



# National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 03 | Issue 01 | June 2020



## *A Transition in Leadership*

Greetings from NUWODU. The first quarter of 2020 has been a year of transition for NUWODU and her leadership. The 5th General Assembly conducted earlier this year saw a change in leadership in the Board of Directors and turned out to be a great success. As an organization, we are witnessing a steady growth in the number of expressions of interest from development partners both locally and internationally due to the good reputation of the organization. NUWODU would not be the organization that it is if it were not at the forefront of advocacy for the rights of women and girls with disabilities. A call goes out to those in line with our agenda and wish to partner or volunteer with us to come on board. May the good Lord protect all of us.

Ms. Achayo Rose Obol, BOD Chairperson

## *Inside This Issue*

PG. 2

Adapting to COVID-19 in the workplace

PG. 3

The injustice faced by girls with disabilities after surviving sexual violence.

PG. 4

A renewed hope for the future of a woman with a disability and her son.

## Thriving Through COVID-19



December 2019 witnessed the outbreak of the coronavirus in China. The viral infection spread across nations like wildfires prompting the World Health Organisation to declare the coronavirus (COVID-19) as a global pandemic. As May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, in Uganda, 457 have been confirmed as cases of COVID-19.

Available data suggests that COVID-19 affects women more severely. Evidence from outbreaks like COVID-19 indicates that women and girls face more negative impacts than men. Needless to stress that this will double when it comes to Women and Girls with Disabilities. There is the risk that gender gaps could widen during and after the pandemic and that gains in women's and girls' accumulation of human capital, economic empowerment, and voice agency, built over the past decades, could be reversed.

However, the secondary effects of the pandemic on domestic violence, employment, livelihoods, sexual and reproductive rights, education, and unpaid care work have disproportionately impacted women and girls with disabilities, threatening to roll back the efforts attained as affirmative action gains.

Since the very first case was reported in Uganda, in March, NUWODU has taken a number of actions to prioritize the rights of women and girls with disabilities in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic— as they are among the marginalized communities who are most likely to see their livelihoods evaporate, their healthcare needs overlooked, and their lives upended during a crisis.

NUWODU has adapted its work plan to fit the current climate of lockdown by continuing to consult women and girls with disabilities through hotlines, ensuring information regarding how to stay safe reaches this vulnerable group.

Intimate partner violence is being called to attention as, based on global trends, this is most likely to escalate along with the sexual exploitation of women and girls due to food shortages at the household level.

You, I, and the colleagues we work with in the disability sector worldwide are aware that the problems our work addresses will be exacerbated by Covid-19. Further, the worst impacts of the pandemic will not be equally borne.

As our country remains under lockdown, livelihoods are being swept away, with the greatest burden of care and domestic labour falling on the shoulders of women, especially those with disabilities. Pre-existing intersecting discriminations shall conspire to erode health equity, economic resilience and compress civil society space further. And, tragically, violence against women and girls shall increase for the biggest percentage of women and girls with disabilities.

We do hope that this read is not just to peruse through the works of NUWODU but bring about a deeper appreciation of the innovative modes the pandemic has opened our eyes and heart to.

Enjoy a good read.

Betty Achana,  
Executive Secretary



## *Widening the Space of Persons with Disabilities in Education and ICT*

In 2017, the Uganda Communications Commission carried out a national survey titled, ‘Access and Usage of ICTs by Persons with Disabilities’ and disseminated its findings through a report released in 2018 under the same title. The report publicized that the ratio of male to female respondents was 55.8% to 44.2%, while that of rural to urban population of location was 48.7% to 51.3%. The report further revealed that the number of female persons with disabilities actively using ICTs and its related components like the Internet was dismally low compared to that of males with disabilities.

Women and girls with disabilities had limited knowledge and access to ICTs which stagnated their empowerment and denied them the right to access to information as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In order to bridge the gap between information and usage of ICTs among women and girls with disabilities, NUWODU, in partnership with the Uganda Communication’s Commission launched “Widening the Space of Persons with Disabilities in Education and ICT” with the ultimate aim of equipping women and girls with disabilities basic training in ICTs through digital literacy.



Figure 1: Women and girls with disabilities at the launch of the project

## *Liberating Women and Girls with Disabilities from Gender-Based Violence*

With unwavering support from Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA), NUWODU brought together potential stakeholders to help strengthen structures of redress when it comes to Gender Based Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Pader and Koboko.

The district leadership starting from the local government, Koboko and Pader district women with disabilities associations and civil society organizations operating within the two districts committed their support to liberate Women and Girls with Disabilities from Gender Based Violence at the project’s inception meeting.

By working with the Local Government and women with Disabilities structures at districts and grassroot levels, ending Gender Based Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Koboko and Pader shall be attained.



Figure 2: Local Government partners and NUWODU BOD and staff member pausing for a photo after LG Officials signing a Memorandum of Understanding

## *The Injustice Faced by Girls with Disabilities*

On the dawn of 10th /5/2020, Sarah (not real name) a 14-year-old girl with epilepsy and nodding syndrome met the worst fate that could happen to a girl. A 43-year-old man allegedly living with HIV/AIDS sexually abused her at the home she shared with 3 other people that were nonrelatives under pretense that Sarah's father had sent for her. When the occupants of the house denied his claim, the suspect forced his way into the house, beat and dragged Sarah out of the house.

The man with whom Sarah was staying with tried to protect her but was defeated in the scuffle. The suspect got ahold of Sarah and took her inside Pakwach park where he proceeded to rape her twice before fleeing the scene and leaving her in the cold. Abused and disoriented, Sarah managed to find her way to the police station to report the case.

A medical examination carried out proved that she had been raped and was immediately given PEP since the suspect was alleged to be HIV positive.

