

Strategies for County Implementation of the UNCRPD

Boresha Maisha ya Mama Mlemavu
(Improving the Lives of Women with Disabilities)

Kenya and Uganda

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Acronyms

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| PWD | People/Persons with Disabilities |
| OPD | Organisations of People/Persons with Disabilities |
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) |
| CBO | Community-Based Organisation |
| NCPWD | National Council for Persons with Disability |
| GL&SD | Gender Labour and Social Development |
| WWD | Women (and Girls) with Disabilities |

Definitions

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| Disability | The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognises that disability is 'an evolving concept' (UN, 2006, p.1) and defines people with disabilities as those who have 'long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (ibid, p.4). |
| UNCRPD | The UNCRPD is intended as a human rights instrument which reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was adopted on 13 December 2006 and opened for signature on 30 March 2007. There are 164 signatories to the Convention and 94 signatories to the Optional Protocol (UN CRPD home page 6 May 2022 staus). |
| Livelihoods | Livelihoods are the means by which households obtain and maintain access to the resources necessary to ensure their immediate and long-term survival. These essential resources are physical, natural, financial, social and political. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities, assets and entitlements both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Action on Poverty adapted from DFID, 2000, ' <u>Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets</u> '). |
| Washington Group Questions | The Washington Group Questions are targeted questions on individual functioning intended to provide a quick and low-cost way to collect data, which allows disaggregation by disability status. The questions measure difficulty functioning in six basic, universal actions (capabilities) that, in an unaccommodating environment would place an individual at risk of restricted social participation. Available at https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss/ . |
| Assistive technology | Assistive technology is "any item, piece of equipment or product system whether acquired commercially, modified or customized that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities" (World Health Organisation & World Bank 2011). |

Background

The objective of this document is to share and promote learning exchange for wider replication on the joint implementation of the UNCRPD at County (or District) levels.

The project '**Boresha Maisha ya Mama Mlemavu (improving the lives of women with disabilities)**' had an overall objective to improve the implementation of the UNCRPD by promoting the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by women living with disabilities in Kenya and Uganda, with a particular emphasis on livelihoods. The action was led by **SITE Enterprise Promotion** and implemented together with **Kenya Union of the Blind (KUB)**, **National Union of Women with Disabilities in Uganda (NUWODU)** and **APT Action on Poverty (APT)-UK**.

The project identified key strategies which were important to the improvement of the UN-Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) at the District/County level. This document describes strategies which were key pathways to the development of appropriate structures and implementation. Different structures were developed in the three different counties according to their context. The targeted counties were Meru and Machakos Counties in Kenya, and Gulu District in Uganda (split into four districts: Omoro, Amoro, Nwoya and Gulu during the period). The project was 95% financed (€ 1,029,203) by the European Union over three years (1st January 2019 - 31st December 2021).

The project met or exceeded all its targets which included:

- 28,331 PWDs (22,228 WWDs) accessing services from government and other service providers
- 18,332 WWDs accessed financial services
- 12,703 WWDs improved skills relating to enterprise and 8,032 jobs created.
- 627 Duty bearers with understanding of the CRPD, specific needs of WWDs and acted towards inclusion of PWDs at village, ward, sub county and county level
- Specific recognition of CRPD/rights of WWDs/PWDs in county/district plans with over 20 key decisions made which transformed the PWD sector and had a wide outreach.
- 942 strengthened and engaged OPDs (Organisations for People with Disabilities); representation of 36 stakeholder institutions.
- Structures with a range of strategies in place at county/district level for sustained inclusion of PWWD.

Rationale of County Approach

County structures and processes involved in effective implementation of the CRPD cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider discrimination and stigma of people with disabilities at all levels of society. Rural women with disabilities face multiple kinds of discrimination and barriers to accessing services and resources because of their limited voice, choice, economic agency, and their own internalised negative attitudes towards their disability. Duty bearers are also affected by prevailing societal attitudes and lack the capacity and models to properly enforce legal frameworks and to translate these into practical plans and strategies.

