# Logo of Light for the World

# **Reaching the furthest left behind: The participation of persons with disabilities in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Post-2030 discussions.**

Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, June 2024

# **Introduction**

Light for the World welcomes the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ call for inputs on reaching the furthest left behind: the participation of persons with disabilities in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Post-2030 discussions.

Light for the World is an international disability and development organisation aiming for an inclusive society where no one is left behind. We are committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

This submission is based on input received from the Light for the World Country Office in Kenya (Light for the World Kenya) and it structured around the questions put forward by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

# **Question 1:**

**Please inform how persons with disabilities and their representative organisations are meaningfully consulted and their participation ensure during the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda at the regional, national, and sub-national levels.**

1. Is there a specific mechanism for follow-up and review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the country? How are persons with disabilities included in this mechanism?

The SDGs Kenya Forum is a platform which brings together diverse civil society organisations, including organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), government entities, private sector institutions, academia, and the media, around the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kenya. The SDGs Kenya Forum has citizens at the centre of involvement.

The national umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities in Kenya – United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) - is actively engaged in the SDGs Kenya Forum. UDPK has mobilised its own OPD member organisations to ensure inclusion of the diverse disability movement in Kenya.

The SDGs Kenya Forum takes a multisectoral approach that is used to engage different and diverse stakeholders to ensure meaningful citizen engagement in the implementation, monitoring reporting on the 17 SDGs in Kenya.

# **Question 2:**

**Please describe the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in gathering data and producing Voluntary National Reviews or Voluntary Local Reviews. Please share good practices in this regard.**

1. What steps are being taken to facilitate their participation? Are there any awareness-raising campaigns implemented to inform persons with disabilities of these processes?
2. Are there any platforms in place for persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to contribute to the reporting process? How are they accessible? Is there are reasonable accommodation fund in place to secure the participation of persons with disabilities?
3. How are the views of persons with disabilities incorporated in these reports?

Kenya has committed to achieving the SDGs by 2030. These goals include a wide range of objectives that span from reducing inequalities, to education, employment, environmental conservation and climate action, and other key sectors. Aware of the interlinkage between the aspirations of persons with disabilities and the SDGs, Kenyan OPDs under the leadership of UDPK have engaged in actions and activities geared towards the achievement of the SDGs in Kenya.

Through the support of the SDGs Kenya Forum, UDPK contributed to the civil society organisation Voluntary National Review (VNR) report that highlights progress and gaps in the current implementation of the SDGs in Kenya, and provides recommendations on the future implementation of the SDGs. UDPK’s contribution to the civil society VNR report was developed through the collaboration of a diversity of OPDs, both at the national and county levels. The drafting process involved holding various sessions with OPDs to reflect and discuss the implementation of SDGs concerning persons with disabilities, and then collating the inputs. The report provided an overview of OPDs’ collective engagement, spotlighting the milestones realised, the challenges encountered, and the existing gaps. Additionally, the report outlined strategies on how to collaboratively and inclusively address those gaps going forward.

Some of the highlights from the report are as follows:

* OPDs key contributions to the achievement of the SDGs in Kenya.
* Challenges faced by OPDs in the realisation of their rights during the implementation of the SDGs.
* Gaps identified by OPDs in the course of implementing the programmes and interventions.
* Strategic recommendations in reducing the gaps, and for future steps in engaging the diversity of OPDs in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of SDGs.
1. **Steps taken to ensure participation of OPDs in awareness raising campaigns**

While there has been the involvement of UDPK in the SDGs Kenya Forum there is no clear mechanism to cascade information to the grassroots OPDs for the meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities in all their diversity. More strategic and inclusive approaches to awareness raising are needed to ensure that no one is left behind.

1. **Platforms for OPDs contributions in the reporting process**

Currently there is no funding mechanism available in Kenya to support the participation of persons with disabilities in the monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. Inclusive and meaningful participation is dependent on the goodwill of development partners. The limited resources have acted as an impediment for OPDs to expand and scale interventions to reach more persons with disabilities and their immediate communities. Limited resources impact negatively on the operational capacity of the OPDs. In addition, communication by the government is usually through the government websites which are often inaccessible to the majority of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, especially those working at the grassroots level.

