

LOCAL GOVERNANCE BRIEFER

A Product of the Local Government Councils Scorecard Initiative

Leaving No One Behind: The Parish Development Model Should Benefit Persons With Disabilities (PWDs)

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The government continues to improve the recognition and targeting of its programs towards improving the well-being of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The 2014 National Population Census noted that PWDs were at 12.4 per cent of the Ugandan population while the 2017 Functional Difficulties Survey noted that PWDs are 16.5 per cent of the Uganda population. Uganda Population and Housing Census 2014 showed that disability was more prevalent amongst women (15 per cent) than men (10 per cent); higher in rural areas (15 per cent) than in urban areas (12 per cent). The 2014 census found that the majority of persons with disabilities were subsistence farmers (73.7 per cent compared to 61.6 per cent of PWDs (IDS, 2019). The Uganda Bureau of Statistics National Household Survey 2009/2010 by UBOS found that poverty rates in households with a person with a disability were 30 per cent higher than in households without a person with a disability. Furthermore, the incomes of persons with disabilities are often less reliable and stable than those of persons without disabilities, which increases their vulnerability to shocks (Rubangakene, et al., 2016).

In 2006, the United Nations published its landmark Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities intended to guarantee among other things, the rights of people with disabilities to live independently and to be included in the community (UN, 2006). This Convention stresses the critical need to ensure that people with disabilities have access to economic empowerment opportunities through gainful work in an environment that

is inclusive, equitable, and accessible. The government of Uganda has implemented several poverty reduction interventions to uplift the standards of people.

According to data from the programme MIS (Government of Uganda, 2019), 6,770 young persons with physical disabilities (persons with other disabilities are not mentioned) have been reached by the programme so far, which is 2.8 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries. People with multiple or several disabilities are eliminated in this category given the difficulty in accessing the funds. According to the programme's MIS data from the MGLSD, 27,164 women with disabilities have so far benefited from the programme, which is 23 per cent of total participants to date. However, the research found that overall, women with disabilities do not find the programme very accessible or inclusive. Although the Special Grant was an alternative source of getting funds, PWDs could not easily access the fund because of the limited funding, very few groups in a district can benefit at a time. Moreover, the benefits provided were too limited to be meaningful. (MoGLSD, 2020).

PWDs are among the vulnerable in almost all communities in Uganda. It is important that like everyone else, they are empowered to live independently and participate in all aspects of life. This can be done by ensuring access to services and eliminating all barriers and obstacles that hinder this access. Some people opine that helping marginalized groups such as women, PWDs, the elderly in income-generating activities is probably starting point in poverty eradication in communities and parishes (Kibiike, 2021).

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Legislation on the inclusion of PWDs in Uganda

There is government willingness to include the PWDs in the national development agenda and this is evident in the adoption of international and national policies such as SDGs; the Third National Development Plan (NDP III) which commits to design, implement and follow up the integration of human rights and disability responsive policies; the Social Development Sector Plan (SDSP1) 2015/16-2019/20 that emphasizes the need for social protection and empowerment of the vulnerable groups of which the PWDs are among, and the 1995 Constitution (provisions in the State and Policy Objectives XV1 on Recognition of Rights of Persons with Disabilities to respect, Objective XX1V on Development of Sign Language), Article 32 on Non-discrimination on basis of disability, among others, Article 35(i) and (ii) stipulates the Right to respect and human dignity and; Taking appropriate measures to ensure their full mental and physical potential respectively, amongst others.

The National Employment Policy for Uganda 2011 recognizes that the employment of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, is important for wealth creation and poverty eradication. Other relevant legislation includes the 2007 Equal Opportunities Act, the 2006 Employment Act, the 2011 Employment Regulations, the 2000 Workers' Compensation Act, and the 2008 Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training Act, as well as provisions for quotas and tax incentives under the Persons with Disabilities Act. Sections 9(6[b]), and 13(1) The Public Finance Management Act, 2015 articulates provisions that relate to the implementation of Gender and Equity Certificate Government approach two thronged mainstreaming PWDs issues and specialized services to persons with disabilities for inclusive development. The National Policy on Disabilities, 2006, provides a human rights-based framework for responding to the needs of persons with disabilities (DPOD-NUDIPU, 2016). The above provides an appropriate legal, policy and institutional context within which the PDM will be implemented.

Experience from Past Poverty Alleviation Programs on How PWDs Benefited

To fight poverty and increase rural people's productive capacity, generate additional value, and provide market access for farmers and small business entrepreneurs, the government of Uganda pursued various policies such as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the Plan

for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA), and the Rural Development Strategy (RDS) among others. Despite Uganda's excellent policy formulation process, its benefits have largely not filtered through to grassroots structures, predominantly the decentralized structures at the district and sub-county levels where a lot of policy implementation takes place. Often the vulnerable and particularly the PWDs are not privy to the beautiful policies. While they are often included in the target groups of some of these policies, the hurdle is seen when it comes to implementing the strategies and policies that are inclined to them. For instance, apart from mentioning PWDs as a focus group, there was no concrete strategy on how to have them fully participate in the PEAP or at least to be beneficiaries. At the time, it was an uphill task to intervene on issues PWDs and impact on the same group because there was no data available regarding how many they were. Also, the inclusion of the PWDs with their various disabilities was not catered for in some programs such as PMA. As for the YLP, access is available to those with a limited disability, however other disabilities such as the deaf and blind are not able to access the program because there is no provision in the structure to make the funds inclusive.

