

## Bridge CRPD - SDGs Uganda

### Christine Kirungi

“For [advocacy] to be successful, we must be well knowledgeable about what we are advocating for. So, we cannot know all those things unless we get an opportunity of being in such trainings, like the BRIDGE CRPD-SDGs training initiative.”

Christine is the Executive Director at the **Ugandan National Association of Cerebral Palsy**. As one of the founders of the organisation, she is determined to advocate for people with cerebral palsy to be included in the disability movement, leaving no one behind.



Christine is a person with cerebral palsy from the age of nine. From this time, due to widely held misconceptions about her impairment including the belief that it was caused by witchcraft, Christine faced social isolation within her community. Her education also presented a challenge, as she faced

discrimination from teachers who believed that she was “attacked by demons” and would “scare other children”. Resultantly, Christine was denied entry to numerous schools. However, with persistence, Christine completed her primary education at a special educational needs school before being accepted on a probationary period at a mainstream secondary school. Here, Christine found her peers to be supportive, sharing their notes with her.

This inclusivity shown by her peers had a profound effect on Christine. Drawing attention to the reality that many people with cerebral palsy in Uganda are illiterate as a consequence of barriers in accessing education, Christine emphasised the need for these barriers to be broken and attitudes to be changed, putting an end to discrimination. She therefore advocates for inclusive education to be the standard across all Ugandan mainstream schools. Then, children will grow up understanding that people with disabilities are part of society, and that some people simply need additional support.

Christine found the Bridge CRPD-SDGs training in Uganda to be very helpful in advancing her understanding of inclusion, with the emphasis that all people with disabilities must be accommodated for inclusion to be achieved. She recalled: “It was very amazing that through the training, we learned to be inclusive. That we are all persons with disabilities no matter what category.” Previously, Christine’s work had focussed solely on cerebral palsy, resulting in her lacking confidence in ways to include people with different disabilities. However, from the BRIDGE training, Christine learnt how to prepare and deliver an inclusive session, taking into account all of participants’ needs.

As a direct result of the Bridge CRPD-SDGs, Christine now identifies herself as an “inclusive activist”, fighting for the rights of all people with disabilities, and is confident in defending her advocacy using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Since the training, Christine has also approached an international organisation asking for support for an inclusive education programme, where she hopes to “put into practice what [she has] acquired from BRIDGE”, focussing on all children with disabilities in the Mukono District. Christine will also be training the staff from her organisation, sharing the knowledge that she had gained and increasing the advocacy movement for people with disabilities in Uganda.

Christine is very grateful for the Bridge CRPD-SDGs training in Uganda and feels empowered as a consequence of these sessions. Going forward, Christine hopes that the training will be implemented in other countries, expanding the reach and resultant benefits of the training for people with disabilities.

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