

# The Changing Times #EqualWorld

## Opinion

"If we want employment to be truly inclusive, we must stamp out disability discrimination"

## Ask the experts

How can world leaders tackle inequality in their global development programmes?

## How to...

Five practical steps to make sure women and girls with disabilities are not left behind

## Sport

Paralympian Taonere Banda: "I want the world to know we have the capability"

# Young people with disabilities are key to SDGs breakthrough



**BREAKING NEWS:** Campaigners have called on global leaders to consult young people with disabilities if they want to boost progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Disability rights campaign Equal World says leaders must involve young people with disabilities in discussions about the upcoming Pact for the Future. If member states can successfully negotiate the pact, it will be agreed during the Summit of the Future, which takes place in New York in September 2024.

At a briefing for member states run by Equal World, campaign ambassador and disability activist Abia Akram said: "An ambitious

Pact for the Future is critical to secure a more prosperous future for all people. But it's vital that people with disabilities, who make up 16 per cent of the world's population, are not excluded. They must be engaged and play an active role at every stage of the consultation process."

Equal World youth representative Tapiwa Matsikira has also spoken about the importance of including young people with disabilities in global development. He told world leaders: "I urge you to listen to and learn from the lived experience and expertise of young persons with disabilities. Open space for meaningful engagement with us so we can find the solutions

that are needed with you. We can do it. Let's start something together, and we can build something powerful."

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were agreed in 2015, but have been plunged into uncertainty because of failures to meet their central promise to 'leave no one behind'.

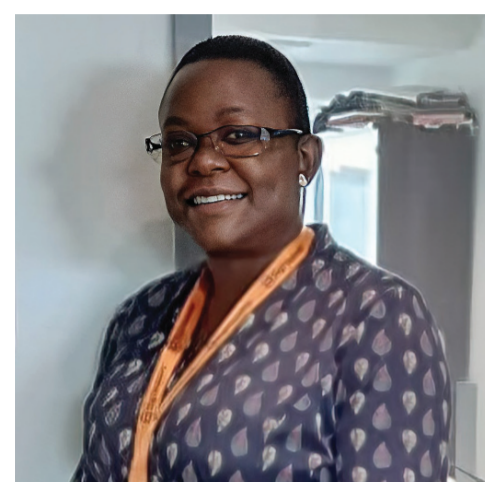
The Equal World campaign has repeatedly highlighted the need for disability rights to be upheld and fully included in the SDGs. The campaign is currently calling for the lived experience of young people with disabilities to be meaningfully included in the Pact for the Future consultative process.



Disability campaigner Abia Akram has urged world leaders to act



# “To boost inclusive employment, we must transform attitudes to disability”



By Edith Kagoya

**W**e know discrimination is a huge barrier for young jobseekers with disabilities. So as part of Sightsavers' flagship employment programme in Uganda, we tested a new way to improve employment rates.

We focused on behaviour change: influencing communities, families and the private sector to act more positively toward people with disabilities.

We identified two key beliefs that we wanted to encourage: to see young people as equal economic actors; and to see them as valued members of the community. To achieve this, we created activities with their families, local employers and communities to increase awareness and acceptance of young people with disabilities.

Our economic empowerment programme provided vocational training for people with disabilities, helping to transform attitudes within the community.

We also organised careers fairs that brought communities together to raise awareness about the talents and capabilities of young people. These events enabled them to display

their skills, products and services to potential employers and customers, and offered valuable experience engaging with them.

At the fairs, employers who had already hired young people with disabilities shared positive testimonies about their work, which helped to boost their credibility among other businesses.

Other activities at the fair included motivational speeches, team-building exercises and performances by local musicians, all aimed at making the event fun and celebratory.

Importantly, fairs like these provide a safe and supportive environment for young people to build their confidence talking to potential employers and customers. They also enable

**“We focused on influencing communities and families to act more positively towards people with disabilities**

young people to interact and learn from each other, helping them to foster a sense of community and expand their professional networks.

