walking aids, white canes, hearing aids.

Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) pay fees for some Children with Disabilities in schools and provide scholastic materials,

QUAMA in conjunction with Doctors of Africa carries out surgeries, they give amputees artificial limbs.

Peace Education Trust Uganda (PET-Uganda) it supports Rwaramba Secondary School unit for Deaf Children. It pays salaries for their two Sign Language interpreters, hires for them a house for accommodation and sustains their feeding.

Compassion a faith based NGO; they provide school fees, scholastic materials and uniforms

Sight Savers International has supported schools that have units for Children with Disabilities, in Kamuli District they have trained teachers in identification of Children with Visual Impairments, provided scholastic materials like Perkins Braille's, Braille papers and two computers.

Plan International is operating in Kamuli, the NGO supports construction of class rooms and they consider accessibility of Children with Disabilities.

The Kisoro Trust Fund has been supporting Children with Disabilities in Kisoro District; it was supporting Deaf Children who were studying at Deaf Unit at Seaseme Primary School who were later transferred to Kisoro Demonstration School.

The Uganda's National Development Plan (NDP), 2010/11-2014/15 indicates that 10% of school-going age children in Uganda have special needs thus requiring Special Needs Education. However, the UNICEF (2012) Annual Report indicated that that only 5% of the children with disabilities are able to access education within an inclusive setting of the regular schools whereas 10% access education through special schools and annexes.

Currently, the Government Of Uganda (GOU) promotes a twin track approach to provision of education for people with disabilities that is promoting both inclusive education and special needs education where it is needed. Furthermore, the draft Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy

(2011) provides for a number of approaches for delivering special needs education. These include home based care programs, special schools where children with severe and often multiple impairments receive specialized support in methodology, instructional materials and assistive devices. Others include Units/Annexes where children are integrated within regular schools but targeting learners with particular disabilities and inclusive schools where children with special needs including but not limited to children with disabilities study with other children. In Uganda, emphasis has been put on promoting inclusive education.

For that matter, according to Ministry of Education and Sports official records, all the 21,000 schools in Uganda practice Inclusive Education by admitting learners with special education needs. In addition, there are 138 special education units in the country (49 for those with Hearing Impairments, 38 for those with Mental/intellectual impairments, 8 for those with physical impairments and 43 for learners with visual impairments). In addition, the government has constructed four regional special needs education schools: one in Gulu for children with physical disabilities, Mukono for children with visual impairments and two secondary schools for the Deaf in Wakiso and Mbale Districts respectively.

The 2013 Uganda Bureau of Statistics illustrates the enrolment of children with disabilities in Primary and Secondary school for the period 2007-2010 as below:

**Table of enrolment of Primary schools pupils with Special Needs (2008-2010)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Class</b>					
<b>P1</b>	38,169	40,023	40,895		
<b>P2</b>	28,502	30,430	31,263		
<b>P3</b>	30,828	36,528	34,847		
<b>P4</b>	29,572	33,796	35,128		
<b>P5</b>	24,881	28,287	27,781		
<b>P6</b>	19,585	21,986	22,233		
<b>P7</b>	12,000	13,302	12,871		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83,537</b>	<b>204,352</b>	<b>205,018</b>	-	-

**Source:** UBOS Statistical abstract, 2013

**Table of enrollment in Secondary school students with Special Needs (2007-2010)**

Year/ Class	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total	% of enrolment
<b>2007</b>	2,990	2,555	2,533	2,125	1,054	846	<b>12,103</b>	1.3

<b>2008</b>	2,830	2,689	2,128	1,831	862	805	<b>11,145</b>	1
<b>2009</b>	3,275	3,052	2,897	2,083	1,172	939	<b>13,418</b>	1.1
<b>2010</b>	3,208	3,011	2,632	2,246	1,053	843	<b>12,993</b>	1.1
<b>2011</b>							-	
<b>2012</b>							-	

**Source:** UBOS Statistical abstract, 2013

#### **4. Factors affecting access to Education by Children with Disabilities in general and Women and Girls with Disabilities in particular:**

There are several factors affecting access to education by Children with Disabilities which include among others the following:

##### **(a) Inadequate trained Special Needs Education teachers:**

Teachers trained in Special Needs Education abandoned the skill due to low remuneration yet SNE requires extra attention.

Teachers also used the opportunity to get more qualified which helped them to get promoted to Head teacher positions; thus leaving the classroom activities. This became more evident with the closure of EARS project that was supported by DANIDA, the Special Needs Education program that was running in 48 Districts was left to Government to handle; the Project lacked resources and closed completely. In Kamuli District the Offices of EARS are now used for Education Departmental Offices for the District and the Car is no longer operational, in Arua District, the Offices were used by the RDC till when ODW project under UNAB came in and the Disability movement in Arua lobbied and got the Offices for the Project Operations in the area.

Special Needs Education teachers are at times place in schools with no Special Units or in a Schools with Special Seeds that not of their specialty for example in Arua District a teacher trained to deal with pupils of Visual Impairment is posted in Arua Demonstration School where there is a unit for Children of Hearing Impairment.

##### **(b) Inadequate Funding:**

Education of Children with Disabilities has inadequate funding yet all its services are costly. The Disability budget is very low and is very conditional yet the District Local revenue major goes to



Council activities on top of which the subvention grant takes long to be released to the Schools despite it being meager.