The project identified gaps in both countries in the existing county/districts structures', which was contributing to poor implementation of the CRPD, including:

- Poor operation and lack of awareness of Disability Acts/National Action Plan guidelines
- Poor representation of PWDs in decision-making
- Poor connection between county Gender departments and OPDs
- Lack of data on PWD prevalence and needs
- Lack of synergy between actors and duty-bearers.

One difference between the two countries is that to access government services and opportunities, compliance is required at individual level in Kenya and through OPDs (Organisations for People with Disabilities) in Uganda.

Joint-CRPD implementation and reporting at County level enables:

- Centralised, disaggregated data on PWDs, which is critical for planning and budgeting allocations
- Alignment of County PWD strategies and plans with the CRPD
- County contribution to national CRPD reporting
- Shared learning, synergy, collaboration with CRPD actors
- Opportunity to model best practices for PWD inclusion and gender mainstreaming to other counties



Photo: Young woman with a disability from Gulu, Uganda, who accessed a contract to supply school sweaters.

Key Pathways

Key pathways which had a significant impact on establishing structures and approaches for improved CRPD implementation were identified in both countries and in different locations.

Many best practice approaches for improving inclusion of people with disabilities, specifically women, have been documented elsewhere. One of these is working with CBOs and OPDs, which was an integral part of this project. Another is the need to work in formal and informal partnerships to provide the wide ranging impact required. These and other approaches are documented in the Disability Learning Review (Action on Poverty) - a review of 4 projects including this one. Further information, including overarching challenges and recommendations to disability inclusion are included in this review.

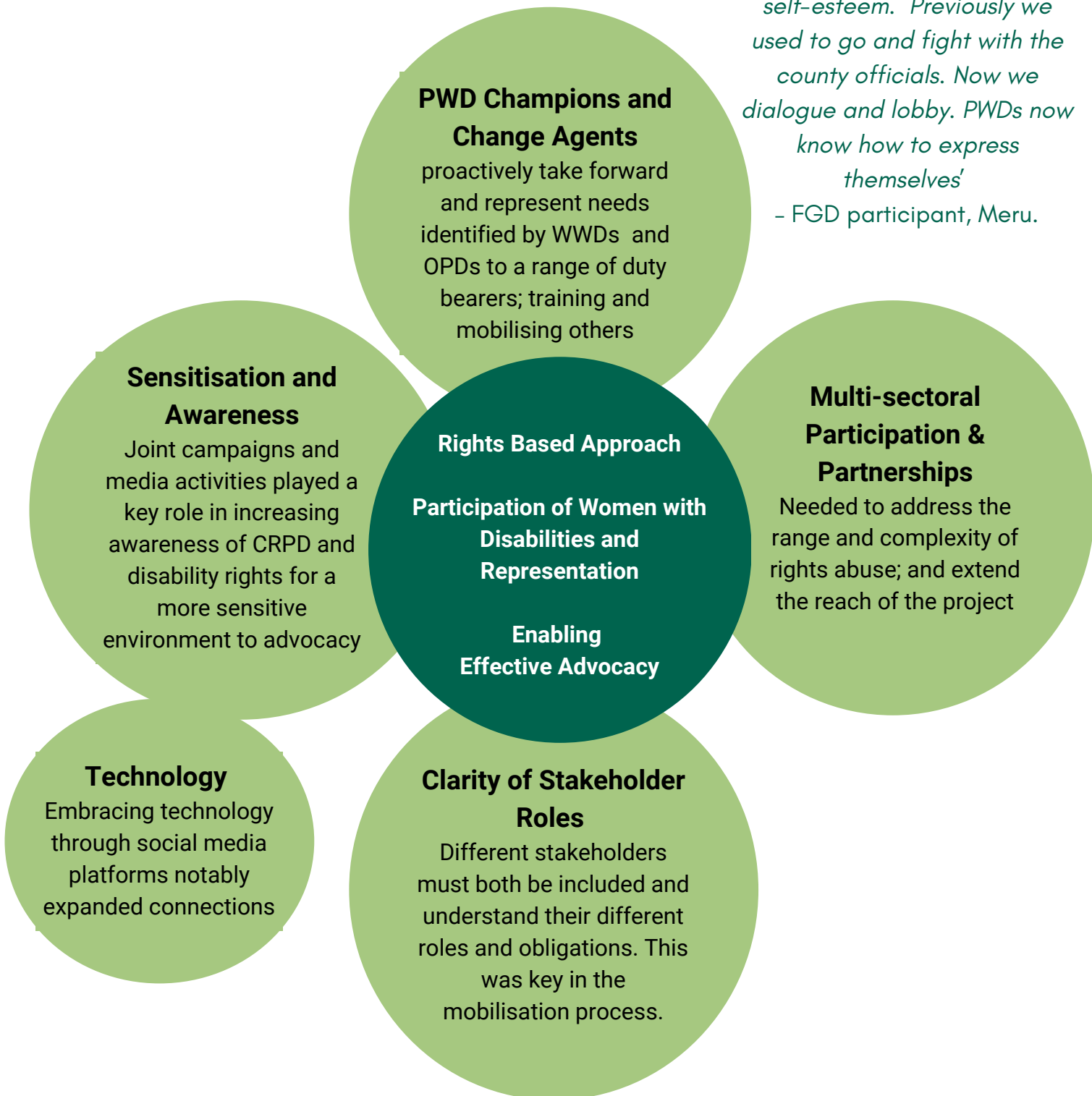
The focus of this document relates to key strategies which had an impact on developing appropriate structures and pathways for effective advocacy, accountability and securing disability rights up to County or District level. At the same time, by establishing effective structures and mechanisms to enable productive advocacy and accountability to take place, both the rights holders and the duty bearers were better able to perform their roles and the implementation of the CRPD was improved.

