

Spring 2023 Professional Fellow

Name: Teopista Nannyanzi
Country: Uganda
Job Title and Employer: Project Coordinator, [Pan African Network of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities \(PANPPD\)](#)
Project Title: Ensuring Political Participation of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities in Uganda

Problem: While Ugandan law guarantees the right to political participation for all citizens above the age of 18, the law also contains provisions that specifically bar people with psychosocial disabilities from exercising this right, defining them as persons of “unsound mind” (Constitution of Uganda, 1995). The exclusion of persons of “unsound mind” is vague, stigmatizing, overly broad, and does not reflect the true capacity of persons with disabilities (PWDs) to make decisions about voting. The exclusion violates PWDs’ right to vote, their right to equality, and their right to freedom from discrimination based on disability. People should not be excluded from the electoral process based on a perceived or actual intellectual disability or psychosocial disability (disability caused by a mental health condition). This project seeks to ensure that all persons who are of voting age, regardless of any disability, be enrolled to vote and be provided with appropriate support, where necessary, to exercise their right to vote.

Project Objective: Teopista aims to develop a position paper to create awareness of the need to provide support to PWDs during the electoral process and advocate for amendments in the law to fully observe the rights of all citizens.

Project Description: Teopista will focus the project in two districts of Uganda, Mukono and Jinja. She will partner with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) from these districts on this effort. Specifically, Teopista will hold four focus group discussions (FGDs) with the goal to solicit diverse perspectives on and understanding of the issues described above.

In each district, Teopista will hold two FGDs, including one focus group with up to eight PWDs and a second focus group with up to eight local duty bearers. Duty bearers will include church leaders, local leaders, parents, caregivers, community development officers, representatives from OPDs, and opinion leaders. In total, Teopista will work with 16 PWDs and 16 duty bearers across the two districts.

Teopista plans to not only use the FGDs to sensitize PWDs on their rights but will use the findings from these FGDs to develop a position paper on this topic. Teopista will present this paper to the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development to push for legal reforms, as the ministry in charge of disability. Teopista will also share this paper on organizations’ websites, including those of OPDs and PANPPD.

Teopista has secured buy-in and support for her project from both the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) and PANPPD.

References

Uganda Constitution, 1995, Amended by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, Act 11/2005 and the Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Act, 21/2005.

