

MKUKI Coalition
Accessibility and Inclusion Training
in Preparation for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

25th October 2021

Background

Since 1991, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign has drawn attention to violence against women and girls (VAWG). Too often, however, persons with disabilities are excluded from the conversation because of structural inequities and overall inaccessibility. In the lead up to the 2021 16 Days campaign in Tanzania, the MKUKI (Mtandao wa Kupinga Ukatili wa Kijinsia) Coalition held an accessibility training for Tanzanian Gender-Based Violence (GBV) stakeholders in their coalition and in the Tanzania ACT Country Forum, with support from international human rights agencies including the Finnish organisations Abilis Foundation, Fida International, Felm, with contributions from Sense International and UNFPA. The purpose of the training was to bridge knowledge gaps and introduce the stakeholders to tools for ensuring accessibility in physical and virtual spaces.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the training was held virtually on the Zoom platform. Participation was noted to have been higher than at other MKUKI Coalition events/trainings and attendance showed representation across sectors, including the government and NGOs from diverse regions of the country. Women with disabilities were well-represented, and Tanzanian Sign Language (TSL) interpretation was provided. The training was highly collaborative and participants displayed great enthusiasm, such that call drop-off rates were very low despite internet connectivity challenges and other disruptions common to virtual meetings.

Highlights

The session opened with remarks from Anna Kulaya (MKUKI Coalition National Coordinator) who pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inclusion challenges faced by people with disabilities, as measures such as facial covering and social distancing have made interaction that much more difficult. Dr. Timo Voipio (Head of Cooperation - Embassy of Finland) then expressed appreciation for the knowledge and learning that was going to be shared.

The following were the objectives of the training, as outlined by Patricia Mwaikenda (ELCT):

- Understanding the basics of accessibility
- Increasing accessibility of communication, events, and meetings of the 16 Days Campaign 2021
- Ensuring that GBV messaging is inclusive of disability issues
- Changing/improving the design of future campaigns and services

Next followed a fictitious scenario of Rehema, a woman with multiple disabilities, whose husband helps with basic personal tasks but is also abusive towards her. The story pointed out obstacles that Rehema faced in getting assistance and invited participants to consider how the situation might have been different had Rehema not had disabilities and not been a woman. The story served to illuminate the intersection of women's rights, disability rights/accessibility challenges, and GBV. The introductory section ended with an outline of the various forms and associated risk factors of GBV faced by persons with disabilities including:

- Perceived vulnerability by gender, age and type of disability
- Lack of sexual and reproductive education
- Ignorance about the severity of the crime
- Perpetrators perceiving sex as a 'favour' to the victim
- Beliefs that sex with persons with disabilities is safe or beneficial to the perpetrator
- Increased vulnerability through poor care and neglect

What is accessibility?

Disability can be defined as the relationship between a person's impairment and their environment. When inclusive and comprehensively accessible environments are provided, an impairment on its own would not lead to disability.

Accessibility, as introduced by Rafiki Msafiri (Abilis Foundation), is when people with disabilities are able to do or obtain what they need using no more effort or time than a person without. Protected by national and international laws and conventions, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), accessibility is a need only for some but is of benefit to everyone.

Different disabilities have different needs, such as wheelchair ramps for buildings (physical accessibility), as well as communication considerations for persons with sensory disabilities including braille (visual accessibility) and sign language interpreters (auditory accessibility).

The overarching goal of accessibility, as presented by Benjamin Kihwele (Sense International), is for people with disabilities to be able to interact with and utilise their surroundings without obstacle. The measures for ensuring and improving accessibility include:

- Needs assessment according to disability
- Planning for the necessary accommodations
- Implementation e.g. infrastructural modifications, appropriate communication methods
- Evaluate efficacy and continue adjusting according to needs

The Constitution of Tanzania (1977) makes clear the right of everyone to access information, and the Tanzania Persons with Disabilities Act (2010) specifically stipulates the necessity of sign language interpreters to enable Deaf people to wholly participate in society. However, there are still many aspects of these legal protections that remain to be strengthened. Everyone has been reached when even the most vulnerable is reached.

Content is best created with accessibility in mind from the beginning (versus trying to adapt already-made content after the fact). As presented by James O'Sullivan (Abilis Foundation), the following accessibility considerations should be taken into account.

- **Design for the need:** low vision/Blind, hard-of-hearing/Deaf, low tech resource settings
- **Documents:** clear large font, high contrast, screen reader compatible (e.g. .doc or .pdf)
- **Images:** Alt-Text (alternative text) descriptions, diverse and disability-positive depictions
- **Videos:** subtitles, sign language overlay, microphone for clear audio, YouTube features
- **Social media:** Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), get feedback from users

In the context of COVID-19, virtual events and meetings have become the default – a format that increases participatory challenges for those with audio-visual and sensory needs. Tuomas Tuure (Abilis Foundation) provided best practices around digital accessibility for ICT, such as:

- Allow for accessibility requests beforehand; involve people with disabilities in planning
- Consider technological device/internet access limitations, especially in the global south

- Inclusive invitations: easy registration and clear event description and logon instructions
- Provision of non-internet/computer participation options, such as telephone dial-in
- Audio considerations: clear audio, headsets where possible, captions, sign language
- Visual considerations: good lighting, high contrast, clear signage, tactile features
- Prepare all materials in an accessible format and distribute before and after the event
- Welcome feedback after the event/meeting; ensuring accessibility is an ongoing process

After these presentations, the participants were divided into four (4) groups to work on the below assignments.