Spotlights are given on particular areas with significant impact.



Photo: WWDs participate in soap-making training.

Key Pathways



The W/PWDs noted that: -
'The structure has raised our self-esteem. Previously we used to go and fight with the county officials. Now we dialogue and lobby. PWDs now know how to express themselves'
- FGD participant, Meru.

"SITE has helped to come up with a PWD structure that is acceptable to the government. Previously, there were too many disability organisations and each claimed leadership. There was competition over county resources, infighting, and power and leadership struggles. The structure has made it easy to work with PWDs"
- Female PWD Board member, Meru.

Spotlight: A Rights Based Approach

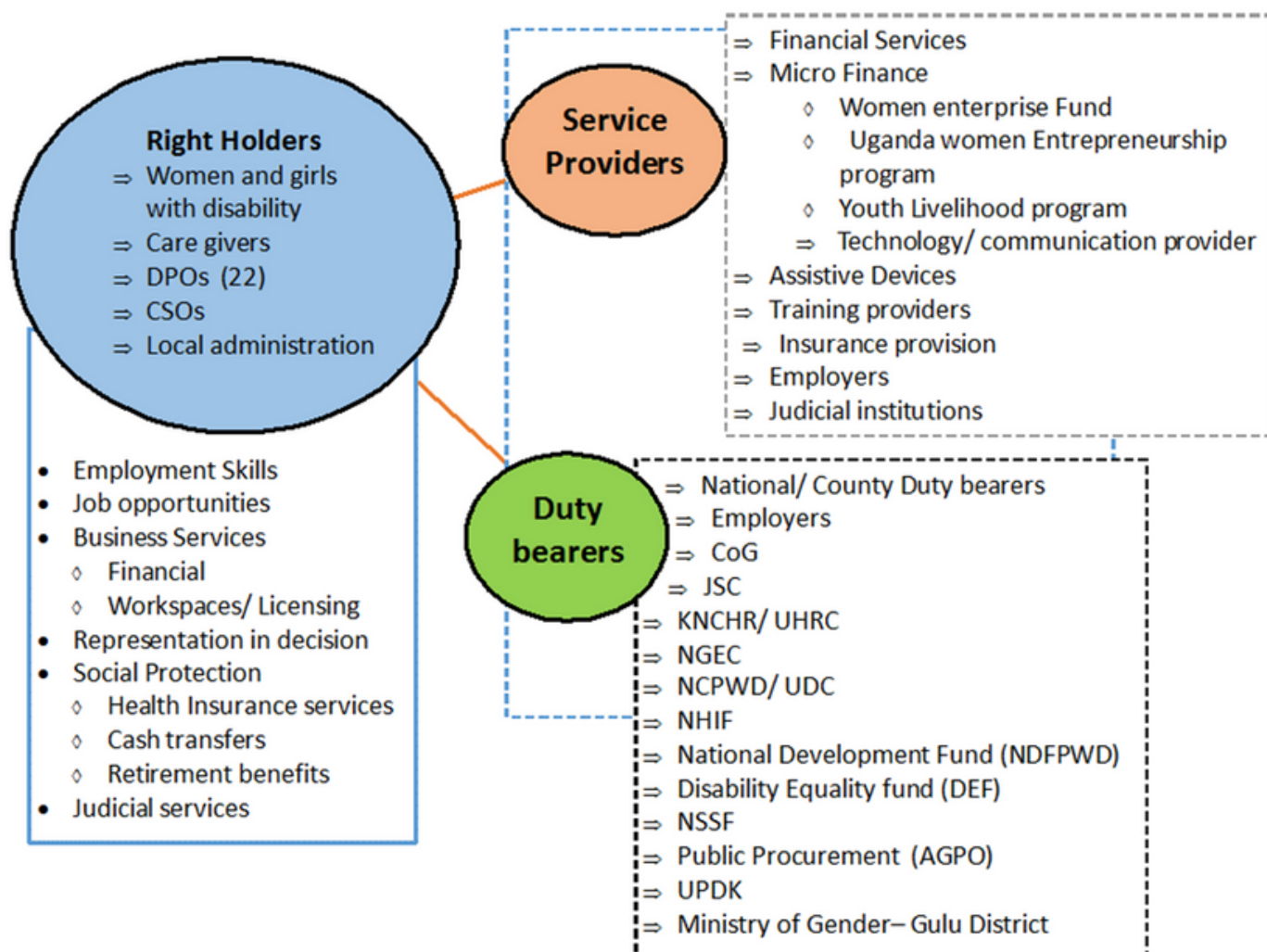
For Disability Inclusion, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) provides a global framework for holding duty bearers to account, as well as articulating the entitlements of rights holders (women, men and children with disabilities) which they can seek and claim.

Through a rights-based approach, awareness and sensitization, duty-bearers, CSOs, PWDs, OPDs, and communities have an improved understanding of their roles towards protecting PWDs rights in CRPD implementation. PWDs, including WWDs, can now effectively articulate and report on issues affecting them and advocate for their needs to be met, as well as contributing to monitoring and reporting; and the duty bearers and service providers provide a more informed response. By facilitating processes and improved structures with a rights based approach, the ongoing impact on PWDs is sustained.

Activity Map

EIDHR—EuropeAID/155232

Improving CRPD (Articles 6;27) Implementation—Rights Based Approach



Spotlight: PWD Champions & Change Agents

PWD/WWD Champions played a critical role in proactively taking forward and representing needs identified by women with disabilities to a range of duty bearers. In the project, 812 Champions were trained and taking action to represent people with disabilities and promote inclusion structures, with a range of strategies in place at county/district level. PWD champions also influenced a large and varied number of PWDs and strengthened the connection between OPDs and duty bearers, contributing to proactive action for PWD inclusion. 942 OPDs were strengthened and engaged and 627 duty bearers gained improved understanding of the CRPD, resulting in changes at the village, ward, sub county and county level.