To challenge some of the negative perceptions of disability, we wanted to increase the presence of young people with disabilities in a positive way.



Sightsavers has provided vocational training for young people with disabilities, which has helped to change attitudes in the community

We achieved this through 'market activation': stalls were set up in local markets for young people to display and sell their products or services. It enabled them to 'learn by doing' – they tested and improved their skills in marketing and negotiation through direct contact with community members, customers and potential employers.

As well as helping to build their confidence, this demonstrated to the community and local employers that young people with disabilities are skilled, productive members of society.

To improve the sustainability of the project, we wanted to ensure these young people had the ongoing support of their families. We ran sessions in local

communities to educate and involve their families in the project and answer any questions about their child's employment. These forums were also useful for uncovering and addressing any issues at home that were preventing the young person from being successful in their new role.

Through the sessions, we saw an increased commitment and understanding around disability rights from families.

In Uganda, there is a common misconception that having a disability means you are unable to work. By engaging directly with families and showing the benefits of young people with disabilities being in employment, we helped to transform those negative attitudes.

Edith Kagoya is a programme manager at Sightsavers. She is based in Uganda, and specialises in disability inclusion.



## Summit of the Future

September 2024  
United Nations,  
New York



# Ask the experts: disability advocates answer your queries

**This week's question:** “As a world leader, part of my work to tackle global inequality is to know the barriers that need addressing. What factors are overlooked or under-resourced, and how can I ensure they're more adequately considered to make global development more inclusive?”



Sylvester,  
Kenya



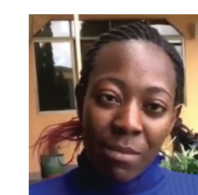
Ese,  
Ghana

“Visibility for disability rights in my country would really help. Here in Ghana, the rights of people with disabilities are not being respected, and a lot of people's rights are infringed upon.

“Some people are not even aware they have rights, or don't believe their rights are of any value. So when the African Disability Protocol (ADP) is ratified to protect human rights, it will empower so many people with disabilities.

“The rights of people with disabilities and mental illness need to be upheld. For far too long, these groups have been marginalised. Through public education, we can learn to respect and give equal opportunities to these groups, so they can be given a chance to contribute to society.”

**“Small changes can open doors for people with disabilities**



Rose,  
Uganda

“There are so many barriers that women with disabilities face while accessing services relating to gender-based violence. There are accessibility challenges: some places have many steps. A person with a wheelchair may not be in a position to reach the offices they're supposed to access the services from.

“Another thing: you often find that the information provided for women with disabilities is not in accessible formats.”



Lucy,  
Kenya

“The county government needs to know how many people with disabilities there are in the county, the qualifications they have, or the number of children with disabilities enrolled in schools. We also need to develop policies to support the implementation of the Disability Act.”

“What needs to change is the addition of necessary facilities to cater for the varying degrees of disabilities that people have. If people are visually impaired, we should have machines with JAWS screenreading software. It's just an additional computer program – it's not particularly complicated.

“If they are deaf, have a sign language interpreter. Or if people are physically disabled, you can install simple ramps. You don't even have to change

**“Some people are not aware they have rights, or don't believe their rights are of any value**

your infrastructure to the point where you have permanent cement ramps – you can just buy portable ones that can be placed over steps.

“These small changes may look very drastic to you, but they open doors for people with disabilities, who could end up having a level of innovation that you might never have previously known.”

## We start with sight, but we don't stop there

Protecting sight | Preventing disease | Fighting for inclusion

[www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org)



Sightsavers



# Inclusion in action around the world

Everyone has the right to access health care, education and employment opportunities and participate in political processes. We've captured photographs of young people with disabilities who are claiming their human rights to learn, earn and thrive



Fallou uses adapted braille materials in a maths lesson at his school in Senegal, which is taking part in an inclusive education project



Husband and wife Ayesha and Jalil (centre and right) carry out surveys to identify and support people with disabilities, including Nipa (left)



A participant of the Inclusion Works training and employment programme sits in his office at the Access Bangladesh Foundation