Prompt	Response
<p>Group 1: You are tasked with preparing a national media plan for the Lake Zone for the 16 Days of Activism.</p> <p>1. Who do you involve in planning?</p> <p>2. What does your media plan need to ensure accessibility?</p> <p>3. What does the budget need to account for in order to ensure inclusion?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involve stakeholders: have material vetted by those actually living with accessibility needs in order to address any gaps 2. Choose the best mass communication format per the target audience 3. Budget should include infrastructural modifications to ensure accessibility, as well as adequate gender representation
<p>Group 2: You are tasked with organising the launch event for the 16 Days of Activism.</p> <p>1. Where will you hold the event?</p> <p>2. Who do you invite?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At a venue physically accessible to people with various forms of disabilities 2. Duty-bearers, government officials, religious leaders, politicians, media, disability service providers, organisations for disabled persons, organisations for marginalised groups 3. Physical and content accessibility (handouts, signage, ramps, TSL interpreters, media etc.)

<p>3. What budget items do you have to ensure accessibility?</p>	
<p>Group 3: You are tasked with organising the Caravan of Change for the 16 Days of Activism. This is a bus carrying activists across Tanzania spreading awareness and listening to the community.</p> <p>1. Who do you invite to the regional stops?</p> <p>2. What does your budget look like?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional and local government leadership, social welfare officers at various levels, customary elders, traditional healers, women’s groups, <i>bodaboda</i> (motorbike) groups, parents (especially parents of children with disabilities), social media influencers, prisoners if possible. 2. TSL interpretation, media advertisements, social media promotion
<p>Group 4: You are participating in compiling media messaging about GBV towards people with disabilities for the 2021 16 Days of Activism.</p> <p>1. Think about 2-3 slogans targeting policymakers</p> <p>2. Think about 2-3 slogans targeting the community</p> <p>3. Think about 2-3 slogans to inform people with disabilities about their right to live peacefully</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. > People with disabilities have the same rights as others, involve them in all areas of decision-making, e.g. parliament, local government, at community and national levels > Disability rights are human rights, don’t exclude us! 2. Women with disabilities shouldn’t be left behind, should be included in all areas Having a child with a disability isn’t a curse or a shame, don’t lock them up inside, involve them in all aspects of life Abandon superstitious beliefs about people with disabilities e.g. albinos 3. Nothing about us without us! Demand your rights! Take steps to rescue people with disabilities from GBV.

Following the breakout sessions, James O’Sullivan (Abilis Foundation) shared more tools and resources for participants to use as references for accessibility best practices.

Fingo Toolkit

<https://fingo.fi/en/fingo-powerbank/learning-material/technology-and-digital-accessibility-toolkit-for-ngos/>

CBM Digital Accessibility Toolkit

https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/CBM-Digital-Accessibility-Toolkit.pdf

UN Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines

https://www.unicef.org/peru/sites/unicef.org.peru/files/2021-10/un_disability-inclusive_communication_guidelines.pdf

Accessible Communication Formats GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility GOV.UK

<https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/02/dos-and-donts-on-designing-for-accessibility/>

Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action

<https://worldblindunion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Accessibility-GO-A-Guide-to-Action-WBU-CBM-Global.pdf>

Due to time constraints, the question-and-answer period was omitted; instead, a vote of thanks was given by Aginatha Rutazaa (Tusonge Community Development Organisation) who made suggestions that will be included in the Way Forward section below.

Official closing remarks were then issued by Aneth Gerana (Director - FUWAVITA) and Maja Hansen (UNFPA). Gerana, with the assistance of a TSL interpreter, praised the inclusivity of the training for providing interpretation throughout. She expressed sorrow over the death of disability activist Blandina Sembu, underscoring the urgency of strengthening anti-VAWG efforts and the need for stakeholders need to be proactive in advocating for and protecting disability rights. Gerana also emphasised that many social services, such as the police and COVID helplines, have “call this number for assistance” yet many Deaf are not able to effectively use the audio function of telephones and thus cannot easily access these services. Gerana ended with an exhortation for the 16 Days Campaign 2021 to take accessibility and inclusion into account. Hansen followed this up by also extending thanks on behalf of UNFPA and reiterating the agency’s commitment to accountability around GBV prevention efforts.