A training of trainers (TOT) approach with the PWD Champions enabled these change agents to both mobilise and transfer their skills to many more WWDs and enabled numerous grassroots OPDs to be connected and engaged. Skills found to have critical impact on this engagement were enterprise skills, and lobbying and advocacy skills.

In Kenya, during the project PWDs champions mobilized 18,097 PWDs (13,115 WWDs) into 475 grassroots DPOs which in turn enabled mobilization of 10586 PWDs into registration process; and for medical assessments with MoH and NCPWD

By using a Training of Trainers Approach 604 PWDs (520 WWDs) and 132 community trainers in specialized trades provided training to 9,872 PWDs (74% WWDs) to develop their skills in enterprise.

Leadership training was seen to offer immediate outcomes. Women with disabilities joined management committees in their communities – in schools, health facilities, markets, and churches. In Kenya, key leadership positions in the PWDs coordinating structure were held by WWDs.

Using technology, champions & change agents were able to spread information more effectively. Meru and Machakos PWD Network used WhatsApp group chats where PWD Leaders shared opportunities, government/private programs and campaigns such as Covid-19 vaccination and cross learning by DPOs.

Spotlight: Stakeholder Roles

For county structures to work effectively, different stakeholders must be included and understand their different roles and obligations.

Clarity on the roles of:

- County Government Departments
- Change Agents & OPDs
- Community Members
- CSOs & Rights Organisations
- Service Providers

For example, in Kenya:

- The County Government is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the CRPD, for the inclusion of PWDs in County planning and budgeting, and upholding their rights (for example, including PWDs in gender mainstreaming, access to services such as health and training, social protection and improved infrastructure for accessibility).
- OPDs represent PWDs. This includes in decision-making forums and planning, identifying needs, lobbying for and promoting services, mobilising resources as a vehicle for self-help projects and from service providers, training and promoting role models, providing a networking platform, public awareness, and participating in CRPD monitoring. Together with PWD champions they are instrumental in developing effective connections between county structures and their membership.
- Community members have a role in stopping discrimination of PWDs, particularly girls and women, demystifying stereotypes and stigma, revealing hidden PWDs, and reporting violations towards PWDs/WWDs.
- CSOs & Rights Organisations develop and support programmes including PWDs and support to access their rights, provide data and reports and support county, OPDs and other stakeholders.
- Service Providers, including private sector, proactively include WWDs to access their services.

Spotlight: Multi-Sectoral Participation

The rights abuses which PWDs - especially WWDs - encounter are numerous and varied. As a result, there needs to be effective engagement with different sectors. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders from different sectors significantly expanded the reach of the project. Whilst this added to its complexity, different government institutions/departments and service providers are mandated to serve PWDs. The different offices of duty-bearers are dispersed and also tend to assume that responsibility for PWDs is vested in another department. As such, it becomes necessary to adopt a multi-sectoral approach for sensitization on PWDs' rights, women-specific needs, and the respective roles of different duty-bearers and linkages with PWDs champions. For effective CRPD implementation at county level the approach needs to cut across different sectors in its structure and co-ordination.

The process of registration to obtain PWD Identity cards, requires the involvement of Ministry of Health officers, local administration, OPDs, NCPWD, GL&SD, community influencers for an effective one-stop-shop exercise. Otherwise the cost and long process for PWDs and caregivers would lock out the majority from accessing government funds/services targeted for PWDs.

Photo: Education, Technology & Social Development, CEC. Ruth N. Mutua of Machaakos County (Kenya) addresses the media during the International day for Persons with disability.



Spotlight: Data

The need for robust data on disability is widely known and partners in this project acknowledged the need for monitoring data to be collected in a consistent manner at different levels.

Rich databases of WWDs and PWDs across the different sites contain details of the project beneficiaries, their groups and activities, and are updated regularly and used to inform decision making. However, in terms of co-ordinated data gathering for monitoring CRPD, even when raw data capture forms were similar, there needs to be improved uniformity in recording of the data across the different sites, with further work on standardisation and data disaggregation according to gender and disability type. Unique identifiers for each individual WWDs as well as for the different groups could avoid overlap and provide co-ordinated data to share with other stakeholders.

