**Experiences from organizations of persons with disabilities and data advocacy efforts in Kenya**

Sally Nduta,United Disabled Persons of Kenya

The Kenya Population and Housing Census was carried out in August 2019. To use the Washington Group (WG) short set of questions is something that the disability movement in Kenya had advocated for with the hope that it would ensure the availability of quality data that can inform interventions. It took diverse interventions for this to happen.

Firstly, there was intense training of officers from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) on the importance of using the WG questions to collect disability data.

Secondly and importantly was the involvement of DPOs in this process. Through United Disabled Persons of Kenya, persons with disabilities went through trainings on disability data including the use of the WG module. The International Disability Alliance through its Bridge CRPD-SDGs training continued to strengthen the capacities of leaders in the disability sector on advocacy for appropriate disability data.

By these empowerment processes, both for statistics officers as well as for DPOs, we had the WG questions in the 2019 census. From the census statistics, what has been published so far includes distribution of the population aged 5 years and above by disability status as well as distribution by type of disability. A Disability Monograph shall be published that shall look on various indicators such as access to education and employment.

Through a framework of continuous engagement of DPOs and KNBS, DPOs are now members of a Technical Working Group on Disability Data which, going forward is going to play a key role in availability of disability data in Kenya. Currently we are engaged in discussions around having a disability survey as guided by the disability movement, specifically to collect data on the situation of persons with disabilities.

**Next steps and COVID and disability**

There are various efforts from partners in Kenya on ensuring that there is good data on disability. Whereas at present there are various gaps on getting disaggregated data, we hope that the collaboration with partners including the KNBS and DPOs in a spirit of goodwill, will ensure that going forward there is good data.

Looking at COVID-19 for example, we noted challenges when it came to disaggregation of data. Whereas as an umbrella DPO our first agenda in the initial months of the pandemic was to ensure that persons with disabilities were part of the response system/fully and meaningfully engaged in processes we noted huge gaps in the areas of data disaggregation.

Rapid surveys that were carried out to determine the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on households, did not disaggregate this data by disability status. We still did not have data on how person with disabilities accessed hospitals, or for example how accessible isolation centers were among other crucial aspects as regards the response on COVID-19.

In the lack of this data we have used research and community-driven data to complement official data for policymaking and decision-making.

We have relied on data from DPOs, as well as from commissioned researches. For example, we rely on DPOs at county level to see if at all persons with disabilities are aware and a part of COVID-19 response committees; or for example how many are receiving cash transfers from government meant for vulnerable households.

We have also continued to work with our networks and allies to conduct such research to influence policy and decision making. An example is that we worked collaboratively with the Leonard Cheshire Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) project to collect data around the experiences of persons with disabilities in Kenya during the pandemic where it showed that over 92 per cent of persons with disabilities interviewed on the impact of COVID-19 said their daily lives had been affected, pinpointing factors such as limited transport; restricted movement; lack of necessities; lack of contact with others at school, church and social functions; reduced income; and loss of jobs or income. Many had employment and job insecurity and were concerned about their finances.

We have continued to work with other partners to ensure that we address these gaps in data collection. These include the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Development Initiatives (DI) as well as being a part of the Inclusive Data Charter.

As a result of our engagement in data and evidence based advocacy, it was possible to approach the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in terms of the social assistance given to person with disabilities and highlight and ask that social protection must specifically address specific needs of persons with disabilities such as the extra costs of disability.

Collaboration with stakeholders, DPOs in processes of ensuring that we have community driven data to inform policy is ensuring that going forward, we have formalized structures to ensure the meaningful involvement of DPOs in all endeavors of data collection and disaggregation. In addition, the collaboration with KNBS shall ensure leadership from government in ensuring that all data collected is disaggregated on the basis of disability.