While there are baselines for women i.e. 30 per cent, the PWDs do not have an outreach target. According to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD, 2020), district focal points submit quarterly reports to the MoGLSD against key performance indicators, such as the number of groups, the number of women. However, youth with disabilities are not a specific target, and this is not reported against them. While efforts were made to ensure that the youth with disabilities access the YLP, they faced many challenges such as writing proposals, and yet their literacy levels are low. Also, the groups should consist of members of the same village yet there might not be many Persons with Disabilities in the same village to form a group. The program targets youth between 18-30 years but deliberate and specific efforts were not made to offer targeted support to Special Interest Groups youth with disabilities.

Experience from UWEP indicates that although UWEP has larger credit access amounts than the Special Grant, it is a loan and this hinders women with disabilities. Also when the women make the application, the process is a long and tedious one and requires a lot of movement which is quite difficult for women with disabilities. The UWEP comprehensive manual promises that, "the Programme interventions will as much as possible be sensitive to and have special considerations for

women with disabilities.” Much as there is mention of Persons with Disabilities as a vulnerable group, there is no further guidance to ensure inclusion of the Persons with Disabilities. It omits the quotas or how targets of inclusion of such persons with disabilities who have been included in the program will be met neither on how they will be monitored. In addition, the personnel in charge of the program have not received the necessary training on how to deal with persons with disabilities.

Implementation of the Parish Development Model

Given that the goal of the PDM is socioeconomic transformation based on improved productivity of households and enterprises at the parish level, special groups like women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) will be given priority during the implementation of the Parish Development Model. (Luyomya, 2021). However, picking lessons from past interventions, a clear strategy on how PWDs should benefit needs to be put in place to ensure effective participation.

Furthermore, the PDM has eight principles among which is the principle of inclusion and equity that states: LED shall be inclusive and take a value chain approach (including women, youth, smallholder farmers, and other agri-micro, small-medium enterprises). So, the promise is that there shall be the inclusion of the vulnerable in the model. A lot of development literature has pointed out that nobody is more interested in inclusion than those excluded themselves. The excluded will ensure that they are included if only they have power. Inclusion means that all participants have power and to have power means having an effective or decisive say. To have a say, the minimum requirement is to have a centre of convenience like the “Parish Development Model”. The nearer government service/programs the smaller voices are heard (Kibiike, 2021) Whereas the Parish Development Model brings services nearer to the community, no one even PWDs must be left behind but strategies are put in place to ensure that they are actively involved in this model.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For the Parish Development Model to benefit PWDs, a deliberate effort in dealing with structural impediments in the system; such as the non-functional parish development committees, inaccessibility in terms of communication with the various stakeholders, and lack of inclusion in planning, decision making, implementation and monitoring of the PDM. It is also imperative that the actual numbers of PWDs are taken into consideration and assess how many of them are

being impacted by the program. Therefore, this can be achieved in the following ways:

- The Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development should ensure that the monitoring tools of the PDM include indicators of PWDs, as well as disaggregated data on their poverty, social and economic situations. For example, how many PWDs male and female have had access to the funds and have been reached through the Parish Development Model. This will help in identifying how many PWDs have been reached and those impacted. This will facilitate continued advocacy on disability researches and surveys to make sure they are catered for.
- The Equal Opportunities Commission should ensure that The Equal Opportunities Commission Act, 2007 is implemented so that PWDs with specialized skills are recruited. While recruiting, parish chiefs for example the Ministry of Public Service and Local Governments should include PWDs. Also, special care should be taken to recruit those knowledgeable in issues of the PWDs. This will help in dealing with the interpretation of some documentation especially those who are deaf and blind but also help deal with stigma issues and mindset change.
- Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development should ensure that the monitoring tools of the PDM include indicators of PWDs, as well as disaggregated data on their poverty, social and economic situations. For example, how many PWDs have been reached, which kinds of disabilities do they have, which areas do they come from, their literacy levels and the like. This will help in identifying how many PWDs have been reached and those impacted. This will facilitate continued advocacy on disability researches and surveys to make sure they are catered for.
- The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, National Planning Authority, Equal Opportunities Commission, should ensure the inclusion of the PWDs in planning, development, implementation and monitoring of programs and activities. In such poverty programs as the Parish Development Model, the government needs to allocate quotas for inclusive development. In this case for the special interest groups.

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