Graduates from Kenya's IT Bridge Academy, which runs IT training for students with disabilities



Divinah (left) and Kibwana are students at Kenya's National Industrial Training Authority. They took part in an IT networking course in Nairobi as part of an employment programme for people with disabilities



Young men and women in Nigeria take part in games and workshops to promote access to inclusive family planning for people with disabilities



Akinpelumi, 23, who has a hearing impairment, is taking part in an inclusive employment project in Nigeria to boost his skills and job prospects



# Letters to the editor

## Everyone needs a seat at the table

I would like to live in a world that's inclusive: a world that sees me as I am, that sees my capabilities. I also want to live in a world that's accessible, where there's equity and equality, where persons with disabilities sit at the table where the policies are being made.

The policymakers that create the policies have little to no experience of what persons with disabilities go through and it's unfortunate, because they tend to give one-size-fits-all solutions, and that itself is discriminatory.

We should be involved and have seats at the table, but not only seats: we need our voices to be heard. We need to air our concerns and our opinions, and contribute to the policies that are being made.

We need persons with disabilities to be involved in the policies that affect them directly. It's upon us - everyone - to make sure no one is left behind.  
**Victoria, Kenya**

## There's still more to do on inclusion

As a person with a disability, it's good to know your rights. But a lot of people with disabilities grow up not knowing that they have the same right to things like education and employment as everyone else, and there's a lot of discrimination.

We need to change this. Progress is happening already: now, when our government holds meetings, they include a person with a disability as a first priority. Through this campaign of inclusiveness, in all public buildings and government

buildings there is now an accessible ramp. In government programmes, there must be access for people with disabilities. But we have further to go.  
**Atugonza, Uganda**

## Our request? Leaders need to listen and learn

To create an equal world, we need to be heard. And for us to be heard, you need to be willing to listen. Everybody has the right to fundamental rights - to work, to health, to every special amenity. For us to be given a chance to achieve this, you need to be willing to listen. You need to try and learn, because knowledge is power. Information is power. So please do not be ignorant on the issues that affect us.  
**Elsie, Kenya**

## Governments must take action

I faced difficulties getting educated, because there was not a proper transport system for me. I have tried for jobs, but faced many difficulties.

We disabled persons face many difficulties every day. That's why I want the government to develop a system for disabled persons, so that they can travel and get education and prosper in life, and also get proper health services.

I want the government to preserve the rights of the people with disabilities. Their right to access food, transport, education; these things needs to be ensured.  
**Jannatul, Bangladesh**



## Today's word search

We've hidden 12 words related to disability inclusion in the puzzle grid below. Can you find them all?

F	S	A	L	R	W	T	V	I	C	O	D	E	P
O	P	E	D	U	C	A	T	I	O	N	M	Q	A
P	D	L	E	F	A	X	P	F	L	P	H	Y	R
P	G	E	Q	R	V	M	B	F	L	A	J	P	T
O	H	A	I	C	O	P	T	O	A	Y	L	I	I
R	Y	D	E	N	I	A	Y	P	B	S	D	H	C
T	R	E	Z	O	C	M	E	D	O	L	T	S	I
U	P	R	U	G	E	L	Q	E	R	E	D	R	P
N	K	S	P	N	C	D	U	P	A	U	D	E	A
I	J	H	T	W	M	R	I	S	T	S	B	N	T
T	R	I	G	H	T	S	T	X	I	C	N	T	I
Y	Q	P	V	B	A	U	Y	K	O	O	P	R	O
D	E	V	E	L	O	P	M	E	N	T	N	A	N
R	G	S	D	I	P	N	E	U	Y	C	S	P	A

- Inclusion
- Employment
- Participation
- Opportunity
- Collaboration
- Rights
- Partnership
- Leadership
- Equity
- Voice
- Education
- Development

## Want to share your opinion?

Email [campaign@sightsavers.org](mailto:campaign@sightsavers.org)  
Visit [www.sightsavers.org/equalworld](http://www.sightsavers.org/equalworld)  
Follow us on social media: @Sightsavers

# How to make sure women and girls with disabilities are not left behind

## Our guide to ensuring everyone is included in global development

Unless women and girls with disabilities are consulted and included, the targets to achieve universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals will not be met.