There is a need to find common agreement, across all stakeholders, on how 'Disability' is defined and understood and assessed in standardised way. Training in and the use of Washington Group Short Set Questions were helpful in addressing this.

SITE and partners KUB and NUWODU in Kenya and Uganda emphasised the importance of centralised disaggregated data for reporting on county-level CRPD implementation.

NUWODU highlighted the need for further capacity building of duty bearers in data management, as well as data disaggregation by age, gender, type of disability and location (village, parish, sub-county, district).

Spotlight: Enabling Effective Advocacy

The structures and processes above enabled effective dialogue, advocacy and improved accountability. Some key learning pertinent to this project and included in Action on Poverty's Disability Review includes:

- A recognition that programme stakeholders (rights holders and duty bearers) require an understanding of PWDs' protective entitlements and laws (as part of a rights based approach).
- Political engagement and fostering support from government leadership is required.
- Adopting a flexible strategic approach, rather than one specific set model, so that adaptations can be made at a local level.
- Working in partnerships and networks was key to successful advocacy.
- Strengthening the agency of people with disabilities is key to successful advocacy. This was interlinked with organisational strengthening of OPDs and supporting the development of other structures for people with disabilities, including Champions. It includes greater representation of people with disabilities, and specifically women with disabilities, in a variety of decision-making structures.
- Development of an inclusive communications strategy both for the partners and for external campaigns is a powerful advocacy tool. Use of a variety of media, including social media, plays a critical role in changing attitudes.
- Strong MEL and data collection practices to generate the evidence base for successful advocacy was identified as a challenge, and a clear area for improvement at all levels, and across all stakeholders.

Project Impact included:

Specific recognition of the CRPD in county/district plans with more than 20 key decisions which transformed the disability sector

Coordination structures in Kenya enabled over 14,000 PWDs to access PWD targeted government resources including funds & scholarships, education bursaries, tools for work & assistive devices

Co-ordination Structures

Strengthening the county/district structures was facilitated through participatory dialogues, training, information access, exchange learning and building synergies between disability actors, OPDs and duty-bearers. For this to take place effectively and sustainably, it needs to be an integral part of the multi-sector, rights-based approach, inclusive of a range of stakeholders with strong informed representation of PWDs and understanding amongst duty bearers.

Meru PWD Coordination Structure

The project partnered with the **County Government of Meru Gender and Social Development Department** to develop the Meru PWDs Coordination Structure.

This aimed to ensure a wider reach of all PWDs and a strong connection between County-level structures and grassroots PWD groups, for effective representation and enhanced service delivery. The structure consists of the Gender Department, PWDs Board, PWD SACCO, PWD and WWD representatives, 11 coordinators at sub-county, 45 ward representatives and 290 group leaders at grassroots levels. It is recognized by the County Government and is used in engaging with the government on issues involving the PWDs.

A note on the PWD Board: it is a gazetted organisation, with the coordinators required to serve for three years. The PWD Board recommended the creation of the Meru County Persons with Disability Fund, which can also ensure continuity of the CRPD work.

The 45 Ward representatives and 11 Sub-county Coordinators play a key role in representing interests of PWDs by mobilizing them to both access services such as education bursaries, assistive devices, NCPWD identity cards, and to participate in development and key decision-making platforms by connecting the grassroots OPDs/PWDs groups with the County PWDs SACCO & PWD Board.

This structure contributed to Meru County winning 2 national awards on PWDs' inclusion and attracted interest from the Council of Governors for replication to other counties.