Key Takeaways

- Nothing about us without us: to ensure accessibility, include persons with disabilities in planning events and content
- Accessibility facilitates inclusion
- COVID-19 pandemic measures e.g. mask-wearing, social distancing, phone helplines, have heightened obstacles to accessibility and inclusion; socioeconomic effects have exacerbated GBV, those with disabilities remain at greater risk
- Virtual communications and gatherings call for improved digital equity and accessibility
- Physical accessibility = arrival > entry > mobility > utility: wheelchair ramps, few/no stairs, clear signage, good lighting, wide passageways
- Content accessibility = clear large font, good contrast, ALT-text, subtitles, disability-positive imagery, sign language overlay video
- Digital accessibility = easy registration, live captioning, clear audio, good facial lighting, non-internet participation options, accessible format materials

Way Forward

- **Ensure implementation of accessibility tools during the 16 Days of Activism 2021.** The knowledge acquired in this training must be put to use throughout the campaign, the learning should be converted into action.
- **Avail multilingual materials at future similar workshops.** This training was trilingual, with participants presenting in English, Kiswahili, and/or Tanzania Sign Language (TSL), and serving as impromptu translators for one another. This ad hoc approach leaves room for inadvertent missed information and misinformation; it was therefore proposed that, in future, learning materials (e.g. slides) should be provided in both English and Kiswahili, to enable those not fluent in either to follow along easily.
- **Ensure effective and in-depth capacity building via focused trainings and evaluation.** MKUKI would like similar trainings in future, potentially covering fewer topics to allow for more in-depth learning. It was also proposed that a survey be conducted after the 16 Days Campaign 2021 to assess which measures were actually implemented and with what efficacy.
- **Make training materials and reports available to participants to ensure wider reach.** Aginatha Rutazaa (Tusonge Community Development Organisation) requested that resource handouts be provided after future similar trainings for use

as reference materials, and encouraged the participants to continue reflecting on the identified knowledge gaps. It was also suggested that the training opportunity and its outcomes be promoted on social media and other channels to spur awareness, involvement, and similar educational events.

- **Create opportunities for continuous learning.** Rutazaa also suggested consideration of a program for continued collaborative learning about accessibility and inclusion, to cement the knowledge acquired in this training.

Acknowledgements

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Partners

Abilis Foundation funds projects that promote the Human Rights, participation, independent living, education and employment of Persons with Disabilities in developing countries. Special attention is given to girls and women with disabilities.

ACT Alliance is the largest coalition of Protestant and Orthodox churches and church-related organisations engaged in humanitarian, development and advocacy work in the world, consisting of more than 130 members working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalised people. The ACT Tanzania Forum has 12 members, including 3 local members and 6 international members, and 2 observers.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is the federation of Lutheran churches in Tanzania, an organization which reaches out to the people of Tanzania offering worship opportunities, Christian education, and numerous social services, including disaster response, healthcare, and AIDS education and relief.

Felm is an agency of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELF) for its international work. Felm currently works in 30 countries with more than 100 partner churches and organisations. As one of the largest Finnish civil society organisations working in global development Felm also receives funding from Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Fida International is a Finnish faith-based organisation working in global missions, community development and humanitarian aid in 50 countries. We aim to bring hope and a better future to all nations – especially to children living in poverty.

MKUKI Coalition is a network comprising 70 Tanzanian organizations collaborating together to uphold the goal of ending gender-based violence in rural and urban areas.

Sense International is a global charity supporting people with deafblindness in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal, Tanzania, Peru, Romania and Uganda.

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) is a Pan-African women's rights network which is dedicated to promoting and strengthening strategies that link law and development to increase women's participation and influence at the community, national, region and international levels.

Participating Organisations

- Abilis Foundation
- ACT Forum Tanzania
- Civic and Legal Aid Organisation
- Comprehensive Support to Persons with Disabilities (COSUPED)
- Door of Hope Tanzania
- Embassy of Finland - Tanzania
- Engender Health
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)
- Felm
- Fida International
- Finnish Mission - Kenya
- Finnish Mission - Uganda
- Free Pentecostal Churches of Tanzania (FPCT)
- Full Gospel Church Kenya
- Furaha Ya Wanawake Wajasiriamali Kwa Viziwi Tanzania (FUWAVITA)
- Global Peace Foundation Tanzania
- Health Integrated Multisectoral Services (HIMS) Arusha
- HIMIZA Development
- Kimamba Youth Organisation
- Morogoro Paralegal Centre
- Mtandao wa Vikundi vya Wakulima Mkoa wa Kilimanjaro (MVIWAKI)
- Mwanasatu Development Organization (MWADO)
- Mwanza Youth and Children Network (MYCN)
- Sauti ya Haki Tanzania
- Save Community Health Initiative (SACOHEI)
- Save the Children
- SDA Special School for Learners with Intellectual Disability Kenya
- Sense International - Tanzania
- Shirikisho la Vyama Vya Watu Wenye Ulemavu Tanzania (SHIVYAWATA)
- Sign Language Interpreters
- Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS) - Kilwa Office
- Tanzania Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Women, and Children
- Transformative and Integrative Build Out for All (TIBA)
- Tusonge Community Development Organization - Moshi
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Waking the Giant Initiative
- Women and Children Welfare Support (WOCWELS)
- Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)
- Women in Mining Association
- Women Promotion Centre
- Women Wake Up (WOWAP) Dodoma
- Youth with Disabilities Community Programme
- Youth with Disabilities Organisation
- Youth Partnership Countrywide (YPC) - Kibaha