

Report on Attending the 5th Afri-CAN CBR Conference Nairobi 1st - 4th June 2015

Sub-title; A bridge to an Inclusive Society Beyond the 2015 Development Framework

FIRAH provided six people with the opportunity to attend the 5th Afri-CAN CBR Conference in Nairobi from 1st to 4th June 2015. This is a major international conference which takes place every two or three years and is a key forum for sharing knowledge in community based rehabilitation. The selected sponsored delegates, three of whom are persons with disabilities, work in Uganda and Kenya with Disabled Persons' Organisations at community level and are involved in provincial and sometimes national level advocacy. Attendance at the conference provided these individuals with a rare opportunity to engage in the academic, research and policy arena.

Another main purpose of attending this conference was to disseminate the initial findings of our FIRAH funded research project; An Assessment of the Social, Cultural and Institutional Factors that Contribute to the Sexual Abuse of Persons with Disabilities in East Africa. Before the conference Advantage Africa submitted an abstract to present our research at the conference which was accepted by the



organising committee. In addition to this we worked hard in advance of the conference to convince the organisers to include 'sexual violence' as a major theme in the conference. Advantage Africa coordinated efforts to include this theme and partnered with two other organisations who are running projects concerning sexual abuse of persons with disabilities, namely the Ubuntu Care project to stop sexual violence against children with disabilities in Rwanda, Kenya and Burundi managed by Handicap International and also the research project Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities by Women Challenged to Challenge, Kenya. I am pleased to report that these efforts achieved our aim and the theme of Sexual and Gender Based Violence was programmed in for half a day of the conference.



We made a 30 minute presentation at the conference. Three of our team presented, including Nthioki Nzungula who is a survivor of sexual abuse with a disability and she bravely spoke to the conference delegates about her experiences as a victim of abuse, and as a representative of a poor rural community. Also Fazira Kawuma spoke about a real case of sexual abuse that she had dealt with as part of her community work in Uganda. Rob Aley presented a power point

presentation which illustrates the conceptual issues which have been exposed by the research and some of the possible future interventions (see separate power point presentation). Following our presentations the other two organisations mentioned above presented their work. The audience which was about 150 people, were obviously highly interested and engaged in the topic and we are pleased to say that the presentations under this theme were more interactive and inclusive of persons with disabilities than others at the conference. After the presentations there was a questions and answers session. Subjects like the vulnerabilities of persons with different impairments, especially deaf people and those with intellectual disabilities were discussed. The issue of boys and men as victims of abuse was also considered and prevention as compared to the responses to abuse were discussed. The point was made that a lot of interest and attention is placed on the survivors with disabilities, when the perpetrators are the people causing the problem. Should there be more work directed towards prevention and working with perspective offenders, especially boys and men?

Advantage Africa Conference Stand

In addition to our presentation at the conference we also set up an information/advocacy stand with our own poster designs and leaflets and information directing delegates to our interim research report and other practical materials about sexual abuse and disability. We estimate that most of the 300+ delegates at the conference spent some time at our stand, and at least 20 requested copies of our power point presentation.



We are still awaiting the conference report and full delegates list from the conference organisers.

Other themes covered in the conference were:

- Training in CBR
- Right to Inclusion – Development of Inclusive Practices
- Innovative Approaches to Inclusion in Communities
- Sustainable Development Practices and CBR
- Sharing of CBR home-grown experiences and best practices
- Inclusive Education
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Development and Inclusive Practices
- Social and Economic Empowerment



Please see our short paper *'Bridging the Gap Between Disability Research and the Application of Research Findings to Benefit Persons with Disabilities'* which makes reference to the observations of the sponsored delegates concerning the other conference presentations. We felt that the conference presentations were variable in quality and relevance. Some were reports on project approaches and experiences, rather than research and others were evaluations of projects rather than new research. *The sponsored delegates would like to thank FIRAH for the opportunity to attend the conference.*



Uganda Dissemination Workshop

On 27th May 2015, before the conference in Nairobi, we held a successful research dissemination workshop in Kampala. The full report of this workshop will be included in our final research report, but we would like to inform you of some of the successes of the workshop here. The workshop was hosted at The National Council for Persons with Disabilities in Kampala and involved 14 people from a

wide range of important disability organisations and relevant government departments in Uganda. We presented our preliminary research findings and then had open discussions about the topic and experiences of the participants. In the afternoon we conducted an exercise to identify possible points of interventions and the means by which they might be achieved. (These will form part of our final research report). Representatives of the media were invited to join in with the day and as a result the issue was featured in the national newspaper – see below.

PWDs at higher risk of sexual abuse

By Charles Kakamwa

A study conducted recently has revealed that women with disabilities are at higher risk of sexual abuse than their able-bodied counterparts. The study indicated that the women with disabilities were three times more vulnerable to sexual abuse than their able-bodied counterparts.

Sexual abuse of people with disabilities (PWDs) is mostly perpetrated by people familiar to them, including family members, carers and teachers, a study has revealed.

The two-year study in selected communities was under the topic: 'An assessment of the social and institutional factors that contribute to sexual abuse of people with disabilities in East Africa'.

It was done in Kenya in Kibwezi (eastern province) and Kakamega (western province) and parts of eastern Uganda by Advantage Africa a non-government organisation in conjunction with International Foundation of Applied Disability Research.

The findings were released at a meeting of stakeholders at the National Council on Disability (NCD) offices in



Griffin Candria (right) chairing a meeting during which findings of a study on sexual abuse of people with disabilities were released. Photo by Charles Kakamwa

Ntinda, Kampala on Thursday by lead researchers Rob Aley and Dr. Mary Wickenden from the United Kingdom.

Aley, the programme manager of Advantage Africa, said PWDs were vulnerable because of neglect and denial of education and employment opportunities.

He noted that the victims are

considered by the attackers as easy targets, who 'enjoy the attack since they are disadvantaged'.

"There is also the belief that the disabled people cannot choose their relationships (partners)," he observed.

Aley said they are despised by society, yet some perpetrators of the heinous act hold the

mistaken belief that having sex with the disabled comes with blessings.

Aley noted that whereas sexual violence against PWDs is high, most cases go unreported because of threats by the perpetrators and the fear of being stigmatised by the community.

He added that in many

communities, PWDs are treated with disdain.

"In some villages, the theft of a cow is seen as a more serious crime than rape of a person with disabilities," he said.

He also observed that it is because of the same reason that many disabled women produce children and suffer to raise them alone because men fear to be identified with them.

Aley who said other studies indicated that at least 60% of PWDs have experienced abuse, said they intend to focus on advocating for support to reverse the situation.

He thinks provision of income generating projects to families of the disabled and sensitisation of society on the rights of people with disabilities would create a change of attitude.

"There is a belief that sex with an albino brings blessings and a cure to certain illnesses or misfortunes," Fazira Kawuma, the vice-chairperson of National Council on Disability added.

The chairman of the National Council on Disability, Griffin Candria, noted that in their strategic plan, more attention will be on promotion of rights of children with disabilities.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Justine Namusubo, social worker ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter

There is need to strengthen networking with primary structures to fight the vice. The fight against sexual abuse is a big challenge due to lack of enough Police surgeons.



Peter Ogik, chairman of SNUPA an association of albinos in eastern Uganda

Last year we recorded three cases of defilement of girls living with albinism yet many are not reported, especially in rural areas. Local council officials mishandle the cases leaving culprits to go scot-free and the crime continues.

