

Spring 2024 Professional Fellow

Name: Ombati Elizabeth Nyabiage
Country: Kenya
Job Title and Employer: Program Assistant, Kenya Network of Women and Girls with Disabilities
Project Title: Strengthening the Participation of Women with Disabilities in Community Civic Spaces in Kenya

Issue: Women with disabilities face significant barriers to leadership and civic engagement (UN DESA, 2018; UN Women, n.d.). A 2017 survey by United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) of 105 women with disabilities, ages 15 to 59, from six counties in Kenya found that although women know their rights, they struggle to realize them due to inadequate policy implementation (UDPK, 2018). Additionally, there are few platforms for them to advocate for themselves, even locally. The report identifies several challenges hindering their participation in governance, including lack of accessible and timely information on county governance structures and procedures, limited disability knowledge among county officials, and insufficient skills in disability inclusion and mainstreaming.

In 2022, the Kenya Network of Women and Girls with Disabilities, in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, launched a program aimed at developing the leadership capacities of women with disabilities selected from four counties (Kakamega, Kisumu, Nairobi, and Mombasa) in Kenya. The ongoing project focuses on equipping these women with advocacy skills to address barriers to their involvement in developmental initiatives. Building on the program's achievements to date, Elizabeth intends to further enhance the skill of these women and strengthen their connections with county governance structures.

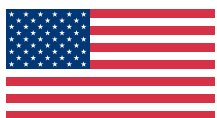
Project Objective: Elizabeth's project aims to enhance the advocacy skills and efforts of 40 women with disabilities, organized into four cohorts, in engaging with county governance across four counties in Kenya.

Project Activities: Each cohort of women participating in the Ford Foundation-funded Program embarked on initiatives to actively engage with county governance. Elizabeth's initial step will involve convening the women's groups into focus groups to facilitate discussions about their accomplishments and obstacles encountered during this engagement. By examining the collective experiences of the four cohorts, Elizabeth will conduct a thorough gap analysis. Based on this analysis, she will design tailored follow-up training sessions aimed at addressing specific skills gaps identified, thereby empowering the women to effectively advance their advocacy objectives.

Furthermore, Elizabeth will disseminate the findings of the analysis to county governance leaders and establish a formalized partnership that ensures a platform and amplifies the voices of women with disabilities. This collaborative effort aims to foster meaningful participation and contributions from women with disabilities within county governance.

References:

- United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK, 2018). *Baseline Survey Report for Amplifying Voices of Women with Disabilities in Kenya Project 2017 - 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.udpkenya.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Baseline-Survey-Report-Amplifying-Voices-of-Women-with-Disabilities-in-Kenya-Project1.pdf>
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA, 2018). *Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities (Report)*. Retrieved from: <https://social.un.org/publications/UN-Flagship-Report-Disability-Final.pdf>
- United Nations Women (UN Women, n.d.). *Facts and Figures: Women with Disabilities, Leadership and Political Participation (webpage)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/women-and-girls-with-disabilities/facts-and-figures>



PROFESSIONAL
FELLOWS

