

COVER PAGE

**Advancing Sports for Youth with Disabilities in Uganda -
A Call to Action (working title)**



**SPORTS FOR
YOUTH WITH
DISABILITIES
INITIATIVE
IN UGANDA**



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Supporting Organizations

Purpose of Call to Action Document

Disability in Uganda

Power of Sport

Key Issues

Call to Action: Strategies and Tactics by Sector

Education

Community

Sport Organizations

Mass Media

Healthcare/Rehabilitation

Disability in Uganda

It is estimated that 16% of adults in Uganda or 5 million adults live with a disability. Those with physical disabilities account for the highest proportion of impairment at 34%. They are followed by those with visually-impairments at 22% and hearing impairments at 15%. Studies have estimated that 80% of persons with disabilities are living in conditions of long-term poverty with limited access to education, health facilities, sustainable housing and employment.

It is estimated that there are 2.7 million children with disabilities in Uganda. Less than 10% of children with disabilities attend primary school. And in Uganda, only 2% of children with disabilities reach secondary level education. Children with disabilities are over three times more vulnerable to all sorts of abuse.

The United Nations (UN) recognizes that girls and women of all ages with any form of disability are generally among the more vulnerable and marginalized of society and are often at greater risk, both within and outside the home of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation.

According to numerous sources including the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), and Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC), and reports including the UN's Women Watch, the WHO's World Report on Disability, NUPIDU - Strategy Plan 2015 - 2019, NUPIDU - Uganda Alternative Report 2015, USDC - The state of abuse, protection and promotion of rights of children with disabilities in Uganda 2011 Report, there is evidence that in Uganda:

- There is systematic discrimination against people with disabilities (lack or services, inadequate funding, poor policies and standards)
- There is lack of accessibility (physical environment, communication)
- People with disabilities are not afforded access to equal Human Rights
- People with disabilities, especially children and women, are more vulnerable and marginalized and more likely to suffer various forms of abuse
- Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school and therefore less likely to find employment and more likely to experience poverty
- There is a stigma towards people with disabilities and they are often ostracized and excluded from activities
- People with disabilities often suffer from low self-esteem and self-confidence
- People with disabilities have difficulties accessing vital health care and have poor health outcomes
- People with disabilities do not have equal access to sport, recreation and culture
- People with disabilities are more likely to be living in poverty

Despite disability sensitive legislation and some policies, it has been reported that there is a general lack of tolerance to PWD concerns and ignorance of PWDs and their capacities at a societal level. This inhibits the PWDs, their families and caretakers, and respective organizations access and exercising their rights as dignified citizens of Uganda. The situation for many persons with disabilities, especially those in rural areas of Uganda is dire and action needs to be taken to help these members of Ugandan society.

Overall recommendations to improve the wellbeing and situation of people and children with disabilities by the aforementioned key-stakeholders include:

1. Reducing societal stigma and prejudice by increasing public awareness and understanding of disability
2. Advocating for policy development and implementation within government
3. Providing access to mainstream policies, systems and services
4. Provide adequate funding
5. Enhancing self-esteem and dignity of CWD
6. Redressing human rights abuses, especially for women and girls with disabilities
7. Building supportive local communities
8. Engaging and involving PWD in programming and planning

The Power of Sport

There are a number of stakeholders and programs focused on different aspects of the aforementioned recommendations however there is one arena that can provide incredible benefits in all areas, especially in helping reduce stigma of PWDs, and that is sport for persons with disabilities.

According to the UN Division for Social Policy and Development Disability, sport can help reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with disability because it can transform community attitudes about persons with disabilities by highlighting their skills and reducing the tendency to see the disability instead of the person. Sport can help reshape assumptions about what persons with disabilities can and cannot do. Sir Philip Craven, President of the International Paralympic Committee believes that by showcasing the power of the human spirit and what can be achieved by testing the body to its absolute limits, Paralympic Sport is rendering old stereotypes of disability obsolete. He also believes that viewing the Paralympics can change the minds of millions of peoples in terms of what they think about persons with disabilities, as has been evidenced in a number of paralympic host countries.

Sir Philip also contends that countries with thriving disability sport programs and paralympic participation are more able to stimulate governments to create investment programs or pass new legislation that will benefit many generation of individuals with impairments.

According to the UN and numerous other sources, participation in sport on an individual level is also a powerful tool for personal change for persons with a disability. Those who participate in sport have been empowered to realize their full potential and many advocate for changes in society. Through sport persons with disabilities gain confidence, develop greater independence, social skills, teamwork, and become mentally and physically stronger. They gain skills that they can transfer to their family life, employment, and community engagement.

For women and girls with disabilities, participation in sport is an opportunity to demonstrate their physical ability, helping to reduce gender stereotypes. It is also an opportunity to feel empowered, foster leadership skills, and build strength physically, emotionally and mentally.