According to UN Women, gender mainstreaming is 'a strategy for making women's concerns and experiences an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, so that women and men benefit equally.' Here's what you can do to make sure women and girls with disabilities aren't excluded.



Reya is a university student working towards a masters in Bengali at the National University of Bangladesh. She's an advocate for the rights of women with disabilities, fighting for equality in Bangladesh and beyond

## Want your work to be inclusive? Start here!

- 1 Liaise with disability organisations to ensure women and girls with disabilities are consulted in a valid, meaningful way, and can participate at every stage of global development programmes and processes.
- 2 Support women-focused organisations of people with disabilities, and women leaders within these organisations, to advocate for the needs of women and girls with disabilities.
- 3 Collect quantitative and qualitative data about the people involved in your project, and document any barriers that exist to prevent them participating - including those related to gender and disability.
- 4 Incorporate inclusive, accessible approaches into your work that encourage people to change their behaviour. This will help to address stigma at community level and create a supportive environment for women and girls with disabilities.
- 5 Anticipate, plan and address the heightened risks and vulnerabilities for women and girls with disabilities. Identify inclusive safe spaces to ensure they can be safeguarded during development and humanitarian projects.

This feature was sponsored by Inclusive Futures, a disability-inclusive global development initiative. To find out how Inclusive Futures can support your work, visit [www.inclusivefutures.org](http://www.inclusivefutures.org)

## Join our Equal World disability rights campaign:

[www.sightsavers.org/equalworld](http://www.sightsavers.org/equalworld)

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# Malawi's first Paralympian: "I want the world to know we have the capability"

**"When I was a child, I didn't participate in many activities. People just thought because I was a disabled person that I couldn't compete. But now, I'm competing."**

Runner Taonere Banda made history in 2016 when she took part in the 1,500m at the Paralympic Games in Rio, making her Malawi's first Paralympian. She competes in the T3 category for athletes with visual impairments, and is hoping to qualify for the 2024 event in Paris.

Taonere is also a disability advocate and ambassador for Sightsavers' Equal World campaign. She's keen to share her story to show how she defied discrimination, even at a young age, to realise her sporting ambitions.

"I was sent to school once, but I couldn't see the blackboard, so I was sent home and told to come back when older and more literate," she explains. "It made me feel like education wasn't for me. But at the age of 10 I was finally allowed to start school properly.

"I started running while I was in school. By that time, I was involved with the National Initiative for Civic Education. They're the ones who spotted me and who told me to participate in athletics.

"That's when I found that I was capable of running, and



Taonere trains regularly with her coach, Agnes, in southern Malawi



Taonere represented Malawi in the Paralympic Games in Rio and Tokyo, and aims to compete in Paris in 2024

**“It's very important for disabled people to be encouraged to participate in sport, because they grow mentally, physically and socially**

I started doing well. And I've since been selected to go to different countries, to participate in competition. I'm so happy about that – I love athletics and I'm fond of travelling.

"It's very important for disabled people to be encouraged to participate in sport, because they grow mentally, physically and socially. They travel outside the country, they meet different people, they interact. So they get more knowledge from others.

"I want the world to know that disabled people have the

capability – that they can do sport and put their countries on the world map.

"Speaking from experience, there is discrimination towards people with disabilities. People think they can do nothing to participate in society. In fact, they're seen as a burden, and that they only exist to beg.

"But being disabled is not inability. I'm a visually impaired person, but I'm still competing and travelling to different countries. Other people with disabilities should not look down on themselves. They can do it. They can be like me.

"I want to be a person who can rely on myself. I want to participate in athletics as any other person can do. I want to do any work that a person without a disability can do."

**Taonere's interview was conducted in Chichewa and translated into English.**