1. **How the views of persons with disabilities are incorporated in the State reports**

Kenya often categorises persons with disabilities under the term ‘special interest groups’ or ‘vulnerable groups’ which hinders actualising disability-specific issues as the interests of persons with disabilities and the specific barriers faced by persons with disabilities are then lumped together with other categories of marginalised or vulnerable populations.

# **Question 3:**

**Is the data gathered for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development being disaggregated by disability? If so, how is it accessible for persons with disabilities?**

Data which is disaggregated by the diverse types of disability is too limited to provide accurate information on the population of persons with disabilities in Kenya. There is limited disaggregated data available from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) including for SDG indicator 10.2.1, “Proportion of people living below 50 percent of median income, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities” which makes it difficult to measure and track progress made in the realisation of SDG 10 and other SDGs.

# **Question 4:**

**Please provide information on whether capacity-building programmes are in place, including specific funding, to allow persons with disabilities to meaningfully engage and participate in the process of follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional, national and sub-national level.**

There is an observable limited involvement and participation of persons with disabilities in legal and policy formulation related to the SDGs as well as in the development and implementation of SDG interventions. The limited participation also hampers access to information and access to services for persons with disabilities.

Limited budget data, especially at the implementation level, makes it difficult to track and evaluate specific financial allocations to disability programmes. It is also difficult to measure equality and disparities in the allocations.

# **Question 5:**

**Please describe the barriers experienced in participating in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the international, regional, national and/or sub-national levels. Please share any good practices in participating in these processes and advocating for the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities.**

Below are some of the barriers to participation in 2030 Agenda and SDG processes:

* Lack of sufficient funding: The budget allocation for disability-specific programmes is insufficient in comparison to the need. For instance, the allocation to the National Fund for the Disabled of Kenya (an endowment fund established by the government to empower persons with disabilities) has stagnated at 250 million Kenyan Shilling (KSH) per year since its inception which does not meet the demand. This contributes to creating disparities and leads to non-implementation of laws and policies.
* Putting disability under ‘vulnerable groups’: Persons with disabilities have traditionally been placed in the larger category of the marginalised populations in the society hindering design of inclusive programmes that are specifically targeting persons with disabilities. Some programmes and interventions by the government such as Cash Transfer Programmes present restrictive criteria which can act as a barrier to access them. Programme design, where it focuses on the household rather than the individual, can limit the impact and effectiveness.
* Limited capacity building: There is no clear framework for capacity building by government for persons with disabilities at either national or county level. This has been made worse by limited budgets to support awareness and capacity building activities targeting persons with disabilities.
* Lack of data: There is a lack of accurate and up-to-date inclusive data on persons with disabilities available for planning and budgeting, including a lack of data disaggregated by disability. For example, there is only limited disaggregated data available from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) including for SDG indicator 10.2.1, “Proportion of people living below 50 percent of median income, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities”. This makes it difficult to measure and track progress made in the realisation of SDG 10 and other SDGs.
* Attitudinal barriers: In Kenya, attitudinal barriers are still prevalent in society which negatively impacts the level of participation of persons with disabilities in socio-economic activities of various aspects of their lives. These attitudes lead to stigmatisation and discrimination making it harder to achieve the intervention goals.

# **Question 6:**

**Please share any experience or barriers encountered related to the participation or involvement in the annual High Level Political Forums, and in particular the SDG Summit of 2023 and the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development.**

A key barrier encountered by OPDs is the lack of or limited representation of the diversity of grassroots, national and regional OPDs during the annual High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Regional Fora on Sustainable Development.

At the regional level, from the Kenya perspective, UDPK did participate in the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) in Niamey in 2023 and in Addis Ababa in 2024. Good practice would include having increased participation of local and grassroot OPDs at both the regional fora and HLPF to ensure diverse representation, including of underrepresented groups, but this would require financial support.

