

AmplifyChange addresses the sexual and reproductive health and rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWD)

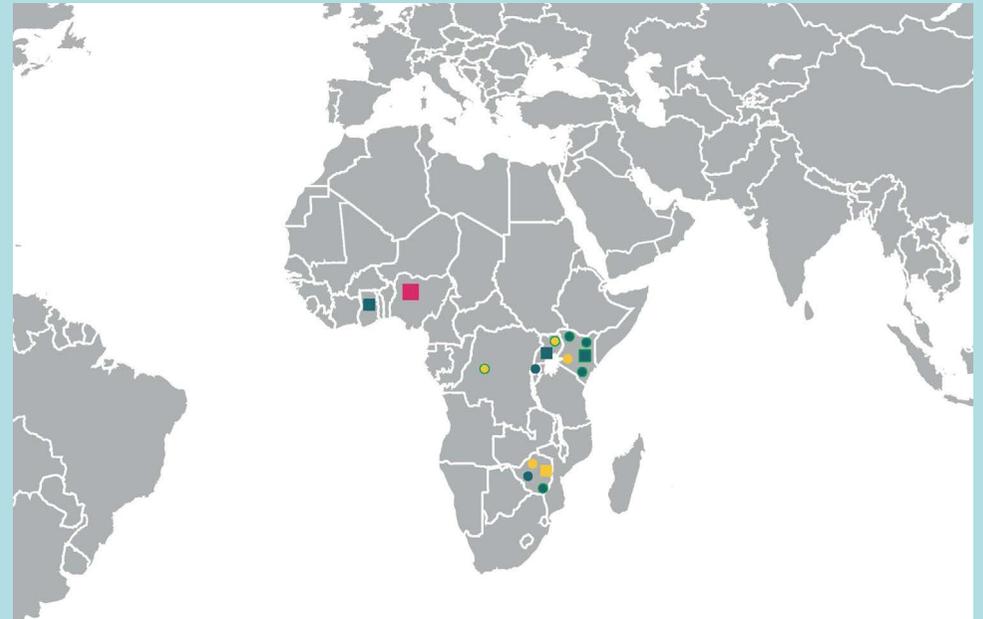
There are more than one billion people living with disabilities in the world today, with the average global disability prevalence rate estimated to be 15.6%¹. Women face a higher prevalence of disability at 19.2% as compared to 12% amongst men².

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities commits states to support the full and effective enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights by girls and young women with disabilities. Yet, they still disproportionately face SRHR violations³. The lack of disaggregated data hinders the efforts of civil society organisations to monitor vulnerability amongst people living with disability and track progress to ensuring their SRHR are fulfilled.

AmplifyChange is supporting 21 grants working on SRHR and Persons with Disabilities

The grants cover 10 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and are supported by a total funding of over 1 million EUR across the different AmplifyChange grant types.

Disability rights activists have a motto of ‘nothing about us, without us’. We have adhered to this as half of our grantees are organisations led by persons with disabilities and all our grants have persons with disabilities fully involved in the work they do. Most projects focus on strengthening SRHR for people living with a specific type of disability – the majority focus on hearing impairments and deaf populations. However, the overall portfolio includes grantees working with people living with all types of disability, including albinism.



¹UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, *Sexual and reproductive health and rights of young women and girls with disabilities*.

²Frohman, C. & Meekosha, H. (2012) 'Recognition, respect and rights: Women with disabilities in a globalised world.' In *Disability and Social Theory*, Edited by Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes and Lennard Davis, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

³Manjoo, Rashida (2012) Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; UN General Assembly; UN Doc. A/67/227.

Lessons learned: challenges and successes

Challenges

No two settings are the same, but common challenges include:

- **Disproportionate vulnerability to rape, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence:** PWDs face acute levels of GBV, rarely reported to authorities and with limited documentation in academic or other formal socio-demographic research
- **Stigmatising myths and misconceptions around PWDs' SRHR:** PWDs can be subject to extreme generalisations such as perceptions of asexuality or hypersexuality. They are often not taken seriously as victims or credible witnesses of sex-related crimes
- **Lack of access to SRHR services, resources and information:** Disability-friendly services are rare, whether in terms of physical accessibility or service providers' attitudes, which has a detrimental effect on demand. Due to high poverty levels, persons with disabilities face financial barriers in accessing services, while communication challenges with providers are a barrier to confidentiality – often relying on a third party having to interpret sensitive, personal conversations. These third party interpreters are often parents or carers
- **Lack of disaggregated data:** Regular demographic or health surveys rarely include data collected on disability status. This is a barrier to the political prioritisation of SRHR issues amongst persons with disabilities, leaving them invisible in policy debates
- **Absence of specific policies and laws and/or presence of harmful ones:** Many policies or laws do not consider persons with disabilities as equal citizens, whether it is through degrading words or by allowing judges, healthcare professionals, family members and guardians to make decisions on behalf of girls and young women with disabilities regarding contraception and motherhood for instance

Successes

Grantees are responding through context-specific strategies including:

- Strengthening policies, laws and public-sector budgets to ensure that they are inclusive by mainstreaming disability while acknowledging specific needs
- Improving parent-child/ Carer-child communications: parents and tutors are key actors for young people and adolescents' access to information, resources and services. This is especially true for those with disabilities who are often more dependent and less likely to attend secondary school where SRHR information is provided
- Generating new evidence to document the stigma around the sexuality of persons with disabilities
- Use of data for evidence-based advocacy to gain recognition of the rights of PWD by duty bearers

- Addressing discriminatory attitudes towards sexuality of PWD and sign language training for police officers and law enforcers to support victims of GBV to seek justice



Federation of Deaf Women Network Kenya has successfully supported the prosecution of sexual abuse cases on behalf of deaf women by training police officers in sign language, providing professional interpreters, and ensuring that judges and probation officers changed their attitudes towards women and girls with disabilities.