The current stakeholders in the disability sport arena in Uganda have already started to create their own local community which can continue to be fostered providing a safe, supportive and inspiring community for persons with disabilities to become engaged with and get involved in either as athletes, administrators, coaches, spectators or supporters.

Each of the recommendations for improving the current situation in Uganda for persons with disabilities can be addressed through promotion and support of sport opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Key Issues

Many incredible organizations and individuals have been working hard at building the capacity of the disability sport system in Uganda so all persons with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation at whatever level they desire whether grassroots/recreations or elite/competitive. Unfortunately, the disability sport sector suffers from the same systematic discrimination against people with disabilities (lack of services, inadequate funding, poor policies and standards) that is present in most sectors in Uganda so there is still much to be done to address the recommendations above to improve the situation for persons with disabilities all across Uganda.

Based on the BlazeSports Sports for Youth with Disabilities in Uganda Summit which took place in Kampala in January, 2017, and the Uganda Disability Sport Summit organized by The Kids League in Kampala in April 2012 these are the specific actions the summits participants put forward to address key issues identified within disability sport in Uganda. A number of issues as well as recommendations and strategies were presented and discussed, this Call-to-Action addresses those identified as most pertinent and relevant.

Key Issue 1: Stigma of Disability in Uganda

The stigma of disability within Ugandan society exists at the individual/family level, at the community level, by sport system and by government agencies. Despite the many efforts of multiple organizations to dispel myths, it is still commonplace and the norm. Sport can help reduce stigma of disability.

Key Issue 2: Lack of Access due to individual, programmatic and structural barriers.

The majority of youth sport and physical activity opportunities are available in schools. Those available in schools are lacking in number and development within the school system. There are few community sport programs due lack of specialized equipment, facilities and trained coaches/staff. Many programs that are available are mostly introductory in nature which is necessary however additional development opportunities within athlete development are needed

Key Issue 3: Lack of participation of girls in sport

There is an overall negative attitude and lack of acceptance towards girls with and without disabilities participating in sport. This has resulted in unfavourable environments - both physical and social, creating greater barriers for girls to participate in sport.

Key Issue 4: Poor systems and infrastructure

Although linked to lack of access, a developed sport infrastructure for people with disabilities is lacking. This includes funding from government and business sponsorships, supporting policy and legislation at the national, district and local levels, a national campaign and an overall strategic plan.

Call to Action by Key Sectors

It is up to each and every stakeholder in the disability and sport arenas to examine their role in improving and creating opportunities for all persons with disabilities, especially youth, to participate in sport. A robust and thriving disability sport system in Uganda would help to reduce the stigma surrounding disability, improving many of the discriminatory practices in place and the overall well being of those with disabilities. Participating in sport has proven to be a powerful tool for empowerment and development of youth and children with disabilities leading to better economic, social, health and emotional well-being.

- 1. Education includes elementary/secondary schools and universities**
- 2. Community-based Organizations**
- 3. Sport Organizations includes disability sport organizations, sport organizations**
- 4. Health includes health care organizations, hospitals and rehabilitation agencies**
- 5. Mass Media includes radio, TV, and print media channels as well as social media and texting**

EDUCATION SECTOR

What's happening now?

- Annual sports competitions available
- Part of the school daily program
- Participants are readily available
- Trained teachers are available in some schools /institutions
- Some facilities are available
- Sports competitions at some school levels
- Integrated sports are promoted in some schools / institutions
- Coaches available as volunteers in some schools / institutions

Gaps

- No policy on adaptive sport.
- Lack of structures in developing adaptive sport through the education system.
- Lack of specialized sporting equipment and facilities.
- Facilitators / trainers are not specially trained to handle adaptive sport.
- Minimal funding for adaptive sport.
- Lack of awareness on adaptive sport
- Rewards to students with disabilities are not available

Education Sector Strategies

E1. Ministry of Education and Sports create policy that requires/recommends Primary and Secondary school districts to offer inclusive physical education during school day and participation in school sports programs and competitions.

E2. Creation of adaptive sports programs in school curriculum - Primary and Secondary School Systems.

E3. School district hold annual District Wide Adaptive Sport Competition to be held between School Districts in collaboration with Uganda Paralympic Committee.

E4. All schools and school districts make adapted school sport programs open and accessible to children and youth with disabilities in the community.

E5. Disability-specific schools offer regular adaptive sport programs from beginner to competitive levels in partnership with National Governing Sport Bodies and Uganda Paralympic Committee.

E6. Universities, school districts ensure that sports facilities and fields, and related physical structures are accessible and meet Uganda's *Accessibility Standards* released in 2010.

E7. All schools and school districts ensure that all girls with and without disabilities are encouraged to participate in physical education and sports.

E8. Schools create a girl-only (with and without disabilities) sport and physical activity programs/clubs that would appeal to them such as dance, running groups, etc.

E9. Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Gender and Social Affairs and businesses provide funding for improving accessibility of Primary and Secondary Schools, Universities and community-based facilities.