Key learning on the Meru Structure

- **Clarity on roles:** Roles need to be clearly and specifically articulated. Different stakeholders must both be included and understand their roles and obligations.
- **Inclusion and a Community Participatory Approach:** The structure uses a community participatory approach which is aimed at recognizing all PWDs, organizing them into functional groups and empowering people irrespective of their form of disability, religion or political affiliation. This structure ensures wider reach and inclusion of all PWDs living in all parts of Meru, including remote villages, and brings on board women and children with severe disabilities who are usually 'hidden' and thus more excluded. WWDs are represented in the PWDs structure – either as sub-county coordinators or ward administrators.
- **Effective Representation:** PWDs are represented from the community/village level to the County level. Electing leaders from all organized PWD groups from the wards and sub-counties of Meru County helped to eliminate discrimination, gender-bias and self-interest driven decisions. The elected leaders are well known by the communities and work directly with the local administration and other duty-bearers to enhance service delivery to PWDs.
- **Articulation of needs and access to Services:** Through representation at Ward and Sub County levels it is ensured that the PWDs Board - which plays the advisory role to the Department of GSD - has the interests of PWDs articulated and addressed by the Executive and relevant County Offices. The Coordinators and Ward representatives also work in conjunction with the SACCO delegates to mobilize PWDs and WWDs into the PWD SACCO for easy access to affordable loans and financial services.

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"External Evaluation of the Project, 2022:

“The Meru PWDs coordination structure is very strong and effective in reaching even the grassroots. It is a model that has proven to work and one that is hailed and highly recognised by the County Government...It is also a model that can be recommended for adoption in all counties,.. increase W/PWDs visibility including in leadership and provide a structure for engaging with government and other organisations seeking to or supporting disability programmes and work”.

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Machakos Structure

In Machakos, the PWD structure is organized around champions who are leaders of various OPDs and other PWD groups. These leaders were trained as Trainers of Trainers (TOTs) and worked closely with the Social Development Officers within the County Department of Gender. The Gender Department, PWDs Board and OP Network put in place a coordination structure mirroring the Meru structure after the exchange learning visit.

The connection with the County headquarter structure is established through 12 elected PWDs (6 WWDs), making a steering committee of the PWDs Network, working closely with 7 Social Development Officers to coordinate PWDs matters directly with 185 PWDs DPOs /group leaders at the grassroots level.

Learning Exchange

The approach worked best in Meru county due to its more mature structures in support of disability inclusion than others. This enabled effective sharing of experiences with Machakos County where it was taking more time to develop. This reflects the different stages of the journey in disability inclusion and CRPD implementation.

The Meru County coordination structure enabled exchange learning between Machakos & Meru counties, cross-learnings among PWDs champions and group Leaders. This reduced PWDs conflicts due to over-representation while improving relationships and harmonizing PWDs representation and coordination of issues, enabling them to share effective leadership, lobbying and advocacy skills, and problem solving together.

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Evaluation 2022: “The Machakos model of using government structures worked for the project but may need an external boost like one provided by the government, and is more at risk of Social Development Officers moving from the work locations or departments. Also, there is still a risk of fragmentation of OPDs and establishment of networks that are not inclusive or accommodative of other OPDs as is currently the case. It is important for continuous engagement of the newly established Machakos PWDs network to extend beyond the town setting and to embrace other OPDs in the County”.

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Gulu District - Uganda

Caucuses, comprised of 20 members, were formed in each district (Amuru, Gulu, Nwoya and Omoro). This formation was supported by national stakeholders the EOC (Equal Opportunities Commission), Ministry of GL&SD, NCPWDs, NUDIPU and NUWODU.

The district caucuses are platforms that bring together a cross section of relevant duty bearers – sector and political heads, non-state actors, DPOs, CSOs, livelihood and other organizations providing services to WWDs, rights holders and key national stakeholders to CRPD implementation. The interface between the community and the caucus demonstrated the ability of PWDs to identify and articulate issues that affect their lives.

The caucuses had direct influence on the inclusion of PWDs rights in District Plans. Issues discussed included awareness on land rights and their implementation, adherence to the building control bill with an accessibility audit, GBV awareness, reporting and its inclusion in the district plan, use of special grant, learning materials/teacher skills and special schools, discrimination by service providers and the police, assistive devices, joint action on International Disability Day.



