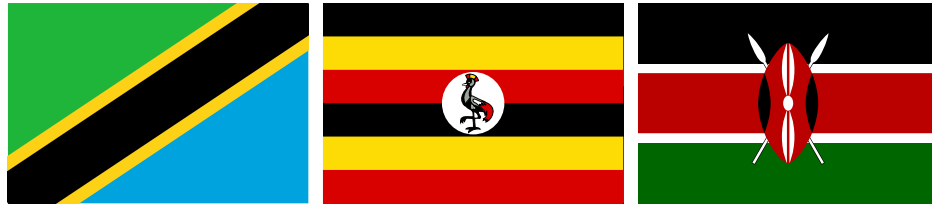


# The Professional Fellows Program on Inclusive Civic Engagement



## Fall 2025 Professional Fellow



### Derrick Mpagi

**Director & Program Manager,  
Might Foundation  
Uganda**

Derrick Mpagi serves as the Executive Director of the MIGHT Foundation, a Ugandan organization that researches and implements community development projects aimed at promoting sustainable development. Informed by his personal experience, Derrick actively champions the rights of individuals living with lupus—an invisible disability that remains significantly underdiagnosed in Uganda.

In addition to his role at the MIGHT Foundation, Derrick serves on the board of Democracy Moves, a global organization that builds the capacity of youth organizations to engage in democratic processes. He believes that advancing youth health is critical to achieving international peace and security.

Derrick holds a bachelor's degree in law from Makerere University.

### Follow-on Project

#### **Lupus as an Invisible Disability in Uganda: Advocating for Legal Reform and Awareness**

**Issue:** While the 1995 Constitution of Uganda guarantees disability rights, the current legal framework excludes many individuals with invisible disabilities, such as those affected by chronic illnesses like Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE). SLE is an autoimmune disease that causes the immune system to attack healthy cells, resulting in inflammation and damage to various organs and systems (Lupus Research Alliance, n.d.).

The Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) defines disability as “a physical, mental, or sensory impairment that limits a person’s ability to participate in society,” effectively excluding people with invisible conditions. This definition does not represent the full spectrum of persons with disabilities (PWDs). As a result, it denies individuals access to key programs, such as government-provided sunscreen for PWDs (Bam, 2025). No one should face exclusion from national laws, policies, or services because their disability is not immediately visible.

**Project Objective:** Derrick aims to develop a position paper to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders about the need for a legal definition of disability that includes lupus and other conditions in Uganda. The goal is to advocate for amendments in the law to fully uphold the rights of all PWDs and citizens. To develop the paper, he will conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) and use the findings and insights from these discussions to inform his work.



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**Project Description:** Derrick will focus the project in Kampala, partnering with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) from the district. Specifically, he will hold two FGDs to solicit a range of perspectives and deepen understanding of these issues.

One focus group will include up to eight PWDs, and a second will include up to eight local duty bearers. Duty bearers will include church leaders, local leaders, parents, caregivers, community development officers, representatives from OPDs, journalists, and opinion leaders.

Derrick plans to use the FGDs to raise awareness among PWDs about their rights and will draw on the findings to develop the position paper. The paper will include recommendations to amend the definition of disability in the Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) to ensure it encompasses all PWDs in the country.

As part of his US Fellowship, Derrick seeks to learn how to develop a position paper and use it as a tool for legal advocacy related to lupus, with the goal of applying this knowledge in Uganda.

He will present the completed paper to the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development-Department of Disability and Elderly Affairs as well as to the Ministry of Health and the Parliament of Uganda. He will also share the paper through the websites of relevant organizations, including OPDs and the MIGHT Foundation.

Derrick has secured buy-in and support for his project from the Lupus Initiative Uganda, Purple Butterfly Uganda (a national network of journalists), Bethel Healthcare, and the MIGHT Foundation. These partners will review the policy paper before Derrick presents it to government officials.

## References

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