

The Professional Fellows Program on Inclusive Civic Engagement



Fall 2025 Professional Fellow



Roselyne W. Mburu Program Coordinator, Down Syndrome Society of Kenya (DSSK) Kenya

Roselyne serves as the Program Coordinator at the Down Syndrome Society of Kenya (DSSK), where she builds the capacity of caregivers and parents to support young adults with Down syndrome in making informed decisions.

She leads efforts to connect individuals with Down syndrome to critical services and support networks. Roselyne has also managed projects aimed at expanding access to legal resources and essential services for individuals with intellectual disabilities in Kenya.

She holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Africa Nazarene University.

Follow-on Project

Amplifying the Voices and Support for Persons with Down Syndrome in Kenya

Issue: Individuals with Down syndrome in Kenya face significant barriers to independence and participation in society (Koros & Njagi, 2022). Achieving independence often takes longer for individuals with developmental disabilities, beginning when a child learns to make decisions and continuing as they grow (Chabeda-Barthe et al., 2019). Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in motivating, guiding, and supporting their children, but societal misconceptions often lead to isolation, overprotectiveness, and exclusion, which further hinder children's development (Chabeda-Barthe et al., 2019; Koros & Njagi, 2022).

Parents and caregivers are essential in the development of individuals with Down syndrome but often lack proper training to provide the best support (Koros & Njagi, 2022). Without the right resources, parents and caregivers may unintentionally create more challenges, making it harder for individuals with Down syndrome to fully participate in their communities.

Although Kenya has laws protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, such as the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the Persons with Disabilities Act (2003), these laws have not been fully implemented due to resource shortages and a lack of awareness (Koros & Njagi, 2022). To ensure that individuals with Down syndrome can live happy and fulfilling lives, it is important to focus on self-advocacy and education.



Project Objective: Roselyne aims to work with approximately 20 individuals with Down syndrome, ages 18–40, and their caregivers in Nairobi and Kiambu. She will provide self-advocacy training to help participants understand their rights, build their confidence, and build their skills to speak up for themselves. Additionally, Roselyne will educate caregivers on effective support strategies and their role in protecting the rights of individuals with Down syndrome.

Project Description: Roselyne will recruit 20 individuals with Down syndrome for this project through her work at the Down Syndrome Society of Kenya (DSSK), which has confirmed its support. She aims to empower participants through self-advocacy and skills-building, using international guidelines from Inclusion International (n.d.). Roselyne will adapt the materials to meet local needs, and share the materials for review and input with disability advocates, educators, self-advocates, parents, and organizations like the DSSK, the Kenya Association for the Intellectually Handicapped (KAIH), Differently Talented Society of Kenya (DTSK), and United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK).

Roselyne will conduct monthly workshops, each lasting 2–3 hours, where parents, caregivers, and individuals with Down syndrome will engage in personal storytelling, share their experiences, and provide feedback on the materials. Workshops will cover topics such as self-awareness, rights advocacy, communication skills, and decision-making. The goal is to strengthen participants' confidence, independence, and self-advocacy skills.

Caregivers will also gain a deeper understanding of how to support individuals with Down syndrome effectively, enhancing the quality of care and empowering them to view individuals as capable rather than as needing constant care.

Roselyne will use feedback forms to assess participants' progress in self-advocacy skills, independence, and decision-making. Additionally, follow-up interviews with caregivers will evaluate the changes in attitudes and practices at the family level.

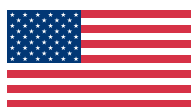
Organizations like DSSK will be key in sustaining this training, using their networks to ensure its ongoing impact. By incorporating this training into their existing programs, they can continue empowering individuals with Down syndrome and their families across Kenya.

References

Chabeda-Barthe, J., Wambua, T., Chege, W. L., Hwaga, D., Gakuo, T., & Rotich, G. C. (2019). Child developmental disabilities, caregivers' role in Kenya and its implications on global migration. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(6), 1010.

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Koros, E., & Njagi, T. (2022). *Report on inclusive employment persons with Intellectual disabilities*. Nairobi, Kenya: Down Syndrome Society of Kenya. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hRn8y1p4C-6BnjvBOv93IYfaiEUfYMwX/view?usp=drive_link



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