Federation of Deaf Women Network Kenya

Strengthening   Kenya



- Working with the media, especially the radio, to reach persons with disabilities who are often confined to their homes, while increasing media awareness for PWDs' SRHR as well as their capacities on rights-based messaging
- Creating access to adapted formats for SRHR information and resources for instance with large font and self-explanatory language
- Supporting persons with disabilities to become their own advocates and build partnerships through networking with decision makers, sharing strategies and tactics and providing them with research to support policy development
- Empower persons with disabilities and challenge social norms with creative and innovative approaches such as mixed ability art performances where persons with disabilities and able-bodied persons perform together

Dance Into Space Foundation

Opportunity   Kenya

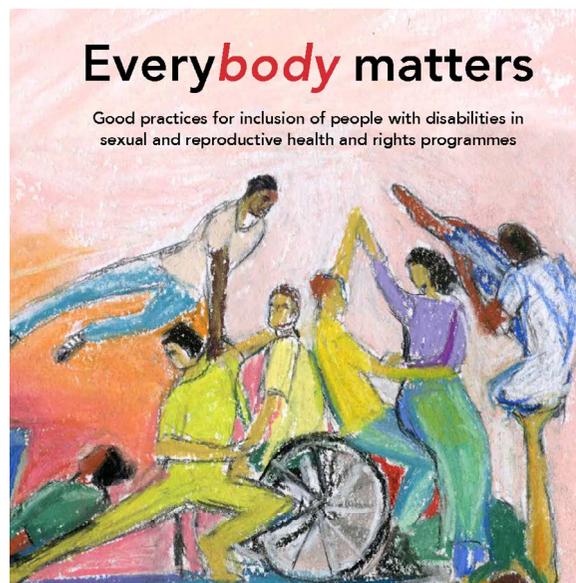
Dance Into Space Foundation created contemporary dance performances through which men and women with disabilities were able to share their stories in front of their village, while becoming local advisers on SRHR. It has put an end to many misconceptions and improved both the participants' self-esteem and social status. One participant, Michael Oturi, whose personal story featured in the performance, found that the project not only improved his self-worth and esteem, but also greatly lifted his social status by giving him the opportunity and confidence to publicly conduct a condom demonstration and facilitate a community discussion on SRHR issues.

How we are learning as a Fund

- **Mentorship:** Closely cooperating with grantees throughout the grant set up and implementation periods. The relationship developed at the beginning of the grant cycle is essential for developing bespoke advice and support as well as identifying general areas of support for grantees
- **Digital Communities:** We have developed a community of practice with PWD grantees to network and share strategies to tackle common challenges. Grantees showcase outcomes and communications materials. The community was established through WhatsApp because grantees themselves were using the platform to communicate in looser coalition or movement-structures in contexts. The group has 38 members in 12 countries who have shared more than 2,000 messages and 100 types of media

This group has already:

- **Co-developed guidance on managing sexual violence.** The guide collates advice from across the group on how grantees should respond to the medical, legal and social support implications of uncovering a case of sexual violence against a young person with a disability
- **Supported members to identify and apply for funding opportunities**
- **Developed 6 case studies**, including 2 selected and 2 quoted in '[Everybody Matters](#)' - an international publication on Disability and SRHR by the Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development and Share-Net
- **Amplified organisations' voices at an SRHR expert meeting with the UN Rapporteur for PWD** and developed content for the [Evidence in Global Disability and Health](#) event organised by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Public Health Foundation of India



 AmplifyChange
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Today we are highlighting the fantastic work of our PWD-led grantees at the Making Inclusion Work! SRHR and Disability event by DCDD and Share-Net in the Hague.
<http://bit.ly/2A0kJxh> #SRHR #advocacyleaders



Going forward we will

- **Linking and learning:** Create opportunities for grantees to connect, share and learn from each other through diverse platforms, including through digital communities
- **User-centred design:** Capture learning in grantee-centred technical guidance and organisational development resources designed in conjunction with users: our grantees
- **Amplify Southern voices:** Provide opportunities for grantees to boost their profile internationally and contribute thought leadership on disability and SRHR
- **Fund the hard places, not just windows of opportunity or the easiest environments to work in:** Continue to support initiatives where they are most needed, including in challenging contexts where SRHR is weakest or civil society movements are least developed
- **Long-term, results-based financing:** Provide renewal funding to support existing successful grantees to build on and further develop their initial projects

More information

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- [AmplifyChange Tweets from The Hague: Presenting the work of PWD-led grantees at the Making Inclusion Work! SRHR and Disability event via WhatsApp](#)
 - [‘Sign Language for Service Providers’ - FEDWEN-K, AmplifyChange blog](#)
 - [‘Breaking Barriers with Performance Art’ - Dance Into Space Foundation, AmplifyChange blog](#)
 - [‘The importance of evidence on Gender-based violence for deaf women and girls in Kenya’ - Deaf Empowerment Society of Kenya, AmplifyChange blog](#)
 - [Watch a video by Dance Into Space Foundation on Instagram \(@amplifychange\)](#)
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AmplifyChange social media:



Illustrations by De Beeldvormers

Version 1 (Jan 2018) – this document will be regularly revised and updated with feedback from grantees and other stakeholders