There is little Government support in form of Subvention Grant which is irregular in all Districts. The inclusive schools have been heavily affected since there is no special support given to them by Government to cater for the Children with Disabilities in those schools. Also UPE program is not worthy to support a Child with Disability, per term each Child in UPE School is funded between 700= to 1200= per term which can not even be used to buy one ream of Braille papers for a blind child.

(c) There is in adequate supply and lack of scholastic materials to use mostly by Children with Visual Impairment in the four Districts that were visited.

Scholastic materials like Braille papers are not provided by Government since they are not on policy, a ream costs not less than 30,000/= which parents can not afford to buy for their Children yet the Government is not providing the papers. One of the respondents said *“Schools have resorted to use of manila papers which they cut to the size of Braille papers and use to Braille notes; however these have posed a major challenge of spoiling the Braille machines and the brailed work fade way in a short time since the paper is not meant for that work”*.

(d) Lack of assistive devices such as wheelchairs, white canes, hearing aids, calipas, crutches, hearing loops to mention but a few.

Assistive devices are very expensive coupled with the general poverty of most parents who can not afford School fees and assistive devices.

This has affected parents and end up not taking their Children to School. For those who have gone to school the rate of School drop out is high, other Children have only stopped at Primary seven, the parents can not afford the costs of taking Children to Secondary Schools that have units for Children with Disabilities.

(e) Inaccessible School Environment:

Accessibility is another challenge, this comes with the way buildings are constructed, the distances from their homes and the toilet designs. Sanitation and Hygiene is poor in Schools, this affects Girls with Disabilities more since they require more hygienic places.

Girls with disabilities have a high risk of dropping out of school when they get into adolescence, when they start menstruating, parents fail to offer guidance on what to do, they also never give them sex education, the girls become unhygienic, they are stigmatized by their counterparts who have no disability, they have no sanitary towels to use thus end up deserting schooling.

**(f) Negative attitudes of parents and the community:**

Disabled children have been attached to organizations and are never appreciated and owned by their parents- they are generally discriminated from other children in the homes. Parents and Community ignorance towards the usefulness of CWDs has increased the negative attitude towards CWDs.

Stigmatization by the community and fellow Children who brand them names, this was reported in all the four Districts that were visited. Children with Disabilities get traumatized in the process and end up dropping out of School.

**(g) Sexual abuse** though it is at low levels, there was one case in Arua where a Girl with Disability got impregnated by a sighted boy in their homestead where she lived. Also there is another girl in Ediofe Girls who was convinced to give in for sex so that she can gain her sight and ended up getting pregnant too.

**(h) Transport** is a challenges since the road network is poor, there is an “I do not care attitude” by other road users towards CWDs are often are knocked with in the roads mostly at crossroads. Accidents on the roads while going to school has led to increased school drop outs due to fears to loose the lives of loved ones by the parents and the victims also have decided to stay at home to avoid more accidents, there is no training given to motorists and cyclists on white cane usage and its rules in order to respect those who use it

Feeder roads in rural areas are not friendly for wheel chair users because they are full of potholes.

(i) Inadequate coordination between Ministry of Education and Local Governments has posed a challenge to Special Needs Education, this was sighted in all the four Districts where by some of the school that have units for Children with Disabilities have never received subvention grants, others received once yet the MOES department of Special Needs Education reported that some of the schools with Special Needs Units have never submitted their accounts to the accounts general so the money end up being re-banked with Ministry of Finance.

(j) Inadequate staffing for Inspection of Education of Children with Disabilities at District level.

For example, in Arua District, 5 years back the Department had 3 Inspectors and one was specific for SNE, as of now there is no one to handle SNE. The DOE urged that at least 3 Inspectors are required to cater for SNE in the following ways; one for Mental, Visual and other one for the Blind. One head for Special Needs Education cannot know all categories and in Uganda no training is given to multi-task. If at all that Inspector gets any problem, the unit will be non-operational. Inadequate staffing at district level has been reported to those concerned with recruitment but it ends up in lip service with out proving a service and it worsened due to restructuring affecting SNE heavily.

(k) Sign Language and tactile Interpreters are still glaringly lacking in Schools with an example of Rwaramba secondary school where there are seven boys in school with only two Sign Language Interpreter yet the students are in different classes four in S.4 and three in S.3 respectively.

## **5. Recommendations for minimizing factors affecting access to education by Children with Disabilities in Uganda:**

The following recommendations are necessary for minimizing the factors hindering education of children with disabilities:

- Adoption of special needs/inclusive education policy in Uganda with its regulations;
- Allocation of direct funds from Ministry of Education to cater for Education of Children with Disabilities;
- Data collection, data management system to be in place in order to easy the flow of information and to help ascertain the needs of special needs education per district so that all children with disability needs are catered for accordingly since their needs vary according to disability category, gender and family background.

- Awareness raising to Parents of Children with Disabilities to appreciate Education of their Children and take them to school;
- Sign Language be introduced in Teacher Training Colleges as part of the regular Curriculum;
- Procurement of Scholastic materials such as Braille paper, Perkins, Brailers and others be provided by Ministry of Education;
- Train more Special Needs Teachers and deploy them to various schools. The deployed Special Needs Teachers need to be appointed to head the Budget Departments in their respective Schools in order to give priority to Special Needs and enable equality.
- Government and Civil Society Organizations should collaborate to uplift the plight of Children with Disabilities through Special Needs Education, the collaboration will help to reduce duplication of services, planning and budgeting for the needs of Children with Disabilities.