

**Challenges and Discrimination Faced by Young People with Disabilities in the Realization of Their Rights.**

**By Peter Ochieng**

The International Disability Alliance (IDA) is deeply concerned by the economic, humanitarian, political and social consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on youth with disabilities, including limiting their ability to exercise their rights to education, employment, health and living independently in the community. IDA is further concerned that the pandemic has compounded the multiple forms of barriers and discrimination faced by young with disabilities, particularly in the global south where due to poor social infrastructures, states have cut off some services originally offered to young people with disabilities in order to cope with the imminent crisis.[1]

The realisation of young people with disabilities' rights are majorly threatened by attitudinal, accessibility, communication and institutional/policy/legal barriers. For example, since the outbreak of COVID-19, some states have enacted new regulations to fight the pandemic. In some countries, laws enacted granted additional powers to authorities to detain people suspected of being infected with COVID-19 for testing hence making it easier to detain people on mental health grounds and creating the potential for violations to fundamental human rights.[2]

In most societies, disability is still seen as a personal tragedy, a condition that must be prevented or cured, a curse/punishment for misbehaviour and young people with disabilities are seen weak people unable to behave as expected in their society. Such persistent stigmatising, prejudicial attitudes undermine youth with disabilities self-esteem, reinforce their discrimination and marginalisation, hence hindering the realization of their rights.

The IDA seeks to emphasis the significance of an intersectional approach to human rights implementation to fully counter all forms of discrimination and barriers youth with disabilities continue to face. An intersectional approach reminds us that people with disabilities also have other identities that could marginalize them even more than their impairment. For example, indigenous youths with disabilities often face additional discrimination based on their race/ethnicity, gender and age.[3]

To guarantee their full inclusion in society, it is imperative that all stakeholders pay attention to the intersectional barriers they face in exercising their rights. This entails recognising how all other identities they hold interact with diverse barriers restricting their ability to exercise their rights on an equal basis with others. An intersectional approach to disability inclusion further calls for cross groups work and capacity building of youth with disabilities to actively participate in all activities designed to make their rights a practical reality.

We would be very happy at IDA to work closely with you all on ensuring the realisation of rights of youth with disabilities from different identities.

[1] ILO (2020). *COVID-19 and the World of Work: Ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities at all stages of the response*. [online] ILO. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_746909.pdf>.

[2].Human Rights Watch (2020). *UK: COVID-19 Law Puts Rights of People with Disabilities at Risk*. [online] Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/26/uk-covid-19-law-puts-rights-people-disabilities-risk>.

[3]. First Peoples Disability Network (Australia) (2016). *Intersectional Dimensions on the Right to Health for Indigenous Peoples – A Disability Perspective*. Australia:

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