UDPK did not attend the SDG Summit of 2023 due to lack of available funding.

There is an observable limited involvement and participation of persons with disabilities in legal and policy formulations in Kenya. This is also prevalent in the development and implementation of SDG interventions. Additionally, in Kenya, there is limited enforcement of existing legal and policy frameworks regarding disabilities i.e., Persons with Disabilities Act 2003 and sector policy on learners and trainees with disabilities. Limited enforcement of these legal provisions produces low quality outcomes in securing and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

# **Question 7:**

**Describe whether you are currently aware and engaging in the process leading to the Summit for the Future 2024 and its outcome documents and the Social Summit in 2025. Please identify your thematic priorities, if any, when engaging in these processes**.

At the regional level, from the Kenya perspective UDPK did participate in the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) in Niamey in 2023 and Addis Ababa in 2024. At least in 2024, UDPK’s participation was possible due to the financial support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). It would be good practice to see increased and meaningful participation grassroots OPDs at both the regional fora and HLPF to ensure diverse representation, including of underrepresented groups, but this would require financial support.

During the 10th session of the ARFSD in Addis Ababa in April 2024, Light for the World was also present along with OPD partners. Presentations were made regarding the upcoming Summit for the Future 2024, and the Social Summit in 2025 but there were almost no references to persons with disabilities.

# **Question 8:**

**In light of the global crises facing the world, including armed conflicts, natural disasters, and health crises, and the financial implications of these crises, do you find that this has impacted programmes to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in your country? How have your efforts to advocate for the implementation of the sustainable development goals for people with disabilities been affected?**

Light for the World Kenya actively supports OPDs in advocacy through the programmes implemented at the country level. This has been possible through building a partnership with UDPK as the key advocacy partner.

In partnership with OPDs and others, Light for the World Kenya contributed to preparations for the 17th session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (COSP17) which has the overarching theme of 'Rethinking disability inclusion in the current international juncture and ahead of the Summit of the Future’. A Kenyan committee comprising of OPDs, CSOs, and government agencies held a number on meetings that paved the way for approval to hold a COSP17 side event on meaningful employment and sustainable livelihood for persons with disabilities.

**Key achievements through inclusive employment programmes in Kenya**

Programmes focused on empowering young people with and without disabilities through mentorship sessions and employability skills training. Over 400 young people with disabilities were reached. Employability skills training covering various aspects such as CV creation, interview skills, and workplace etiquette, resulted in a 97% increase in confidence among participants.

Upon completion of the training, students/participants were placed in various organisations for internships, demonstrating a strong interest in practical skills development. A post-employability skills training survey indicated 110 participants with disabilities experienced enhanced knowledge and readiness for employment, highlighting the positive impact of interventions on preparedness for the job market.

Additionally, efforts to improve employer perceptions and practices regarding disability inclusion were made through an Employer Engagement Forum, which drew participation from 18 Kenyan employers. This led to increased interest and requests for disability awareness sessions and placements of students with disabilities within organisations, thereby increasing opportunities for students with disabilities.

Key learnings from the project include the transformative impact of interventions on employer perceptions, the effectiveness of employability skills training, and the importance of practical experiences through internships.

**Sustainability of Gains:** The programmes intend to sustain the gains made by leveraging lessons learned in future projects, co-creating with OPD partners, maintaining partnerships with stakeholders, and continuing systemic change efforts beyond the project's duration.

**Commitments to Inclusive Employment in new programmes:** Building upon the success of these projects, UDPK and Light for the World Kenya are integrating commitments to inclusive employment in new programmes. These commitments include incorporating disability awareness training, employability skills development, and internship opportunities into the design and implementation of projects aimed at youth empowerment and employment. By embedding inclusive practices from the outset, the aim is to ensure that future programmes contribute to sustainable and equitable employment opportunities for all individuals, including young persons with disabilities.

# **Light for the World International**

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