

Bridge CRPD - SDGs Uganda

Simon Peter Okwii

“The training has instilled in me practical ways on how I can engage with the state key stakeholders, right from the grassroots to the top level.”

Simon Peter works as the Legal Officer at the **Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism**, where he is passionate about fighting and advocating for the fundamental human rights of people living with albinism.



Simon grew up in the countryside of the Serere District in the eastern part of Uganda. As the only child living with albinism in his village, social misconceptions about his impairment and consequential fear, stigma and discrimination perpetuated his life. This led to the break-up of his parents, and his exclusion from his extended family and mainstream schooling. However, the dedication shown by Simon’s Mother led to his enrolment in a special educational needs school during his primary education, where he excelled. Simon was resultantly given a sponsorship to attend a mainstream secondary school, where

he was identified as one of the best students in the country, leading to his receipt of a government scholarship to study Law at Macquarie University.

Yet, Simon has continued to face discrimination and inequality at all stages of his life. In his first position as a Legal Officer, before joining the Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism, he experienced a lack of provision for his visual impairment derived from a lack of understanding about his disability. Sadly, Simon expects to face this discrimination for the rest of his life. However, the Bridge CRPD-SDGs training initiative has given him hope that the mind-set achieved from this training will create an impact and consequent change within society.

Simon found the Bridge CRPD-SDGs training in Uganda very helpful in understanding the national legal framework in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Reflecting on Uganda's legal framework, Simon identified that due to the introduction of Uganda's Disability Act in 2006, two years before the UNCRPD was introduced in 2008, Uganda's legal framework does not yet conform to the international standards; however, amendments are taking place. The Module one of the Bridge CRPD-SDGs training in Uganda, enabled Simon to understand how he might act as an advocate in Uganda and create positive change for people living with disabilities.

Building from this initial training, the Bridge CRPD-SDGs module two led to Simon's understanding of key policy areas and effective engagement with stakeholders. With this newfound knowledge, he hopes to achieve the mainstreaming of disability in all sectors and the fulfilment of rights for people with disabilities. For this, he believes that the collection and disaggregation of data, specifically relating to people with disabilities, is key. In a forthcoming meeting with stakeholders who work with government, Simon therefore hopes to ask for their involvement in the collection of data. If successful, Simon will then be able to use the results as evidence to influence the planning and implementation of projects, working towards his wider goals of inclusion.

Reflecting on the Bridge CRPD-SDGs training in Uganda, Simon expressed his gratitude to the funders of the training. He hopes that they will continue to support participants in their implementation of their newly acquired knowledge and in the training of more leaders, so that a greater impact can be achieved.

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