COMMUNITY SECTOR

What's happening now?

- Some Disabled Persons Organizations (DPO) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) are using selected adaptive sports as mobilization tool to raise awareness.

Gaps

- Inadequate equipment and infrastructure for adaptive sports.
- There are few adaptive sports in the communities.
- Communities are not aware of the adaptive sports
- Adaptive sports does not attract local funding due to negative attitudes towards disability and people with disabilities.
- Few technical personnel in adaptive sports in the communities
- Inaccessible facilities for adaptive sports.

Community Sector Strategies

CB1. Create and implement a long-term mass media campaign “Uganda Sport For All” (working title) with key messages targeting parents/caregivers, youth/children with disabilities, community leaders to promote participation in sport and benefits of sport, regardless of disability.

CB2. Offer regular and ongoing adaptive sport programs for children and youth with disabilities, ideally in partnership with sport organizations.

CB3. Increase awareness and involvement of parents/families and caregivers in adaptive sport participation.

CB4. Recruit coaches for adaptive sport programs and ensure coaches have participated in minimum adaptive sport coaching requirements offered National Governing Bodies and Uganda Paralympic Committee.

CB5. Ensure that local any sport facilities and fields, and related physical structures are accessible and meet similar guidelines as those developed for schools (Accessibility Guidelines).

CB6. Create Peer to Peer support system for girls lead by (Insert name of organization)

CB7. Advocate for funding by the Ministry of Education and Sport, and local businesses.

SPORTS SECTOR

What's happening now?

- Training for youth is taking place in certain areas.
- Increasing awareness for importance of sports for children with disabilities.
- Outreach to schools.
- Using role models to encourage participation in youth.
- Creating more teams.
- Organizing festivals / galas/ competitions
- Improvising and adapting equipment for different sports where possible.
- Fundraising for certain programs.

Gaps

- Lack of adaptive equipment and poor quality of existing sport equipment.
- Lack of qualified personnel (e.g. coaches, athletes, trainers)
- Limited funding.
- Negative attitude towards sports for people with disabilities
- Accessibility of sports facilities and fields.
- Inability to sustain volunteers.
- Lack of government commitment to sustain programs.
- Less involvement of the corporate sector.

Sports Sector Strategies

S1. Create a national adaptive sport strategy for Uganda

S2. Create physical activity and sport mass media campaign in collaboration with non-governmental health organizations and government health agencies with key messages targeting parents/caregivers, youth/children with disabilities, community leaders to promote participation in sport and benefits of sport, regardless of disability.

S3. Offer regular and ongoing adaptive sport programs for children and youth with disabilities, ideally in partnership with community-based organizations.

S4. Increase awareness and involvement of parents/families and caregivers in adaptive sport participation through national mass media campaign.

S5. Recruit coaches for adaptive sport programs and ensure coaches have participated in minimum adaptive sport coaching requirements including how to include girls.

S6. Develop network of stakeholders for sharing resources, expertise, ideas.

S7. Advocate for additional funding to support adaptive sport organizations to include youth with disabilities and cover costs for adaptive equipment, infrastructure/building improvements.

MASS MEDIA SECTOR

Insert preamble

Mass Media Sector Strategies

MM1. Community-based organizations and non-governmental sport and health organizations in collaboration with government health agencies develop a national physical activity and sport campaign for Ugandans with and without disabilities.

MM2. Educate mass media professionals on the importance of physical activity and sport for all; to portray positive and empowering messages about people with disabilities that align with “Sport For All Uganda” Campaign.

MM3. Profile athletes with a disability focusing on their ability and their involvement in sport not their disability includes Paralympians and emerging Paralympians.

MM5. Cover and/or promote female athletes with and without disabilities so they can be seen as role models for girls thinking about participating in sport.

MM6. Cover and/or promote disability-related events including coaches training, workshops, and adaptive sporting events to help reach greater number of people.

HEALTHCARE/REHABILITATION

What's happening now?

- Increased awareness about the role of sports in health (sports galas by CoRSU, USDC, Special Children Trust)
- Availability of sports equipment dealers
- Networking and collaboration amongst key actors (e.g. annual awareness days)
- Use of therapy at outreach clinics to increase chance of children with disabilities participation in games and sports, sports also used to attract children with disabilities for therapy).

What's missing:

- Knowledge and skills on adapted sports
- Prioritization of sports for children with disabilities
- Limited funding
- Limited government involvement in sports initiatives
- Limited funding to outreach programs in government health facilities
- Limited community / healthcare engagement
- Limited passion and motivation by healthcare / rehabilitation service provider

Strategies

H1. Train healthcare workers and rehabilitation professionals in developing adaptive sport programs

H2. Increase awareness of parents/families and caregivers of the importance adaptive sport participation in the rehabilitation process and for overall health.

H3. Connect children/youth and parents with community-based and sport organizations.

H4. Establish partners with universities and sport federations to create joint activities (sport organizations and education/universities).