

## **REPORT on GDS Youth with Disabilities' Consultations in Kenya**

### **Introduction**

The first Global Disability Summit took place in 2018 co-hosted by the UK government, Kenya government, and International Disability Alliance. The second GDS will take place in February 2022. During this summit period, various forums will be organized including civil society and a virtual youth summit. In the lead up to the forum, various pre-summit events will also take place in November 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event is likely to take place virtually.

Youth with disabilities voices are vital and in the spirit of leaving no one behind, Leonard Cheshire contracted Gifted Community Centre, GCC and Maria Njeri Foundation which are youth with disabilities led organizations in Kenya to gather youth with disabilities' views, realities, and priorities, in so doing, strengthening their understanding of and engagement with the Global Disability Summit.

### **Purpose of Consultancy**

- To build awareness among youth with disabilities of the Global Disability Summit 2018, its commitments and progress towards these.
- To increase engagement of youth with disabilities in the lead up to Global Disability Summit 2022.
- To bring to light and document youth with disability lived experience in relation to the commitments made by the Kenyan Government in 2022
- To empower youth with disabilities to raise their voice and develop key policy asks to take to the Youth Disability Summit in November 2021

### **Summary of the workshops and youth with disabilities' profiles**

The workshops took place nationally divided in regions. There were three physical workshops and one online workshop. The three physical workshops took place in Nyanza region (targeting 6 counties), Coastal region (targeting 6 counties), Nairobi region (targeting nearby counties) and an online session that targeted all other counties which were not represented in the physical sessions.

A total of 123 youth with disabilities were invited and 120 youth with disabilities directly attended and participated, all with different disabilities (deaf, physical, visually impaired, hard of hearing, speech impairment, cerebral palsy, short stature, albinism, autism, and epilepsy). The disabilities were represented as follows: 60% physical, 30% deaf, and other disabilities at 10%. In terms of gender, 60% were female and 40% male.

The participants were drawn from different areas: rural, urban, and sub-urban. Notably, invitations were conducted youth with disabilities themselves thus observing 'Nothing for us without us.'

### **Perspectives, realities, and priorities of youth with disabilities**

It was clear from the workshops that 99% were unaware of GDS2018 and 2022, with 1% aware of GDS2018 though through their own browsing. The youth indicated they never knew, heard, or engaged in the previous GDS. The consultations were their first time to hear and engage. They highlighted that there was the need of awareness, monitoring and reporting for previous commitments before making new commitments. The plea for stakeholders to prioritize implementation and actualization of commitments.

The following were the key themes arising from the sessions:

- Accessible infrastructure, transport system, and equipment.
- Access to affordable education
- Awareness creation on disability inclusion amongst government officials and citizens to eliminate stigma and discrimination.
- Provision of assistive devices customized for different disabilities
- Implementation and domestication of the CRPD
- Monitoring and reporting of the governments progress of their commitments

The following were their direct voices:

*“Why make employment accessible yet the infrastructure and transport system is inaccessible? For instance, living houses do not have lifts, how do I get to that workplace yet where I live is inaccessible already?” Jackline*

*“The government should help us go to school and increase the number of youth with disabilities accessing education.” Charity*

*Some of us have big picture concerning our lives despite being a PWD. The only opportunities that are offered to us is only the technical colleges yet we also have vision and passion in graduating from best university in the country and beyond so at least we should be given that chance.” Elizabeth*

*“As for me (on tackling stigma and discrimination), I think the government and the local people should, treat youths with disabilities as normal humans and give them more opportunities to do something better with their lives. Something that will give them skills and help them to get to know what/how they can do more with their lives as youths.*

*This will change their perception and make a great change on how they view themselves and in the society to as they will be helping on the growth on some of the key areas in our normal lives as humans,” John.*

*“Public transport sector is very poor, there's no implementation which has taken place. Drivers and conductors need awareness, especially about people who are using wheelchairs on public transport are going through hell,” Kennedy.*

*“Develop and implement an inclusive education policy which would cover all children with special needs in both public and private education facilities ensuring they get quality education and sustainable skills to ensure children with disabilities explore their full potential and are not left out,” Brenda*

*“Increase job percentage from 5% to 25% for persons with disabilities.” Jack*

*The government should promote inclusivity in our vocational centres. Most of the TVETs, TTIs are not accommodative to learners with disabilities.” Titus*

*“All government institutions should be disability friendly and they should employ a person with disability to help those with a disability who have gone to seek for help.” Rhoda*

*“There needs to be awareness of the different disabilities and their requirements (for example, epilepsy).” Simon*

*“The donor funding is currently low so we are not able to access medical products for spina bifida. The government needs to make them free.” Deborah*

*“Make education free for us to acquire relevant qualifications to apply for employment.” Ian*

*Government should supply helping devices to the local hospital e.g., sunscreen lotions etc. for easy access for the disabilities.” Rhoda*

*“Set aside a budget for parents of deaf children for them to learn sign language and make it easy to understand and converse with their children.” Ricky*

## **Conclusion**

It was clear from the sessions that youth with disabilities were unaware of legislations, policies, events/forums, and opportunities taking place nationally or internationally. It was also clear that 99% were unaware of GDS18, GDS18 progress reports, and Kenya’s government commitments.

They consistently highlighted an increased need to disseminate information to them through accessible means. They also suggested to be enlightened how they can join networks and organizations from which they can access information and opportunities. Additionally, they stated that the government ought to involve all youth with disabilities in their diversities that is, from rural, urban, and sub-urban; different disabilities, and levels of literacy. Persons with disabilities who are representatives of persons with disabilities in government were mentioned to have little knowledge on the needs of youth with disabilities and therefore an urgent need to create awareness and enlighten them.

Moreover, the thematic areas which kept arising from these sessions included Accessible infrastructure, transport system, and equipment; Access to affordable education; Awareness creation on disability inclusion amongst government officials and citizens to eliminate stigma and discrimination; Provision of assistive devices customized for different disabilities; Implementation and domestication of the CRPD; and Monitoring and reporting of the governments progress of their commitments.

It is, therefore, our recommendation that these respondents be involved in all GDS events, train them on lobbying and advocacy, effectively engage them in different forums to build their confidence and esteem, and support them to access information through accessible means.

*Report Compiled by Sarah Mwikali, Lead Consultant*

### **Facilitators**

*Sarah Mwikali*

*Maria Njeri*

**PHOTOS**



*Coastal Region*



*Nyanza region*



*Videliz, hearing Impairment, Nairobi region*



*Coastal Region*



*Nairobi region*