Photo: PWD youth display their products during events to celebrate International Womens Day in Awach Gulu (Uganda).

Caucuses in Uganda

The district caucuses had a series of sensitisation activities aimed at understanding their roles, the context of PWDs in the community – their rights and inclusion and challenges of low participation in activities – and addressing the concerns to promote the implementation of CRPD and the National Action Plan guidelines. Eight forums were held by the caucus at community level i.e. two per district. Joint caucus meetings were held in Gulu.

A key success in Uganda was the registration of 333 grassroots OPDs with the Ministry of Labour and Social Services. This meant they were eligible for government grants and enabled improved service delivery to PWDs, including opportunities for livelihoods support, and access to assistive devices and other basic services.

Community Dialogues were held in each District with representative PWD groups to identify emerging issues. The issues raised, strategies of action and the person responsible were reported and discussed at the joint caucus. OPD leaders were trained by NUWODU as champions and are expected to reach the hardest to reach WWDs.

External Evaluation 2022 — “ —————

“In Uganda, the establishment of the District CRPD caucuses is the game-changer. Given that the Caucuses are driven by the duty-bearers themselves, with support from the political leaders, they are likely to have long term impact and to remain beyond the project. However, given that they are young, they need further follow-up and be strengthened so that they can offer lessons to other districts in Uganda, and even to Kenya”.

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Conclusions

The evaluation concluded that in terms of improving or establishing workable and recognised PWDs coordination structure these are: -

- (i) The Meru PWDs Coordination Structure
- (II) Uganda District CRPD caucuses

"These PWDs structures have made significant contribution to the impact on the lives of women with disabilities, through awareness creation of PWDs rights, mobilization of PWDs towards action, representation in decision-making and advocating for review/implementation to disability laws, with PWDs champions and duty-bearers monitoring CRPD and reporting at county level directly to Gender & Social Development Department and other stakeholders e.g. providers of assistive devices".

The application of the pathways described have resulted in structures and connections between stakeholders and the consequent influence will continue to enable PWDs, especially WWDs, to access their rights and sustain and build their inclusion and integration. They are not dependent on further external funding or involvement but are structures and processes evolved through an informed response and supported and sustained by government resources and voluntary and private sector inputs. The informed response is catalysed by building knowledge and understanding of the rights and obligations of all stakeholders and having appropriate structures and processes for holding duty bearers to account.

Different stakeholders have different roles, but all approaches require them to perform their roles effectively; contexts, intersectionality, and disability types and severity have widely different needs and barriers to overcome. Despite this, there is a wide range and depth of impact on the people reached in this project.



Photo: WWD from Meru county (Kenya) shows her business records.

Project Impact included:

- **>28,000 PWDs (22,228 WWDs) accessed services** from government and other service providers
- **>18,000 WWDs accessed financial services; 12,000 with improved enterprise skills**

Appendix 1: Project profile

Kenya & Uganda

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|---------------|---|
| Project name | Strengthening the Implementation of the CRPD in Kenya and Uganda |
| Partner(s) | SITE Enterprise Promotion (lead), Kenya Union of the Blind (KUB), National Union of Women with Disabilities in Uganda (NUWODU) and APT Action on Poverty (UK) |
| Funder | The European Union (95%), small UK trusts and supporters |
| Duration | January 2019 - December 2021 |
| Location | Machakos and Meru counties in Kenya; Gulu district in Uganda |
| Target groups | 28,000 WWD accessing services, 900 OPDs strengthened |
| Objectives | The programme aimed to strengthen the implementation of the UN CRPD amongst women with disabilities, as well as empowering women with disabilities to exercise their rights. It aimed to promote the integration of disability into wider human rights work with specific reference to rights in accessing the services and resources to secure livelihoods, enterprises and employment of women, and build the capacity of duty bearers for more effective implementation of the CRPD. |



Photo: WWDs from Machakos (Kenya) during soap making training.