The suspect was apprehended on the noon of 13/05/2020. After three days' worth of investigations, he was summoned to court in the presence of Sarah and her biological father. Sarah's father was encouraged to negotiate with the perpetrator for a huge settlement to which he refused. He sought confirmation from the perpetrator that it was he who had raped his daughter.

On confirming that he was the one that had raped Sarah, the perpetrator was set free. Dissatisfied with the justice system, Sarah's father sought support from leaders for Persons with Disabilities in Nwoya district local government that in turn reached out to NUWODU.

NUWODU is in the process of gathering evidence that would lead to the re-arrest of the perpetrator for justice to take place.

## *One of my Own*



**Figure 3: Ms. Regina and her daughter Prosy in front of their grass-thatched house**

Regina Aceng, a 67-year-old widow and mother to Adokorach Prosy, a 20-year-old girl with mental impairment is a member of Gwok Lapur farmers group in Olinga Sub-Parish, in Pabbo Sub-County, Amuru district.

Ms. Aceng and her child with mental challenges faced many challenges such as hunger and starvation, no proper accommodation to the extent that, they were made to share accommodation with a goat. The lack of thought regarding their hygiene, the little value attached to Prosy as a girl coupled with the negative attitudes by the community, made life unbearable for both Aceng and Prosy.

Fortune came in the life of Prosy when her mother was identified to join the farmers group because of her disability. This marked her journey to an improved livelihood for she was part of a community sensitization and awareness raising training on disability (about self, family, community stigma and promotion of inclusion in decision-making).

As a result, Ms. Aceng was able to construct a grass thatched house for Prosy, the community changed their attitude towards her and above all she was able to show her love to her daughter, Prosy. In her own words, "I was only thinking when she will die, because I was looking at her as a burden to me. But with the training I got, I learnt to accept her as one of my children and I am doing what it takes to ensure that she lives a decent life."



Figure 4: Ms. Babirye at her temporary shelter with the BOD Chairperson of NUWODU

### *Renewed Hope for the Future*

The sun had not risen in May 2020 when Babirye Felista’s life changed. Dressed in a white-brownish coat, Babirye, a woman with a physical disability sat at the front of the temporary shelter put up by her brother just after the start of the lockdown due to the COVID19 outbreak in Uganda.

“I’m really, really happy.” Said Babirye. Alternating between anxiety and excitement upon receipt of welfare items from National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda. Because of her disability, she could neither work nor look after herself. And marriage was out of the question due to the rape that resulted into the birth of her son Ligan.

Life for Babirye has not been easy after the loss of her parents. She was left in the hands of her brother who migrated from Kamuli district to Mukono as a road construction worker where he got displaced. Being a woman with a disability, Babirye found doors opened for her at National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda. She received a donation of 500,000 Ugandan Shillings to help her construct a modern house on land that was bought and registered in hers and her son’s name.

### *The Cost of COVID19 Measures for a working woman with a Hearing Impairment*

What started out like a short break, turned out to be a nightmare. At the beginning, the phone kept on ringing. “But can’t you get someone to receive my calls or speak to me yourself?” Those are some of the many questions people kept asking. The burden of working from home without a sign language interpreter was so irritating and stressful at the beginning. When you have a hearing impairment, you have to constantly remind people you are not able to hear, you are at home, you do not have access to a sign language interpreter – so please send text.

With time, the number of calls reduced. Everyone started adjusting to text messages. Of course, I thought I was the only one feeling the high cost of sending SMS. A colleague said, for us who can make calls, we are lucky, it is much more expensive to send SMS than make phone calls.

The COVID 19 work from home rules created a big social divide for persons with hearing impairment like me and saw me spend thousands on airtime than before. If you do not have access to smart phone, airtime, and data bundles, you missed out on so many vital information. It is very difficult to work from home. Each day you must make sure you have credit on phone.



Figure 5: Ms. Aciro Susan at a panel discussion on NTV

## Exercising Skills and Potential



My name is Rose Nakiwunga. I have a visual impairment due to congenital cataracts. I have a bachelor's degree in guidance and counselling. I am a volunteer at National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda. I am privileged to say it was a wonderful experience for me. The staff are so welcoming making it a conducive working environment. Volunteering gave

Figure 6: Ms. Rose Nakiwunga

me the opportunity to exercise my potential by engaging in field and office related activities that I thought positioned me in the competitive world of work.

While at the office, I interacted with new people which enabled me polish my interpersonal and communication skills, improve my computer skills with the help of assistive devices (jaws), put classroom knowledge into practice, discover more abilities and learn in a thriving work environment.

Putting into practice classroom knowledge helped me believe that I can do what others do using my computer regardless of my sight problems. NUWODU is so hands on with her volunteers that surprisingly, in the first week of my volunteer-ship, I was assigned to attend a talk show at Mama FM to discuss the status of women and girls with disabilities in Uganda. I found this interesting since it involved raising awareness to the public regarding the capabilities of women and girls with disabilities, which I believe is part of my career.

I also got the opportunity to be interviewed by two TV stations that is to say; NBS Television and Spark Television where I shared experience and recommendations where necessary as a person with a disability on behalf of others. This exposed me to the public hence uplifting my competence in portraying the good image of NUWODU as an umbrella organization for women and girls with disabilities in Uganda.



“A society where girls and women with disabilities live dignified lives”



[www.nuwoduganda.org](http://www.nuwoduganda.org)



[www.facebook.com/nuwodu.uganda](https://www.facebook.com/nuwodu.uganda)



[www.twitter.com/nuwodu](https://www.twitter.com/nuwodu)

Editor: Shamim Nampijja  
Communications

Copyrights: National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda  
All photos used under consent by National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda

