World Institute on Disability

“We just hear oil and gas…”

Towards Inclusive Participation and Leadership of People with Disabilities in Uganda’s Oil Sector

Authored By: Kasim Rashid Sajjabi

2024 Global Heumann Fellow

World Institute on Disability

Sponsored By: The Ford Foundation

© 2025 World Institute on Disability. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution–Non Commercial–No Derivatives 4.0 International License.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary ____ *1*

Introduction: The Promise and Paradox of Oil Development ____ *4*

Problem Statement ____ **5**

Methodology ____ **6**

Focus Group Discussions: ____ 7

Findings From the Study ____ *8*

Symbolic Commitment Versus Structural Barriers ____ **8**

Systemic Exclusion from Employment and Livelihoods ____ **15**

Discriminatory Recruitment and "Fitness" Narratives ____ **17**

Underestimated Capacity and Motivation ____ **18**

Gendered Inequalities and Intersectional Challenges ____ **18**

Caregivers of People with Disabilities Including Children ____ **24**

Financial Barriers to Participation ____ **27**

Accessibility in Infrastructure Versus Attitudes ____ **28**

Information Gaps and Poor Outreach ____ **31**

Corruption, Nepotism, and Structural Discrimination ____ **32**

Absence of Disaggregated Data and Monitoring ____ **33**

The Absence of Data ____ 33

The Mandate of Government Agencies in Data Collection ____ **34**

Controversy Over the 2024 National Census Data ____ **35**

PAU's Abdication of Responsibility ____ 36

Implications of Inadequate Data on Inclusive Planning ____ **37**

Suggestions for Strengthening Data Collection and Monitoring ____ **38**

Local Leadership and Advocacy ____ 39

Disaster preparedness in the context of the oil industry ____ **40**

Theme 1: Concerns about Emergency Response and Infrastructure ____ **41**

Theme 2: The Vulnerability of People with Disabilities in the Context of Associated Risks 42

Theme 3: The Refinery Agreement and Emerging Risks 43

Theme 4: The Need for Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning 44

Accessible Emergency Plans: 44

Community Engagement: 44

Monitoring and Accountability 44

Call for Affirmative Action and Deliberate Inclusion 45

Historical Context of Affirmative Action in Uganda 45

Challenges in Realizing the Promise of Inclusion 46

What Works and Why It Matters 47

Recommendations: Advancing Disability Inclusion in the Oil Sector 48

Policy Development and Legal Framework Alignment 48

Community-Level Outreach and Awareness 49

Inclusive Recruitment Frameworks and Employment Pipelines 49

Support for People with Disabilities-Led Groups and Cooperatives 50

Localized Recruitment and Information Access 50

Sustained, Participatory Engagement 51

Monitoring, Data Collection, and Accountability 51

Embedding Disability Inclusion in Disaster Preparedness 52

Conclusion *53*

Acknowledgements *55*

About The Global Heumann Fellowship *57*

About World Institute on Disability *58*

Bibliography *Error! Bookmark not defined.*

Appendix A – Glossary *70*

Appendix B: Participant Quotes *75*

Executive Summary

Uganda's oil and gas sector holds the promise of economic transformation; however, for people with disabilities, particularly in host districts like Buliisa, this promise remains largely unfulfilled. This study explores the systemic exclusion of people with disabilities from employment, leadership, and decision-making within Uganda's petroleum industry.

Through a mixed-methods inquiry, including key informant interviews and focus group discussions with people with disabilities in Buliisa and Mubende Districts, the study identifies the structural, systemic, and cultural barriers that hinder the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in the sector, while proposing actionable pathways for reform (Booyens & Lorenzo, 2015).

In the Buliisa District, participants in focus group discussions expressed deep frustration at their exclusion from employment opportunities, particularly when they possessed relevant qualifications. One participant lamented, *"Since oil was discovered, people with disabilities in Buliisa have been left behind. And we are not happy at all."*

Another echoed, *"We just hear oil and gas, oil and gas… we don't know how we shall benefit from it."* In Kitenga, Mubende District, a disability leader shared that despite being one of only 16 people with disabilities in his village, he was the sole beneficiary of a house following displacement.

His home lay within the officially demarcated "right of way" for the crude oil pipeline, the area designated for compulsory relocation and compensation by the oil companies involved in exploration, drilling, and future transportation of Uganda's crude oil. From the companies' standpoint, the compensation process was strictly applied to all residents whose structures stood directly within this corridor.

However, among local communities, particularly people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, there has been a heightened perception of entitlement to compensation, given the visible oil-related activity and disruption to their

livelihoods and the environment. This tension underscores the gap between formal compensation criteria and local expectations of inclusion and benefit sharing in the oil sector.

Current employment recruitment practices within the sector create significant barriers to inclusion. The pervasive requirement for candidates to be “physically fit” effectively excludes people with disabilities, as this term is often a coded message used to disqualify people with disabilities.

Many individuals with technical skills, such as welding or tailoring, are often overlooked for employment opportunities, even after completing formal training supported by NGOs and government programs. Dorcas, a skilled welder and mother, exemplifies this systemic exclusion.

Dorcas was unable to source employment; eventually she sold her welding machine to provide for her child.

Dorcas’ experience illustrates the intersectional disadvantage faced by women with disabilities, where gender and disability converge to magnify the structural barriers to decent work. This situation persists despite Uganda’s progressive policy commitments under the Employment Act (2006), which prohibits discrimination in recruitment, and the National Policy on Disability (2006) and Disability Act of 2020, which mandate equitable access to training and employment.

> ***“I have three certificates in welding. I even did an internship… but up to now, they have not called me,” she shared. Despite excelling, “Amongst all girls in Buliisa who sat the interview, it was me who passed.”***

It also runs counter to Sustainable Development Goal 8, which calls for *“inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment for all.”* Dorcas’ story underscores how progress achieved through training, certification, and competence remains fragile without deliberate inclusive recruitment practices and institutional mechanisms

that operationalise these policy commitments.

Edmond Kansiime, a representative from the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), acknowledges the gap between the strategic intent for inclusion and the lack of implementation. While there is no deliberate discrimination against people with disabilities in the sector, Kansiime notes that translating policy into action is necessary. He emphasises the importance of finalising PAU's draft social equity policy, aligning it with broader national inclusion mandates, and creating baseline data to inform programming.

Kansiime also accentuates the need for enhanced outreach to rural communities, better awareness of the oil and gas value chain, and stronger institutional linkages. He stresses the necessity of disaggregated data collection to tailor interventions effectively. Despite some progress, data collection remains underdeveloped, particularly in Uganda's oil regions, leaving a gap in understanding the full scope of the participation and needs of people with disabilities.

Both councillors with disabilities interviewed, Mbabazi Sylvia and Tugonza Paddy Buleme, confirmed the field findings, highlighting the multiple barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing oil-related opportunities. Barriers cited include:

- A lack of group registration hinders access to government support, such as the Parish Development Model (PDM).
- Tokenistic training without meaningful employment outcomes
- Physical inaccessibility
- Corruption in recruitment
- Stigma

A qualified driver who has since acquired a disability, stated, *"I studied driving and welding… but they say a person with disability cannot afford to work there."*

The above statement and other testimonies expose the gap between inclusive legislation and its practical implementation, underscoring the lack of affirmative action and effective local-level planning for people with

disabilities. The study reveals that despite the existence of disability legislation and national equity frameworks, people with disabilities remain marginalised and disconnected from the benefits of the oil sector; they continue to face systemic discrimination, exclusion from decision-making processes, and under-representation in workforce planning.

This paper calls for bold reforms to close the gap between rhetoric and reality. The key recommendations are as follows:

- Finalizing and implementing PAU's social equity policy with strong accountability mechanisms
- Establishing disability-disaggregated baseline data to guide inclusion strategies
- Embedding affirmative action in recruitment and supply chain participation
- Strengthening gender-and disability-responsive social protection and employment pathways
- Integrating disability-inclusive disaster preparedness into oil sector planning

In conclusion, Uganda has the opportunity to align its oil and gas development with the principles of disability-inclusive development.

Introduction: The Promise and Paradox of Oil Development

Uganda's oil and gas sector, anchored by projects such as Tilenga, Kingfisher, and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), is heralded as a catalyst for national development. However, for historically marginalised populations, including people with disabilities (PWDs), participation in this development is often merely symbolic, if not entirely lacking. For people with disabilities living in communities directly impacted by oil and gas developments, the stark reality is that the sector's growth has failed to translate into tangible inclusion. As one participant in the focus group discussion lamented,

The sentiment above captures a central contradiction: oil-driven development

promises inclusive progress, but so far it has delivered inequity. This study was initiated to investigate the levels of inclusion, participation, and leadership of people with disabilities in the oil industry, particularly in host communities.

The Government of Uganda is a signatory to several international instruments promoting the rights of people with disabilities, notably the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which mandates the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in all areas of life, including employment. In addition, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 calls for *"full and productive employment and decent work for all."*

Simultaneously, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) affirms the need to eliminate discrimination against women, including those with disabilities.

Nationally, Uganda's 1995 Constitution guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination under Article 21. The Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) provides for affirmative action, and the Equal Opportunities Commission Act and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities Act (2003), amended in 2020, reinforce the right to inclusive development.

However, despite this progressive legal framework, this study reveals that people with disabilities in Uganda's oil region remain largely excluded from the benefits and opportunities offered by the petroleum industry.

Problem Statement

Uganda's progressive legal and policy frameworks promote disability inclusion; however, people with disabilities remain fundamentally excluded from the opportunities and benefits associated with the country's oil and gas sector. While the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) and industry actors emphasise equity and social responsibility, a persistent gap exists between inclusive policy intentions and practical implementation on the ground. Many people with disabilities who

possess relevant skills and training face systemic barriers in employment, participation in decision-making processes, access to development programs such as the Parish Development Model (PDM), and engagement in community consultations.

Discriminatory recruitment practices, information asymmetry, and infrastructural and attitudinal biases continue to limit the meaningful involvement of people with disabilities in oil sector development. Women with disabilities, in particular, experience compounded marginalization due to gendered inequality. Additionally, the absence of disaggregated data, inclusive monitoring systems, and deliberate outreach mechanisms contribute to the invisibility of people with disabilities in sectoral planning and service delivery.

This research paper explores these challenges through focus group discussions and key informant interviews in the Buliisa District, one of the most affected areas along the oil development corridor, and to a lesser extent, in the Mubende District. It aims to surface the voices and lived experiences of people with disabilities, critically assess existing gaps, and provide actionable recommendations to promote a more inclusive, equitable, and accountable oil and gas sector in Uganda.

Methodology

This paper is based on a qualitative study conducted in:

- Kitenga Town Council, Mubende District
- Kityanga cell, Buliisa town council, Buliisa district
- Kizikya cell, Buliisa Town Council
- Kamandindi village, Buliisa District
- Kibambura village, Buliisa District
- Ngwedo Sub-county, Buliisa District

The research employed a participatory and inclusive approach, centering the voices of people with disabilities through:

Focus Group Discussions:

Two mixed-gender focus group discussions were held with people with disabilities to explore their experiences, perceptions, and aspirations related to inclusion, employment, and participation in the oil sector. Participants were purposively selected to reflect diversity in age, gender, and type of disability. The findings indicate that gender made things even harder for the female participants; hence, gender was a multiplying factor for them.

Several women shared how caregiving and household responsibilities, often intensified by the absence of supportive spouses, constrained their ability to pursue training or employment opportunities in the oil sector. One participant, Nakacwa Fedelence of Kitenga, Mubende District, narrated how her spouse abandoned her, leaving her to single-handedly provide for a child with a disability.

Another, Dorcas, explained that despite holding three welding certificates and relevant internship experience, she remained unemployed and struggled to feed her children and pay their school fees. These accounts underscore how gender roles, economic dependency, and social stigma intersect with disability, leaving women with disabilities particularly marginalised in the emerging oil economy.

In this study, the minimum age of the participants was fixed at 18 years. This was done to reach out to adult participants only.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with strategic stakeholders, including district councillors with disabilities (Mbabazi Sylvia and Tugonza Paddy Buleme) and a senior representative from the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (Edmond Kansiime).

These respondents were purposefully selected for their authoritative insights into community-level realities and institutional dynamics within the oil sector. The councillors provided grounded perspectives on how extractive operations have affected local livelihoods, accessibility, and the participation of people with disabilities in the Buliisa District.

In contrast, the representative from the Petroleum Authority offered a policy and regulatory viewpoint, shedding light on ongoing efforts, gaps, and institutional attitudes toward inclusion within Uganda's oil and gas governance framework. Together, their perspectives reveal the interaction between policy intent and lived experience, illustrating how national-level decisions translate, or fail to translate, into inclusive local development outcomes.

Data from these engagements were transcribed and analysed thematically, with particular attention to recurring patterns, systemic barriers and opportunities for reform. The quotations from the participants are presented verbatim to preserve their authenticity.

The methodology design is inclusive, ethical, and aligned with disability rights principles, ensuring that people with disabilities are not only respondents but also co-owners of the knowledge generated.

Findings From the Study

The study revealed the complex, multi-layered barriers that people with disabilities face in Uganda's oil and gas industry. Testimonies from Kirambura Village and local leaders in Buliisa, juxtaposed with the sentiments of a top official from the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), highlight a profound disconnection between national commitments and lived realities. The four key themes emerged are outlined below.

Symbolic Commitment Versus Structural Barriers

The rhetoric of inclusion within Uganda's oil and gas sector often masks deeper structural barriers, a strain vividly captured through the reflections of Edmond Kansiime, Strategy Manager at the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU). His candid observations revealed a sector grappling with good intentions but hampered by systemic constraints.

Kansiime acknowledged the cosmetic nature of some inclusion measures, particularly in relation to the nature of work opportunities available to community members, including people with disabilities. He explains, *"Challenge number one would be the work*

requirements. Maybe you are required to carry concrete. For you, you may think they were going to pick rubbish, but the person recruiting knew that after picking the rubbish, they will be carrying possibly concrete bricks, to support some civil works elsewhere."

Kansiime acknowledged that some inclusion measures are largely symbolic, particularly regarding the types of work made available to community members, including people with disabilities. He highlighted that recruitment often emphasises physically demanding tasks, such as carrying concrete, even when applicants expect lighter ones.

This mismatch between expectations and actual requirements underscores how ostensibly inclusive programs can inadvertently exclude people with disabilities.

This statement underscores the hidden demands of seemingly inclusive opportunities, often rendering them unsuitable for workers with disabilities.

Efforts to track participation through attendance sheets that capture disability status, gender, and age have been noted, but these remain surface-level interventions. As Kansiime remarked,

> ***"Even when you look at our attendance sheet, it has 'Are you male or female? Are you a person with a disability? If yes, which area? And then your age...' But then there are other factors that come into play."***

These "other factors", often unaddressed, include inaccessible work environments, unrealistic job expectations, and rigid project timelines that disadvantage people with disabilities. Kansiime admitted, *"It is a bit hard. These projects are coming; people are putting in their own money and want to recover their money. So...people with disabilities should come first. Any kind of delay, no one will now come to kneel, bend and wait."*

This reflection highlights a stark reality: although inclusion is articulated as a value, in practice, it is subordinated to commercial imperatives. Thus, the PAU's strategic rhetoric of inclusion is

undermined by systemic barriers, such as inaccessible education, social stigma, and discriminatory attitudes, which restrict participation. Kansiime further justifies the limited presence of people with disabilities in the sector by citing educational gaps in the literature.

However, this points to broader societal neglect: exclusion begins far upstream within unequal education systems, making underrepresentation in employment a symptom of entrenched systemic inequality. The risk, as noted in this study, is that narratives about low qualifications can reinforce harmful stereotypes, overlooking the many people with disabilities who have overcome adversity to acquire professional skills to do so.

Moreover, the timing of PAU's disability inclusion policy, which is still pending management approval, raises concerns regarding its potential for real transformation. Without concrete mechanisms to actively recruit, accommodate, and promote people with disabilities, the policy risks remaining a symbolic gesture of good intentions. As Kansiime himself reflected,

"Inclusion is a deliberate effort."

The absence of structured pathways from education to employment for people with disabilities suggests that this effort remains insufficiently prioritised in the UAE.

Encouragingly, Kansiime identified local leadership as the key to bridging these gaps. He stresses, *"I would like to see mainly the local leaders mapping them and knowing where they are, so that they take on these opportunities because that is the role of the local leadership."* Without proactive mobilisation and information sharing at the community level, many people with disabilities remain disconnected from opportunities in the sector.

Cultural and social barriers also emerge as significant challenges. Kansiime explained, *"Culturally, when women are invited in a village, the deaf woman will not come. They will not even bother to inform her, let alone remind her that she is supposed to attend the meeting."* This illustrates how deeply rooted exclusion

results from physical barriers and social invisibility and marginalisation.

Importantly, Kansiime expands the notion of participation beyond formal employment, suggesting entrepreneurial pathways: *"You may not directly get a job there, but you can get a service",* referencing opportunities like poultry farming to support workers in project areas. Importantly, Kansiime highlighted that participation in the oil sector need not be limited to formal employment; alternative pathways such as entrepreneurship and service provision can also offer avenues for inclusion.

Examples of such opportunities include:

- small-scale poultry farming
- food vending
- transportation services
- providing tools or equipment to project sites

For people with disabilities, these entrepreneurial pathways can create independent income streams and enhance their engagement in local value chains.

However, the ability of people with disabilities to benefit from these opportunities depends on several factors, including access to start-up capital, training, market information, and supportive networks. While entrepreneurship may open doors and increase financial security for some, structural barriers such as discrimination, lack of accessible infrastructure, and limited institutional support can constrain meaningful participation.

Therefore, fostering entrepreneurial inclusion requires promoting business opportunities and addressing systemic and social barriers that disproportionately affect people with disabilities. This requirement broadens the framework of inclusion to include indirect participation through the supply chains and service delivery.

This broadens the framework of inclusion to encompass indirect participation through supply chains and service delivery.

However, the absence of mandates requiring oil companies to prioritise

disability inclusion further complicates this situation. Kansiime clarifies, *"We urge them to encourage locals to participate... However, we cannot say that the goods must come from a person with disability. Disability is not inability, so if you are a disabled person and can offer a given service or a good, then it will be taken, and in so doing, you will be included."*

Kansiime, as a senior official at the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), frames disability inclusion in employment and service provision through a merit-based lens. He emphasizes that oil companies are encouraged to involve locals in their operations, but there is no regulatory mandate requiring them to prioritize people with disabilities. His remark—*"Disability is not inability, so if you are a disabled person and can offer a given service or a good, then it will be taken, and in so doing, you will be included"*—positions inclusion as contingent upon an individual's demonstrated competence or ability to provide goods and services.

While this perspective underscores a principle of non-discrimination, it assumes an equal playing field, effectively equating formal ability with actual opportunity. This reliance on meritocracy overlooks the structural barriers that people with disabilities face in Uganda, such as limited access to skills training, mobility challenges, inaccessible recruitment processes, and social stigmas that constrain their ability to compete on equal terms. In practice, this means that people with disabilities are less likely to meet the "ability" threshold simply because of these systemic disadvantages, regardless of their potential or qualifications.

Thus, Kansiime's approach, while well-intentioned, highlights a regulatory gap: without explicit mandates or affirmative action measures, oil companies may inadvertently perpetuate exclusion, despite the rhetoric of inclusion. This scenario points to the need for policy instruments that actively lower barriers and create opportunities for people with disabilities, rather than relying solely on passive meritocratic inclusion.

Kansiime's reflections on the broader challenges of local participation reinforce these findings. He observed, *"In our strategic plan, we identified the limited participation of locals in the oil and gas sector as a key issue... In 2021, only around 11% of participants were locals, and we are aiming to increase that. But even then, we must not compromise standards."* This overreliance on expatriates, compounded by a lack of affirmative measures for marginalized groups, deepens exclusion for people with disabilities.

The official highlights a critical structural challenge in Uganda's oil and gas sector: historically low involvement of local communities, with only around 11% of participants being indigenous locals as of 2021. By acknowledging this gap, he signals that PAU is aware of the social and economic consequences of marginalizing local populations. His statement also reflects the tension between promoting local inclusion and maintaining industry standards. The insistence on not compromising standards, while understandable from a technical and safety perspective, implicitly frames inclusion as secondary to operational efficiency.

This approach, however, may unintentionally reinforce systemic exclusion. Indigenous communities often face barriers such as limited access to vocational training, low awareness of employment opportunities, and logistical challenges in applying for jobs. By focusing on maintaining "standards" without parallel mechanisms to build local capacity, the sector risks perpetuating the very exclusion it seeks to address. Kansiime's acknowledgment of the low participation rate and the aspirational goal to improve it signals intent. However, the absence of concrete strategies or quotas underscores the gap between policy awareness and effective implementation.

In essence, this sentiment illustrates the classic tension in resource-dependent industries: balancing technical performance with social equity. Without proactive interventions, such as skills development programs, accessible recruitment processes, and targeted support for marginalized groups, the

goal of meaningful local participation, including for indigenous people and people with disabilities, remains aspirational rather than operational.

These institutional insights resonate with testimonies from people with disabilities themselves. For instance, Paddy Atugonza, a trained welder and driver, shared: *"I personally have a disability, but I can drive. I (also) studied welding about five years ago."* Despite his qualifications, Atugonza faces exclusion, highlighting that the barrier is less about skills and more about access and bias.

Similarly, a focus group discussion participant recounted witnessing a disabled friend being unfairly replaced despite a lottery-based system for work allocation, exemplifying how informal discrimination persists even where formal policies claim neutrality.

To contextualise the phenomenon, in areas where oil pipelines pass, oil companies routinely use a lottery system to recruit casual labourers. Residents gather for open meetings and draw numbered cards; those who draw the “lucky” numbers are selected for work. This approach is praised for its transparency in a country where employment frequently depends on nepotism and bribery.

While the system is aimed at being neutral, it does not ensure inclusion for people with disabilities who remain marginalized due to societal attitudes and structural barriers. One focus group discussion participant recounted witnessing a disabled friend being unfairly replaced, despite the lottery-based allocation, highlighting that informal discrimination persists even under ostensibly neutral recruitment processes.

The gaps between strategic commitment and operational practice are further illustrated by the testimony of Mbabazi Sylvia, a local councilor with a disability: *"There were no special benefits for me as a person with a disability…they gave me the same with the general community."*

Her statement underscores a critical point: parity in compensation does not automatically translate into equity. For many people with disabilities, such

measures, while well-intentioned, fall short of addressing structural disadvantages that perpetuate poverty. This testimony affirms that without targeted proactive strategies, such as affirmative action, accessible infrastructure, and deliberate outreach, the promise of meaningful inclusion remains largely aspirational.

In other words, inclusion is not merely about equal treatment but about ensuring equitable access and opportunities that enable people with disabilities to escape entrenched socioeconomic barriers. Ultimately, Kansiime's remarks, corroborated by the lived experiences of people with disabilities, point to an urgent need for the oil and gas sector to move beyond rhetorical commitment towards substantive, systemic change.

Systemic Exclusion from Employment and Livelihoods

A dominant theme emerging from the discussions is what participants described as *"being included in training but excluded from work."* This phenomenon reflects tokenistic inclusion, where companies and local authorities showcase training or engagement activities involving people with disabilities to signal compliance with inclusion norms but fail to integrate them into long-term employment structures. Such practices generate visibility without empowerment and contribute to cycles of dependency, frustration, and mistrust of both corporate and government actors.

In many cases, recruitment processes remain opaque and are heavily influenced by bribery, nepotism, and favouritism, as discussed earlier. For people with disabilities, many of whom already face financial constraints, these informal "pay-to-play" systems are insurmountable obstacles. Even when positions are advertised, the physical inaccessibility of workplaces, discriminatory attitudes among supervisors, and the absence of reasonable accommodations further limit opportunities.

This dynamic perpetuates a pattern of exclusion in which people with disabilities are seen as recipients of training rather than as contributors to the workforce.

This exclusion is symptomatic of deeper institutional disparities. While Uganda's National Employment Policy (2011) and Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) both promote equal access to work, enforcement within the extractive sectors remains weak.

Companies often lack internal disability inclusion policies, and there is minimal monitoring by regulatory bodies such as the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). The results show that even well-intentioned initiatives under CSR frameworks fail to create sustainable employment pathways.

Moreover, the nature of oil-related work, often involving physical labour, technical operations, and security-sensitive environments, has reinforced misconceptions that people with disabilities are "unsuitable" for such roles. However, as participants like Dorcas demonstrate, several people with disabilities have undergone rigorous technical training in welding, electrical work, tailoring, and other trades. Therefore, the issue is not capacity but discriminatory gatekeeping and a lack of targeted policies to match trained people with disabilities with available industry opportunities.

Beyond the economic implications, the exclusion of people with disabilities from employment has profound psychosocial effects. Numerous participants spoke of the loss of self-worth, feelings of invisibility, and anger at being consistently overlooked by the healthcare system.

> ***"Since oil was discovered, persons with disabilities in Buliisa have been left behind." Female Participant***

Another female participant summarised her feelings during the discussion as follows:

"We also want to work and earn our own living. When they don't call us, it feels like we are not part of this country." – focus group discussion female participant.

This statement encapsulates a deeper sense of alienation, one that goes

beyond job denial to touch on citizenship, belongingness, and dignity. For communities in Buliisa and along the oil pipeline corridor, inclusion in the sector represents not only a source of livelihood but also recognition as equal stakeholders in Uganda's development story.

Addressing systemic exclusion requires a shift from rhetoric to action. This includes establishing affirmative hiring quotas, enforcing accessibility standards, and integrating disability-disaggregated data into labour and CSR reporting. Oil companies, in collaboration with the PAU and local governments, must also create mentorship and apprenticeship programs specifically designed for people with disabilities.

Only through such deliberate, monitored measures can Uganda transform the current landscape of symbolic inclusion into one of equitable participation and shared prosperity for all citizens.

Discriminatory Recruitment and "Fitness" Narratives

People with disabilities are often screened out because of rigid, exclusionary job criteria.

While certain tasks in the oil and gas industry, such as pipeline installation, rig operation, and field-based security, are physically demanding, a large proportion of roles are not. The sector also depends on administrative, technical, logistical, ICT, environmental, and community liaison positions that can be effectively filled by people with disabilities.

As one focus group discussion participant pointed points out, it does not take much fitness to regulate by waving down vehicles at a construction site. A female participant also argued that she could sweep the compound, do laundry, or clean utensils at a construction site. Therefore, the blanket use of "fitness" as a criterion becomes discriminatory when applied without distinguishing between job categories or without exploring reasonable accommodations, such as adaptive equipment, role

reassignments, or supportive workplace adjustments.

These narratives ignore individual capabilities and reinforce exclusion rather than promote inclusion in line with the Employment Act (2006) and Article 27 of the CRPD, which prohibit discrimination based on disability.

"Before the process of selecting those people, they usually say one thing: 'You have to be physically fit.' That word knocks people with disabilities out." – focus group discussion *participant*

"They replaced a disabled man who had been employed with an able-bodied one, claiming the work was heavy," Male focus group discussion participant.

These narratives ignore individual capabilities and the potential for reasonable accommodation.

Underestimated Capacity and Motivation

Contrary to assumptions, people with disabilities are eager and capable of working in various roles.

"We can cook, we can clean the compound, and we can even be gatekeepers." – Female focus group discussion participant.

"Cleaning, even gatekeeper, even being a welding inspector. I can manage." Focus group discussion participant.

Despite their willingness, employers often fail to engage with their true potential.

Gendered Inequalities and Intersectional Challenges

Women with disabilities face deeper marginalisation due to the combined effects of gender, poverty, caregiving responsibilities, and social stigma.

Dorcas, a trained welding inspector from Buliisa, shared the following:

"Amongst all girls in Buliisa who sat for the interview, it was me who passed… I was the only person considered for welding inspector."

Yet, despite her success, structural barriers forced her out.

“My welding machine got spoilt, and I had to sell it. I also have two kids who need food.”

Her story reflects the insecurity faced by many women with disabilities, where personal achievements are undermined by inadequate support systems and persistent economic vulnerability.

Even more striking is the story of Shadia Namugerwa, a young woman living with epilepsy. The sudden onset of her condition during primary school brought confusion and fear:

“I never knew where it came from because it was not a thing that I was born with.”

Without accessible and affordable healthcare, her condition remained undiagnosed and poorly managed. Uganda’s lack of a functional national health insurance scheme means that many people, like Shadia, face prohibitive costs, poor-quality services, and worsening conditions.

The stigma surrounding epilepsy compounded these gaps. Misconceptions, gossip, and ridicule forced her to abandon her education, closing the gateway to employment and leadership long before she could aspire to join industries like oil and gas. As she recounted:

“Some people when they see me… they make it a conversation… murmuring around. Everybody could know me.”

Her identity was reduced to her illness, stripping her of her individuality and dignity.

Perhaps the most painful was the betrayal she suffered at home. Shadia recalled how her stepmother spread false rumours, accusing her of being pregnant, an accusation laced with insinuations about her father:

“She told her that I have pregnancy, yet it wasn’t true… Because if it was pregnancy, at this time I would have already produced. Because I have spent two years living with my father.”

Such falsehoods not only humiliated her publicly but also deepened her emotional isolation, reinforcing the psychological scars of her exclusion.

Shadia's experience illustrates how disability is rarely isolated. It intersects with poverty, gender, and rural marginalisation, creating layers of disadvantage that current policies and corporate inclusion strategies do not address. By the time opportunities in high-value industries are presented, many women with disabilities have already been systematically excluded through failures in the health, education, and social support systems.

Her story exposes the misconception of assuming a "level playing field" when encouraging people with disabilities to participate in the oil and gas sector. Without addressing upstream barriers, accessible healthcare, inclusive education, anti-stigma campaigns, and long-term social support, sector-based inclusion efforts risk benefiting only a privileged minority.

In essence, Shadia's story is not just a personal narrative but a mirror reflecting the structural violence embedded in Uganda's institutions. This calls for a radical shift from tokenistic gestures of inclusion toward systemic transformation, one that values, supports, and builds the capabilities of every person, beginning at the earliest stages of life.

An elderly woman who uses crutches portrayed a disturbing experience. Despite limited formal education, the informant demonstrated a range of practical skills, from cooking to cleaning and welding. However, her experience reveals a deep disengagement between skills and access to economic opportunities in the region. She articulates the frustration of being systematically excluded from the oil and gas industry, not because of incapacity but due to systemic barriers that favour education and able-bodied status.

"To be disabled does not mean being unable to perform anything…I am a widow, I have orphans… If they were to engage me here, I would be coming here and I sweep, clean the compound, washing utensils, cooking…"

These statements underscore her willingness and ability to contribute meaningfully; however, her value remains unrecognised, an injustice rooted in narrow definitions of capability.

The informant clearly identifies a lack of affirmative action for people with disabilities in employment. She and others request policy shifts that prioritise people with disabilities in hiring practices, especially at the village level, arguing that equal qualifications should result in equitable opportunities and being given a fair chance because their alternatives are fewer.

"People with disabilities should be the first person to be considered… If they have the same papers, they should consider people with disabilities first, because able-bodied people have opportunities of doing other jobs."

This is a powerful call for inclusive employment frameworks, pointing out that exclusion is not just social but also institutional.

One of the most emotional parts of her testimony is the heartbreak of investing in education and training, only to be left jobless and doubted by her own family. Her efforts to pursue welding, including spending large sums of money on training, have not led to employment. Instead, she faces suspicion, gender bias, and accusations of immoral behaviour.

"When I am not called for a job, I ask myself, God, what did I do?"

"Our parents said we were not studying but probably doing prostitution… It took long for them to learn that we were studying."

These statements capture the internalised pain, societal judgment, and family disappointment that many people with disabilities face after unfruitful efforts to break into the labour market. Her dignity is questioned not only by employers but also by her community and kin.

Despite these hardships, there is a strong undercurrent of resilience and collective solidarity. The speaker identifies not only herself but also fellow people with disabilities, family members, and children as having potential. She rejects the notion of helplessness and calls for agency.

"We, people with disabilities, can save ourselves. Because there is a saying

that the buffalo removes its hair stuck in a hole by itself."

This metaphor reflects her determination and belief in self-reliance, even as she calls for fair opportunities and recognition.

Dorcas's story is a powerful and emotionally charged testimony of aspiration, resilience, and unmet expectations in Uganda's oil and gas sector, especially for people with disabilities. Her experience underscores both the potential and systemic gaps in inclusion and economic empowerment for marginalised groups. Dorcas's journey began with ambition and a dream rooted in both personal passion and family encouragement. Her choice to pursue welding was deliberate and aspirational.

"I chose welding, because when I was studying, it was my best course and I was telling my father that I wanted to be an engineer. Because welding falls in the line of engineering."

This statement reveals not only her personal interest but also the influence of familial guidance and the belief that technical careers can be pathways out of poverty:

"My father used to tell me that those engineers have a lot of money. I said let me do this course."

Dorcas undertook a comprehensive vocational training pathway facilitated by Sight Savers and Total Energies. She has obtained multiple certifications and has undertaken progressive levels of training.

"I got a certificate in welding-level 1, then I added these two and ended up with three certificates... I had undergone 5G, 4G and 3G levels of training in welding."

She stood out not only among women but also among able-bodied candidates:

"Amongst all girls in Buliisa who sat the interview, it was me who passed that interview. Even people without disability were amongst those interviewed." This statement demonstrates how investing in people with disabilities can yield high-potential candidates capable of

competing and excelling in technical domains.

Her placements at Sunmaker, Tullow Oil, and Wembley Dairy Farm exposed her to real industry tasks.

"I was welding there (emphatic), serious work, to weld a tank for Taiwan and Beer... we were using twig and solid metal to weld a big tank." These experiences were practical, hands-on, and directly aligned with her training, suggesting that people with disabilities are not only trainable but also perform effectively in industrial settings.

Despite her certifications and proven skills, Dorcas remains unemployed in the oil and gas sector.

"After Sun maker, they sent me home to await a placement but until now, I am waiting for the work. I have stayed at home, waiting for the call. I have waited and waited and none has called me."

This prolonged waiting period without feedback or placement reveals a systemic failure to transition trained people with disabilities into actual employment opportunities.

Additionally, her attempt at self-employment was thwarted by operational and financial setbacks:

"I was not checking the machine inside... he would simply steal the oil... it eventually got spoilt... I sold the machine at 500,000 shillings."

These challenges demonstrate the need for continued mentorship, follow-up, and support beyond training, especially in terms of equipment management, business skills, and accountability systems.

Dorcas's story is also one of perseverance and responsibility as a young mother.

> ***"The money I am earning is what is helping me to buy my kids food and other needs... She needs money for school fees."***

Her resilience in juggling motherhood, job searching, and attempts at entrepreneurship despite systemic barriers makes her story a potent symbol of both hope and the urgent

need for inclusive employment frameworks.

While expressing gratitude, Dorcas subtly held the stakeholders accountable:

"I am requesting that as they helped me then, also to give me a job so that I can work. Thank you, Sight Savers, Total Energies and Sun makers." She appreciates the support given but highlights the unfulfilled promise of job placement, a recurring theme in skills training programs that lack robust job-matching mechanisms.

Caregivers of People with Disabilities Including Children

Another category of people with disabilities who do not stand a chance of inclusion are the affected children. The story of Nakacwa, mother of such a child, sums it up succinctly:

“Nakacwa Fedelence, a mother of three from Mubende District, is the primary caregiver of her seven-year-old daughter, Ainebyona Emily, who has Down syndrome and epilepsy. The constant attention these conditions require, ranging from daily care to night-time monitoring, illustrates the invisible labour and limited support structures that many families of children with disabilities face. Her experience underscores the urgent need for stronger social protection systems, inclusive health services, and community-based support to ensure that no caregiver is left to shoulder these responsibilities alone.”

At night, Emily often experiences seizures, and her mother, Nakacwa, keeps a cloth nearby to provide immediate care. This constant nighttime vigilance leaves her sleepless and exhausted, underscoring the heavy toll on caregivers of children with disabilities.

Nakacwa’s experience highlights several intersecting challenges:

Caregivers often dedicate the majority of their time to meeting the medical, educational, and emotional needs of their children, leaving little opportunity to pursue education, vocational training, or formal employment.

The caregiving role, often unpaid, compounds financial stress. In households where a parent is the primary breadwinner, income loss or limited earning potential significantly reduces household financial security.

Caregiving responsibilities disproportionately fall on women, reinforcing intersectional exclusion, as mothers like Nakacwa navigate both disability-related care and gendered expectations for household management.

Many families lack access to inclusive healthcare, therapy, respite services, or community support groups, further isolating caregivers and increasing their vulnerability.

Given these unique challenges, it underscores the need for inclusion to extend beyond employment opportunities to address the broader social ecosystem that affects people with disabilities and their caregivers. For children with disabilities, meaningful participation is contingent not only on direct interventions (such as schooling and therapy) but also on support for those who provide daily care. Strengthening social protection schemes, disability-inclusive health services, and community-based support networks is essential to mitigate the hidden burdens carried by caregivers and ensure that families are not forced to shoulder these responsibilities alone.

This is not only a matter of social justice but also central to Uganda's commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 3 on health and well-being and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities), and the country's national disability and social protection policies.

Since her partner abandoned the family, Nakacwa has had to single-handedly manage rent, food, clothing, and caregiving without any form of external assistance. Her daughter does not attend school, although Nakacwa had hoped to enrol her in a special education program. However, the financial burden and lack of support made this impossible: *"I haven't taken her because I did not benefit from the pipeline project. I am fervently praying*

that in the next lottery-based selection, I will be picked as a casual labourer for the oil company."

Nakacwa's story represents the systemic exclusion of caregivers of children with disabilities from the economic opportunities associated with the oil and gas sector. Despite her readiness and willingness to work, employment opportunities in the pipeline project are allocated by a random lottery system, a mechanism designed to avoid conflict but one that inherently limits access for people who have less opportunity for other employment.

> ***"Initially, we discussed prioritising the most vulnerable…However, this was abandoned. Instead, selection was done through a draw," Nakacwa notes.***

With no land, formal income, or childcare support, Nakacwa turned to petty trade. She now operates a small tomato stall with a capital of less than 10 US dollars to afford essentials like soap and school fees for her eldest daughter.

Her resilience is undeniable, but so is the absence of a safety net.

"I appeal to the company and the government to assist me. I own no land because my husband was a porter. Since he left, I have survived by working in people's gardens."

Nakacwa's reality is not unique. Across oil-hosting communities in Uganda, single mothers caring for children with disabilities are among the most marginalised, excluded from job opportunities, social programmes, and the very development meant to transform their communities. Their labour is invisible, yet it holds society together. Their needs are urgent yet unrecognised.

To ensure equity and inclusion in Uganda's oil and gas development, stakeholders must do the following:

Recognise unpaid care work and include caregivers of children with disabilities as priority beneficiaries in local employment and corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes. Second, job allocation models must be reformed

to include vulnerability-based criteria alongside community-based consultations and safeguards against favouritism. It also follows that stakeholders establish social protection mechanisms, such as cash transfers, food support, and childcare subsidies, to target families with members with disabilities.

There is a need to devise innovative ways to support inclusive education and early intervention programs, ensuring that children like Aine can access learning environments suited to their needs. Although the government introduced universal primary education in 1996, it is fraught with weaknesses. Finally, it is necessary to invest in community care systems, including respite services and caregiving cooperatives, to reduce the isolation and stress faced by caregivers.

Nakacwa and Aine's story is not just a personal narrative; it is a call to action for all of us. For Uganda's oil wealth to be truly transformative, it must leave no one behind, least of all women silently carrying the nation's future in their arms: mothers of children with disabilities.

The nerve-wracking stories highlight resilience but also the compounded barriers women with disabilities and those with children with disabilities face.

Financial Barriers to Participation

Systemic financial hurdles significantly limit the participation of people with disabilities in government programs, such as the Parish Development Model (PDM). One such barrier is the cost of group registration, which is required to access these initiatives in the program. As Mbabazi noted:

> ***"Persons with disabilities do not have money to contribute to securing a certificate."***

In addition to financial constraints, corruption significantly undermines both access and equity within the PDM microloan program. According to local leadership, the disbursement of the approximately USD 334 allocated per individual is frequently compromised by officials demanding bribes, allowing some applicants to access funds improperly.

This systemic corruption not only perpetuates inequity but also contributes to chronic repayment challenges, eroding trust in the program and further marginalising vulnerable participants, including people with disabilities.

In addition to financial constraints, corruption further undermines access and equity. The chairman of Kitenga highlights these challenges, particularly in relation to the PDM's microloan component, where approximately USD 334 is allocated per participant. He explains:

> ***"One major issue is corruption in the loan disbursement process. Some officials demand bribes at various stages, enabling individuals to improperly access funds. As a result, loan repayment has been a persistent challenge."***

While the government promotes the PDM as a transformative strategy to elevate Uganda's predominantly poor population to middle-income status, such entrenched corruption raises serious concerns. Unless these governance issues are effectively addressed, the model risks falling short of its goals, limiting both financial inclusion and broader community empowerment efforts.

Accessibility in Infrastructure Versus Attitudes

While the head office infrastructure of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) commendably includes ramps and accessible toilets, systemic and cultural biases persist. Kansiime acknowledged:

"*We regulate and oil companies are the ones to implement, so our role is to urge them that as you do these activities, encourage locals to participate in terms of providing the goods that you need locally."*

Kansiime's statement reveals a significant regulatory gap in promoting inclusion in Uganda's oil and gas sector. By emphasising that "we regulate and oil companies are the ones to implement", the official highlights the Petroleum Authority's role as primarily advisory rather than enforcement

oriented. This regulatory distance creates a situation in which the responsibility for ensuring local participation, including that of marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, is delegated to private companies, with no binding obligation to act inclusively.

The call to "urge" companies to encourage locals to provide goods suggests a passive rather than proactive approach, leaving much to the discretion of oil companies, whose primary motives are profit-driven rather than socially transformative. Furthermore, while there is a general promotion of local content, the statement does not specify or prioritise the inclusion of people with disabilities, women, and youth.

This generalised framing of risk perpetuates structural inequalities by assuming that all "locals" have equal access to participate in economic opportunities, when in reality, marginalised groups face additional barriers. By framing participation mainly through an economic lens and supplying goods and services, the statement overlooks broader and more inclusive dimensions of participation, such as direct employment, skills development, or leadership roles for disadvantaged populations.

Consequently, this hands-off regulatory approach encourages cosmetic compliance, where oil companies may appear aligned with participation goals but fail to make substantive and inclusive efforts. The implication is clear: without stronger mandates, incentives, or accountability mechanisms, the promise of inclusion remains largely symbolic, rather than transformative.

The official also implicitly acknowledges the systemic barriers hindering that hinder the inclusion of people with disabilities in Uganda’s oil and gas sector. When asked about the prospects for people with disabilities accessing jobs and scholarships, Edmond Kansiime, Strategy Manager at the Oil Industry Regulatory Authority, candidly admitted:

"I have a feeling personally that if these people could access those opportunities

because I see opportunities, scholarships, but they are ring-fenced."

This statement is deeply revealing. While Kansiime confirms the existence of opportunities, the term *"ring-fenced"* suggests that these prospects are effectively inaccessible to marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities. Structural hurdles, ranging from inflexible qualification criteria and lack of information dissemination to inaccessible processes and discriminatory social norms, continue to confine these opportunities within invisible, but powerful, boundaries.

Kansiime's admission exposes a critical paradox: the presence of opportunities does not equate to equitable access. Programs meant to promote inclusion risk becoming non-impactful if systemic barriers are not actively dismantled. Without deliberate outreach, tailored accommodations, and affirmative action measures, people with disabilities remain fenced off from the very opportunities designed to uplift them.

The finding directly echoes the lived realities captured elsewhere in this study, including Shadia Namugerwa's story, in which stigma and a lack of systemic support resulted in educational exclusion. This lack of support highlights that opportunity alone is insufficient; meaningful inclusion demands intentional, structured, and proactive interventions that address inequalities at their root.

Suffice to say that while the oil and gas sector in Uganda formally promotes local participation, unless specific strategies are implemented to unlock access for people with disabilities, initiatives risk reinforcing the very exclusion they seek to remedy.

Tugonza, a male participant in a focus group discussion, could not have put it more explicitly:

> ***"They look at us as useless people… Maybe they don't allow us in the camp."***

Thus, accessibility in design does not always translate to practical inclusion.

Information Gaps and Poor Outreach

People with disabilities are often left out of consultations and job announcements due to inaccessible communication.

"They should come down to our Local Council (LC) village chairmen… use people with disabilities to disseminate this information." – *Tugonza Paddy Buleme*

> ***"Even the deaf don't get these opportunities. Because who talks to them?" – Focus group discussion participant.***

The use of non-disabled intermediaries perpetuates information asymmetry and marginalization.

Additionally, the profit-driven stance of actors within the industry is well encapsulated in Kansiime's words of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda. *"These are projects that are coming; people are putting in their own money and want to recover their money. So, it has a time element, you must finish by this time."*

Kansiime drives his non apologetic sentiment home, emphasizing the importance of initiative on the part of people with disabilities, urging that they should not wait for special invitations, adding *"So when you say, community members come and take on opportunities, people with disabilities should be able to be on top of the list, they should come first. Any kind of delay, no one will now come to kneel, bend and wait."*

Kansiime provided insights that reflect the commercial realities of the sector but also raise critical concerns in light of Uganda's human rights obligations. Referring to the time-bound nature of oil and gas investments, he stated, "These are projects that are coming; people are putting in their own money and want to recover their money. So, it has a time element, you must finish by this time."

While Kansiime's statements highlight the urgency and operational pace of the oil sector, they also suggest a limited interpretation of inclusion, one that places the onus on people with disabilities to seek out opportunities themselves rather than on duty bearers

to ensure that those opportunities are accessible and inclusive by design. This position contradicts Uganda's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which mandates a rights-based approach to development.

Under this framework, it is incumbent upon government institutions and industry actors to proactively include people with disabilities in all aspects of development, not as a matter of charity or convenience but as a legal and moral obligation. This includes providing accessible information, eliminating structural barriers, and ensuring meaningful participation at every stage of the oil and gas value chain.

Kansiime's remarks emphasise the need to reconcile the fast-paced demands of the oil industry with the equally urgent imperative of inclusive development. Without deliberate and systemic measures to engage people with disabilities, there is a risk that their exclusion will be normalised under the guise of efficiency, undermining both national policy goals and international human rights commitments.

Corruption, Nepotism, and Structural Discrimination

Access to jobs is influenced by bribery and favouritism, compounding exclusion.

> ***"A person with disabilities will have no money to put there to get that job, while the other one without a disability will." – Ms. Mbabazi Sylvia***

These practices act as disincentives to participation and erode trust in systems that are meant to be inclusive.

In Uganda, reports of corruption in public recruitment are common. The media has repeatedly exposed cases of district officials being apprehended for selling government jobs, demanding bribes, or soliciting favours in exchange for employment opportunities. This entrenched culture of transactional recruitment undermines transparency and equity, effectively sidelining individuals, particularly those with

disabilities, who lack the financial means and social networks to navigate such corrupt systems.

This problem is exacerbated by Uganda's persistently high youth unemployment rates, which remain among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2023) and the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2023), youth unemployment is estimated to range between 18% and 25%, with underemployment and informal work further masking the true scale of joblessness in Uganda. In such a constrained labour market, where competition is intense and opportunities are scarce, corruption becomes a gatekeeper, disproportionately locking out marginalised populations, including people with disabilities.

Consequently, while national frameworks such as the National Employment Policy (2011) and the People with Disabilities Act (2020) emphasise equal access to employment, their implementation is undermined by systemic integrity gaps in the government. Unless corruption in recruitment and service delivery is addressed through transparent oversight mechanisms, independent monitoring, and stronger accountability at the local government level, the aspiration of inclusive employment within Uganda's oil and gas sector will remain unattainable.

Absence of Disaggregated Data and Monitoring

The Absence of Data

One of the most critical barriers to inclusive development in Uganda's oil and gas sector is the absence of disaggregated data on people with disabilities. The lack of accurate, comprehensive data not only impedes effective policymaking but also perpetuates the exclusion of people with disabilities from the opportunities offered by the country's burgeoning oil industry. The inability to accurately identify the number of people with disabilities and their specific needs means that policies, interventions, and planning fail to reflect the realities faced by this marginalised group of people.

The Mandate of Government Agencies in Data Collection

The Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), and National Council for Disability (NCD) have clear mandates to collect and monitor data on marginalised groups, including people with disabilities.

Within the oil and gas sector, the PAU plays a critical role as the regulatory body responsible for overseeing compliance with national laws, environmental and social safeguards, and inclusive development standards. According to the PAU Strategic Plan (2021–2026), the Authority is tasked with “ensuring that oil and gas sector activities contribute to sustainable development and inclusivity, including the integration of marginalized groups such as people with disabilities into the industry” (PAU, 2021).

Beyond its regulatory functions, the PAU is mandated to commission and review Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) and related research studies to understand how petroleum operations affect communities within target areas. These studies are essential for identifying and mitigating adverse impacts, ranging from displacement to livelihood disruption, and for designing targeted interventions that promote equitable participation in the project.

However, while ESIAs routinely consider gender, the environment, and resettlement dynamics, disability inclusion has often been overlooked or inadequately addressed. The absence of disaggregated data on PWDs in these assessments limits the Authority’s ability to enforce inclusive safeguards and to ensure that oil-related benefits and opportunities reach all community members equitably.

In this regard, PAU’s strategic commitment to inclusivity must translate into operational mechanisms that systematically integrate disability perspectives into all research, monitoring, and decision-making processes. This includes requiring companies and contractors to gather disability-disaggregated data, consult organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) during community engagement,

and embed accessibility standards across compensation, training, and employment programs.

Strengthening coordination with the EOC and NCD would further enhance accountability and ensure that inclusion moves beyond rhetoric and into measurable practice.

Ultimately, the Authority's mandate offers a powerful entry point for advancing the rights of people with disabilities within Uganda's oil and gas value chain, transforming compliance-based regulation into an instrument for social justice, data-driven inclusion, and equitable development.Similarly, the EOC, under the Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007), has the statutory responsibility to "ensure that all individuals, particularly marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, benefit equitably from national development processes" (EOC, 2020). This includes data collection, analysis, and reporting on the representation and inclusion of people with disabilities in various sectors.

The NCD, as per its Strategic Plan (2021-2025), is mandated to *"promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of national development, with a focus on collecting, analysing, and utilising data on the status of people with disabilities in Uganda"* (NCD, 2021). This includes the collection of disaggregated data, which is essential for understanding the scale of the challenges people with disabilities face and informing inclusive policies and practices.

These agencies are charged with responsibilities that include monitoring and assessing the inclusion of people with disabilities in the national development agenda. However, their failure to collect accurate data, particularly in areas where oil and gas activities are concentrated, poses a significant barrier to addressing the challenges that people with disabilities continue to face in these areas.

Controversy Over the 2024 National Census Data

The 2024 National Census of Uganda revealed significant gaps in disability data. While the 2014 Census reported a

considerably higher proportion of people with disabilities, the 2024 results estimated only 2.6% of the population as living with disabilities, a sharp and unexpected decline. This discrepancy raises serious concerns regarding data accuracy, the methodology applied, and the risk of undercounting. Reliable disability data are critical for evidence-based policy, planning, and resource allocation, as emphasised by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 17 on data and monitoring).

The failure to apply internationally recognised tools such as the Washington Group Questions further highlights the need for Uganda to strengthen its statistical systems to ensure that the rights, needs, and contributions of people with disabilities are fully and accurately represented.

This sudden drop raised alarms within the disability community, including groups such as the Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) and the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), who questioned the accuracy and methodology of the census. According to NUDIPU's (2024) statement:

"The drastic reduction in the number of persons with disabilities recorded in the 2024 Census is both perplexing and concerning. It raises questions about the completeness and accuracy of the data collection process, which fails to account for the full spectrum of disabilities across the country."

This discrepancy between the 2014 and 2024 Census data undermines the reliability of official figures and signals the need for improved methodologies in disability data collection. For people with disabilities, this creates a significant gap in the recognition of their needs and challenges, making it difficult for policymakers to craft effective interventions.

PAU's Abdication of Responsibility

Despite these concerns, Kansiime, whose mandate is planning and corporate strategy at the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), suggested

that the researcher assume the responsibility of collecting data on people with disabilities in oil-affected areas. He proposed that a survey be conducted across critical oil and gas locations, such as Kingfisher, Tilenga, and along the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), to obtain a clearer representation of the population in these areas. He stated:

"Now that you have said that the census was not all that good and accurate and had those issues, maybe you could do a survey, where you are now sampling. Yes, you go to Kingfisher (oil well site), you sample, you go to… aaah, Tilenga, you sample, and then along the EACOP you also sample. To have a clear representation of people with disabilities, we need to understand, how many are they? We could be speaking when they are not there. We could be speaking when we are understating the statement, when there are very many and we are not paying attention."

This suggestion reflects a shift in responsibility from relevant government agencies with a legal mandate to collect and report data on marginalised groups. By tasking the researcher with the responsibility of obtaining disability data in oil-affected regions, Kansiime essentially diverts attention and resources away from the government's duty to collect this data as part of its inclusive development mandate. This is a misstep as it undermines the legal and strategic mandates outlined in the PAU's Strategic Plan (2021-2026), which calls for data collection on marginalised groups to guide inclusive interventions in the oil and gas sector.

Implications of Inadequate Data on Inclusive Planning

The absence of accurate, disaggregated data on people with disabilities in the oil sector significantly hampers the ability to design inclusive development policies that address the specific needs of this community. As stated in the PAU Strategic Plan (2021-2026),

> ***"The effective integration of marginalized groups in the oil and gas sector depends on the availability of comprehensive data, which informs policy and***

decision-making at all levels of the sector." (PAU 2021)

Without this data, people with disabilities continue to face systemic exclusion from employment opportunities, health and safety protocols, and other vital services related to the oil and gas industry.

Furthermore, the EOC emphasises the need for data-driven policy formulation, stating in its Strategic Plan (2020-2025): *"Inclusive national development requires comprehensive and disaggregated data on marginalized groups to assess their needs, ensure their participation, and guide interventions that promote equity in all sectors"* (EOC, 2020). Failure to collect accurate data compromises the EOC's ability to monitor progress and enforce the equal participation of people with disabilities in all sectors, including oil and gas.

Similarly, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCD) affirms in its Strategic Plan (2021-2025) that *"data collection is key to understanding the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and ensuring their integration into national development plans"* (NCD, 2021). By not collecting accurate data, government agencies undermine the foundation upon which inclusive strategies and emergency responses can be built.

Suggestions for Strengthening Data Collection and Monitoring

To correct this oversight and promote inclusive development in Uganda's oil and gas sector, the PAU, EOC, and NCD must prioritise collecting accurate, disaggregated disability data. Key recommendations include:

Conducting inclusive surveys in oil-producing regions, such as Kingfisher, Tilenga, and along the EACOP pipeline, to ensure a true representation of people with disabilities in these areas and inform rights-based programming.

Developing a standardised framework for collecting and reporting data on people with disabilities, which is aligned with the disability inclusion goals outlined in the PAU Strategic Plan (2021-2026), the EOC's mandate under the Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007), and the NCD Strategic Plan (2021-2025).

Fostering inter-agency collaboration to ensure that data are not only collected but also used to inform inclusive policies and targeted interventions in the oil and gas sector.

Improving public reporting of disaggregated disability data will allow disability organisations and other stakeholders to hold government agencies accountable for ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities in national development efforts.

The failure to collect and use accurate, disaggregated disability data in Uganda's oil sector represents a serious oversight by government agencies, particularly the PAU, the EOC, and the NCD.

Local Leadership and Advocacy

Despite formidable challenges, local disability leaders have emerged as powerful voices for inclusion within Uganda's oil-producing regions. They play a crucial role in mobilising people with disabilities (PWDs), creating awareness of employment and livelihood opportunities, and holding duty bearers accountable for inclusive development. As Ms. Mbabazi, a District Councillor representing PWDs, shared:

> ***"Whenever they come, these oil companies… I mobilize my people to apply… I follow up."***

Her account reflects the determination and resilience of local advocates who act as bridges between marginalised communities and state and corporate structures. However, such efforts often unfold in environments marked by political sensitivity, economic competition, and weak institutional safeguards, factors that make disability advocacy within the oil sector both courageous and risky.

A particularly striking example is that of a disability self-advocate who founded a community-based initiative known as the Oil and Gas Defenders Organization. Motivated by a commitment to ensure that PWDs benefit equitably from the country's petroleum resources, he sought to engage companies, document rights violations, and raise awareness among the affected communities.

However, his advocacy was met with intimidation. Security operatives reportedly raided and closed his office, confiscated his organizational documents, and subjected him to repeated questioning. Undeterred, he made three separate attempts to petition the Parliament of Uganda, seeking protection and recognition of his organisation's work, yet all were unsuccessful.

By thwarting such legitimate advocacy, the authorities inadvertently reinforce perceptions of exclusion and mistrust among marginalised groups. When good-intentioned initiatives are silenced, communities are left without representation, and aggrieved advocates are forced into frustration and disillusionment.

The result is not only the stifling of civic engagement but also the loss of crucial local insights that could inform the more equitable governance of extractive resources.

This study underscores the urgent need to safeguard civic spaces for disability advocates in Uganda's extractive sector. Advocacy is not merely a rights-based activity; it is a form of participatory governance that enriches national decision-making and fosters transparency. Therefore, empowering local leaders and ensuring their protection is integral to realising the principles of inclusion, participation, and leadership that the oil industry, and indeed Uganda's broader development agenda, aspires to achieve.

Through the evidence generated by this fellowship, this study seeks to transform such stories of silencing into calls for action, urging policymakers, regulators, and development partners to recognise disability advocates as essential stakeholders in shaping a more just and inclusive extractive future.

Disaster preparedness in the context of the oil industry

The expansion of Uganda's oil and gas industry, including the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and the planned refinery in Buliisa, has significantly increased the need for robust and inclusive disaster preparedness strategies. While these projects promise economic

transformation, they also introduce complex environmental, technical, and safety risks to the local population. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted for this study revealed serious community concerns regarding the adequacy and equity of disaster response systems, particularly for people with disabilities.

Uganda is a state party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which mandates the inclusion and protection of people with disabilities in all aspects of life, including “situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies” (Article 11, UNCRPD). The aim is to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not disproportionately affected or left behind because of barriers to accessing essential aid, information, and services during emergencies.

Similarly, the National Oil and Gas Policy (2008) emphasizes that the benefits of oil and gas development should be *“enjoyed equitably by all citizens of Uganda.”* In practice, these commitments have not been consistently realised in disaster preparedness planning for the oil and gas sector.

Theme 1: Concerns about Emergency Response and Infrastructure

A central theme across all regions of enquiry was the perceived inadequacy of emergency response systems. Community members repeatedly expressed scepticism regarding the ability of local authorities and oil companies to respond effectively in the event of a disaster.

One participant emphasised the risks posed by distant emergency services, *“the fire engines are stationed in Buliisa. Now, if a fire broke out here, we would all be burnt before they arrived.”*

This comment underscores the spatial and logistical challenge of the physical location of emergency resources relative to high-risk communities near the pipeline. For people with disabilities, whose mobility may already be compromised, such a delay could prove fatal.

However, there were instances where participants noted swift responses,

particularly when corporate or state-owned infrastructure was affected. As one individual recalled, *"I remember when there was a problem with the electricity wires, he came promptly. Nobody called him, but he was here in a short time to fix the wires."* Another participant added, *"If it concerns their property, they will come."* These statements suggest a troubling prioritisation of economic assets over the community's welfare.

A further comment reflects the depth of this concern:

> ***"I do not see anything, any plans in place to save the community, let alone people with disabilities in case of a disaster."***

This perceived lack of institutional care reflects a serious disconnect between community expectations and duty bearer obligations. Under Article 4(1)(c) of the UNCRPD, State Parties are required to take all appropriate measures to ensure that public authorities and institutions act in conformity with the rights of people with disabilities, including during emergencies.

Theme 2: The Vulnerability of People with Disabilities in the Context of Associated Risks

The proximity of oil infrastructure to residential areas, particularly in Buliisa and surrounding districts, has led to heightened anxiety, especially among people with disabilities. For a disabled couple living next to a pipeline, the fear of disaster is a daily reality. Their concerns about their children's safety in the event of a fire or oil spill highlight the intersection of physical proximity, lack of infrastructure, and social vulnerability.

The EACOP pipeline, which is designed to be internally heated to facilitate the flow of waxy crude oil, carries elevated risks. In the event of a rupture or fire, the heat and pressure within the pipeline can rapidly accelerate the spread of the disaster. Compounding this is the pipeline's route, which passes through ecologically sensitive and heavily populated areas, including the Murchison Falls National Park, Lake Albert, and parts of the River Nile

ecosystem. These are not only fragile environments but home to thousands of people, many of whom have limited access to emergency services.

Despite these risks, people with disabilities remain predominantly excluded from disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies. Accessible information, early warning systems, and evacuation protocols specifically designed to include mobility, sensory, and cognitive accessibility are either non-existent or poorly implemented. This contravenes both Article 21 (freedom of access to information) and Article 11 of the UNCRPD, which require States to ensure that people with disabilities can access timely and appropriate essential aid, information and services during emergencies.

Theme 3: The Refinery Agreement and Emerging Risks

The recent tripartite agreement between Uganda, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Egypt to construct an oil refinery in the Buliisa District brings both promise and peril. While the refinery may deliver infrastructural improvements and job opportunities, its scale and location introduce new layers of risk.

Participants voiced concerns that the refinery's construction—and its proximity to the pipeline—could result in a major disaster if it was not managed carefully. For people with disabilities, the combination of rapid industrialisation, inadequate planning, and lack of consultation heightens their vulnerability. Crucially, emergency preparedness drills, safety briefings, and community outreach efforts are either sporadic or wholly absent. This lack of engagement runs counter to the National Policy on Disaster Preparedness and Management (2010), which calls for “inclusive and participatory disaster risk reduction, especially for vulnerable groups”.

If the government and private sector actors fail to embed inclusive safeguards within the refinery’s development, the potential for large-scale human and ecological damage will increase, further marginalising communities that are already at risk of disproportionate impact.

Theme 4: The Need for Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning

A preponderance of evidence points to a fundamental need for inclusive disaster preparedness that recognises the specific needs of people with disabilities not as an afterthought but as a central component of risk management.

Accessible Emergency Plans:

Emergency protocols must be revised to incorporate transportation options for people with mobility disabilities, ensure that shelters and health centres are physically accessible, and include provisions for people with visual, hearing, cognitive, and other disabilities. These plans must be guided by Article 9 of the UNCRPD, which emphasises accessibility across all public services and environments.

Community Engagement:

Meaningful participation of people with disabilities in emergency planning, drills, and simulations is essential. Their lived experiences and insights are crucial for designing systems that function in real-life scenarios. The Uganda Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) mandates consultation with people with disabilities in all matters that concern them, including disaster preparedness.

Monitoring and Accountability:

Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and updating of emergency systems are essential. This should include audits of the location and functionality of emergency resources, feedback from affected communities, and collaboration among local authorities, civil society, and disability rights organisations.

This study's findings highlight significant gaps in Uganda's current disaster preparedness framework, particularly concerning the protection and inclusion of people with disabilities. While large-scale oil and gas developments offer potential economic benefits, they also introduce substantial risks. Without an inclusive, rights-based approach to disaster planning and response, these developments deepen existing inequalities and expose people with disabilities to additional, disproportionate harm.

Uganda's obligations under the UNCRPD and national legal

frameworks, such as the National Oil and Gas Policy (2008) and the Persons with Disabilities Act (2020), require the proactive inclusion of people with disabilities as subject matter experts in all facets of planning, preparedness, and response. Fulfilling these obligations is not merely a policy imperative; it is a matter of human rights, social justice and public safety.

Call for Affirmative Action and Deliberate Inclusion

People with disabilities participating in this study voiced strong support for affirmative action measures and inclusive recruitment strategies as necessary tools to redress long-standing inequalities in Uganda's labour market, particularly in emerging sectors such as oil and gas. As two focus group participants explained:

"People with disabilities should be the first people to be considered… at least 2 out of 10 people should be people with disabilities." – Focus group discussion participant.

"Give us time to explain what we are capable of doing. If we qualify, then give us the job." – Male focus group discussion participant.

As community leader Tugonza Paddy Buleme affirmed, *"We are like any other people… we educate children, because we are parents,"* while Mary reminded us, *"Disability is not inability."* These voices capture the central message of this study: with the right policies, platforms, and political will, people with disabilities can contribute as fully as any other Ugandan to the oil and gas sector. They seek equity, not sympathy.

> ***"We are not asking for favours. We want equal opportunity to show what we can do."***

Their demand is clear: Uganda must move beyond symbolic inclusion and adopt deliberate and measurable actions that guarantee equitable participation.

Historical Context of Affirmative Action in Uganda

Affirmative action is not new to Uganda's governance or development landscape. Over the past three

decades, the government has introduced targeted measures to address the historical marginalisation of various groups, including women, youth, and people with disabilities. One of the most notable and successful initiatives was the affirmative action policy for girls in education, where female students applying to public universities received additional points to improve their chances of being admitted. This intervention, introduced in the 1990s, significantly increased female enrolment in higher education and catalysed broader gender equality outcomes.

Similarly, Uganda established special-interest group representation to promote inclusive participation. The Constitution of Uganda (1995) and subsequent electoral reforms created reserved seats for PWDs at the national and subnational levels. Currently, people with disabilities are represented in Parliament, District Councils, Sub-County Councils, and Village Councils across the country. This system has produced approximately 1,600 PWD representatives nationwide (Election Commission, 2021), building a visible cadre of leaders who participate in legislative processes, influence local governance, and serve as leadership models for others.

For many individuals with disabilities, these positions have elevated their social standing, strengthened their confidence, and challenged the entrenched stereotypes that once reduced them to objects of pity or of charity.

Challenges in Realizing the Promise of Inclusion

Despite these gains, the impacts of affirmative action and political representation have been uneven. Critics within the disability movement argue that while Uganda has made impressive progress in establishing a comprehensive legal and institutional framework, including the Persons with Disabilities Act (2020), the National Policy on Disability (2006), and the Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007), these advances have not consistently translated into tangible benefits for grassroots people with disabilities (PWDs). Many rural communities report persistent exclusion from education, employment, and

livelihood programs, largely due to weak enforcement, limited funding, and entrenched stigmas.

Moreover, affirmative action measures in the political sphere have sometimes been viewed as tokenistic or symbolic, with representatives of people with disabilities lacking sufficient influence, resources, or institutional backing to effect substantive policy changes. The absence of disability mainstreaming within key economic sectors, such as energy, agriculture, and extractives, further limits the reach of these policies. Consequently, while visibility and representation have improved, socioeconomic outcomes for people with disabilities remain disproportionately low compared to the general population.

What Works and Why It Matters

Nonetheless, Uganda's experience demonstrates that affirmative action can yield transformative results when well-designed and supported. The success of the gender-based education policy provides a valuable precedent for extending similar mechanisms to people with disabilities in employment and training. Targeted quotas in vocational institutions, inclusive apprenticeship programs, and mandatory accessibility audits for employers could mirror the logic that once increased girls' participation in higher education.

In the context of the oil and gas industry, an emerging and competitive sector, the call for affirmative employment quotas is timely and strategic. Implementing measures such as reserving a minimum percentage of jobs, internships, and training opportunities for people with disabilities would not only fulfil Uganda's obligations under the Persons with Disabilities Act (2020) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) but also contribute to the broader social licence to operate in the industry.

Ultimately, affirmative action must move beyond policy statements to practical enforcement, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. This includes ensuring that the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) and local governments integrate disability indicators in their performance

assessments, procurement criteria, and public employment frameworks.

The message from the participants in this study is unequivocal: inclusion cannot depend on goodwill alone. Transforming opportunities for people with disabilities from aspiration to reality requires intentional policy design, measurable quotas, and sustained political commitment. While imperfect, Uganda's history of affirmative action offers both lessons and hope that deliberate, data-driven inclusion can dismantle deep-seated inequality and create pathways for leadership and participation in even the most complex sectors of national development.

Recommendations: Advancing Disability Inclusion in the Oil Sector

To achieve meaningful inclusion, participation, and leadership of people with disabilities in Uganda's oil and gas sector, a comprehensive rights-based approach is essential. Drawing on the study's findings and the voices of community members, duty bearers, and people with disabilities themselves, the following recommendations chart a clear path forward for government agencies, industry actors and civil society partners. They aim not only to dismantle systemic barriers but also to harness the full potential of people with disabilities in shaping Uganda's oil economy.

Policy Development and Legal Framework Alignment

The Petroleum Authority of Uganda, in collaboration with key government agencies and civil society, should expedite the adoption and enforcement of a sector-wide Disability Inclusion Policy. This policy must:

Fully harmonise with Uganda's legal frameworks, including the Persons with Disabilities Act (2020), the National Policy on Disability, and international obligations such as the CRPD and SDGs.

Move beyond rhetorical commitment by embedding disability inclusion across all stages of sector planning, implementation, and monitoring.

Be operationalized through a National Action Plan on Disability Inclusion in the Oil and Gas Sector, with clear timelines,

responsibilities, and performance indicators to track progress.

Community-Level Outreach and Awareness

Inclusion must begin where exclusion is most deeply felt at the grassroots level. Oil companies and regulators should ideally do the following:

Invest in accessible outreach programs that inform communities, especially people with disabilities, about training, employment, and enterprise opportunities in the oil sector.

Leverage existing community structures, including people with disabilities-led groups, to ensure outreach is trusted, relevant and inclusive.

Use multiple accessible formats, sign language, braille, large print, SMS, and voice messaging to guarantee that information reaches all people with disabilities, regardless of impairment.

Frame outreach not as charity but as equal opportunity, affirming the capacities and contributions of people with disabilities.

Inclusive Recruitment Frameworks and Employment Pipelines

Recruitment frameworks must be significantly restructured to promote inclusive hiring. Companies in the oil and gas sector should:

Remove discriminatory requirements, such as vague terms like “physically fit”, which have historically been used as barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace.

Implement affirmative action measures for qualified people with disabilities, ensuring that recruitment is inclusive in both principle and practice.

Conduct accessibility audits of recruitment processes to identify and eliminate physical, procedural, and technological barriers that may hinder people with disabilities from applying for and securing positions.

Establish transparent grievance mechanisms that are accessible to all employees, ensuring accountability and preventing corruption or nepotism in the recruitment process.

Furthermore, oil companies must establish clear pathways for people with disabilities to transition from training to employment. This can be achieved by partnering with technical institutions, contractors, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide internships, apprenticeships, and direct job placements that move beyond tokenism to create meaningful workforce integration. Special attention should be paid to ensuring that women with disabilities have equal access to these opportunities.

Support for People with Disabilities-Led Groups and Cooperatives

For the oil and gas sector to benefit from the full potential of people with disabilities, economic inclusion must go hand-in-hand with social inclusion. The government should incentivise the creation of cooperatives, businesses, and enterprises led by people with disabilities by:

- Subsidising or waiving registration fees for people with disabilities to ease the financial burden of formalising their businesses.
- Providing startup capital, organizational development grants, and capacity-building programs to help these groups scale and sustain their operations, particularly in communities directly impacted by oil projects is essential.
- Ensuring that cooperatives of people with disabilities are considered in procurement processes, allowing them the opportunity to participate in local content development and the supply chain within the oil sector.

Localized Recruitment and Information Access

The recruitment process must be localised to ensure accessibility to all communities, especially in rural areas. This can be achieved by establishing community-based recruitment hubs operated by local disability councils and Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). These hubs can serve as trusted sources of information

and guidance for people with disabilities seeking employment in the oil sector.

Information dissemination must be inclusive, using multiple formats tailored to specific accessibility and accommodation needs. This includes:

- Sign language interpretation and captioning for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Braille, audio formats and large print for people with visual disabilities.
- Pictograms and plain language for those with cognitive and intellectual disabilities.
- Utilising community radio and SMS platforms and redundant methods for wide-reaching, low-cost communication.

Furthermore, recruitment strategies must address the specific challenges faced by women with disabilities, offering gender-sensitive support, such as trade toolkits, childcare, and financial aid for single mothers and caregivers.

Sustained, Participatory Engagement

A crucial element of inclusive development is ensuring the active involvement of people with disabilities in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. The sector must establish platforms for sustained participatory engagement between oil companies, local communities, and people with disabilities. This should include:

- Interactive radio programs and disability-led listening clubs to gather feedback, increase awareness, and create channels for open dialogue between communities and companies.
- Community dialogues should be co-facilitated by disability leaders using inclusive communication tools in accessible meeting places that address the needs of all disabilities, including cognitive and sensory disabilities.

By establishing regular and accessible communication platforms, oil companies can improve accountability and ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard and acted upon.

Monitoring, Data Collection, and Accountability

Establishing a National Disability Employment Monitoring Framework is

essential to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive policies. Oil companies and contractors would be mandated to:

- Regularly report on disability employment data disaggregated by disability type, gender, and location.
- Conduct periodic disability-inclusive surveys to assess the participation of people with disabilities in the oil sector and identify areas for improvement.

The Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) and other relevant stakeholders ought to commit to consistent monitoring and accountability to ensure that companies adhere to disability inclusion standards and that progress is made toward meeting inclusive development targets.

Embedding Disability Inclusion in Disaster Preparedness

Disaster preparedness and emergency response frameworks within the oil and gas sector must be fully inclusive of people with disabilities. This includes:

- Providing training in personal preparedness to help them effectively respond to emergencies.
- Evacuations must be accessible, include early warning systems and communication strategies, and have clear protocols for assistance during emergencies.
- Inclusive shelters, communication, and transportation should be prioritised before and throughout disaster events.

People with disabilities should be actively involved in disaster committees and simulation exercises to ensure that their assets and needs are considered in the planning and response stages.

By embedding disability inclusion principles into disaster preparedness frameworks, the sector will not only enhance resilience but also foster greater trust in the community.

These interconnected recommendations provide a clear roadmap for the inclusive growth and equitable participation of people with disabilities in

Uganda's oil and gas sector. These not only align with Uganda's legal obligations but also reflect a deep commitment to social justice and human rights. If implemented, these measures will ensure that people with disabilities are not just seen but are actively included in the benefits and opportunities arising from the country's oil industry.

Conclusion

Uganda's oil and gas sector stands at a pivotal moment. As one of the country's most ambitious development ventures, it has the potential to transform the livelihoods of the people and drive national growth. However, this promise will remain unfulfilled if people with disabilities continue to be excluded. The findings from Buliisa and beyond reveal both the persistent marginalisation and untapped potential of an overlooked segment of Uganda's workforce.

The exclusion of people with disabilities is not only a human rights concern but also an economic loss. Skills and capacities remain underutilised because of discriminatory recruitment practices, inaccessible infrastructure, cultural stigma, and policy inertia. Requirements such as "physical fitness" have historically been misused to exclude people with disabilities from employment, despite their proven ability to perform a wide range of roles. Moreover, the absence of disability-disaggregated data has hindered effective planning and accountability.

Therefore, inclusion cannot be treated as a distant aspiration. It must be embedded by design, implemented in practice, and enforced through accountability. This means going beyond tokenistic participation in community meetings to ensure representation in leadership, workforce participation, supply chains, and policy formulation. It also means adopting affirmative action measures, such as accessible training programs, targeted hiring, and inclusive workplace policies that level the playing field.

Inclusion must extend to risk management as well. People with disabilities are disproportionately affected by environmental, industrial, and economic disasters; however, their

needs are routinely overlooked in emergency preparedness. Oil and gas companies and regulators must ensure that disaster planning is disability-inclusive by addressing accessibility, communication, and accommodation before, during, and after crises.

As emphasised by Edmond Kansiime of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda, bridging the gap between policy intent and practice is urgent and requires immediate attention. Uganda already has strong frameworks, including the Constitution, Persons with Disabilities Act, National Policy on Disability, and international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The next step is to translate these commitments into tangible outcomes. Institutions such as the PAU, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), and the National Council for Disability (NCD) must take responsibility for accurate data collection, monitoring, and enforcement of inclusive practices.

The oil and gas sector should not deepen exclusion but instead serve as a model of equity and justice. To do so, Uganda must invest in accessible infrastructure, enforce inclusive recruitment, strengthen early interventions in health and education, and amplify the voices of people with disabilities in decision-making at every level. The time for action is now. If Uganda embraces disability inclusion as a core principle of its oil and gas strategy, the sector can become a driver of economic growth and a beacon of social justice. If it fails, the promise of oil risks entrenching inequality, rather than overcoming it. The future of Uganda's oil industry must be one in which no one is left behind.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all those whose support made the development of this research paper possible.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Ford Foundation, whose generous sponsorship made this research a reality. Without their support, I would not have been able to undertake and complete this important work on the inclusion, participation, and leadership of people with disabilities in Uganda's oil industry. Their investment in disability-inclusive development continues to inspire and empower many of us working in this field.



Kasim Rashid Sajjabi, MSc
Kasim@wid.org
(T) 256783811529

I am profoundly grateful to Dawn Skaggs, Chief Program Officer at the World Institute on Disability (WID), for her exceptional technical guidance and mentorship throughout this process. Despite her demanding schedule, she provided invaluable insights that greatly enriched the quality and depth of this work. My sincere appreciation also goes to Heather Duncan, Chief Strategy Officer at WID, for her thoughtful encouragement and strategic direction, which helped align this research with WID's broader vision of global disability inclusion. I equally acknowledge Jody Santos, whose collaboration through the Disability Justice Project (DJP) video component helped sharpen our focus and sustain momentum, and Upakar Pandey, whose editorial support brought clarity and refinement to the final manuscript.

Special thanks are due to the leadership and staff of WID, notably Marcie Roth, Chief Executive Officer, and Kat Zigmont, then Chief Operations Officer, for their unwavering encouragement and for granting me the opportunity to undertake this work through the WID Fellowship. I remain grateful to the entire WID Board of Directors for their steadfast commitment to advancing global disability inclusion.

I am also indebted to all the key informants who generously contributed their time and perspectives, particularly Edmond Kansiime of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda

(PAU), whose insights into the oil sector provided a critical context. Above all, my most profound gratitude goes to the people with disabilities who courageously shared their experiences and stories, often marked by resilience in the face of exclusion. Your voices are the true heart and soul of this paper.

With sincere humility, I once again thank the World Institute on Disability for the fellowship opportunity and continued mentorship and the Ford Foundation for making this journey possible through its generous sponsorship.

Kasim Rashid Sajjabi

About The Global Heumann Fellowship

Creating a Global Bridge to the Future



fellowship@wid.org

The WID Global Heumann Fellowship Program honors WID co-founder Judy Heumann's enduring legacy by empowering disability leaders and advocates worldwide to advance disability rights and justice within their regional communities. Through this program, fellows will work on impactful projects aimed at fostering equity, inclusion, and justice globally. Their responsibilities include conducting research, drafting a white paper, cultivating relationships, driving collaborative opportunities, and contributing to program development aligned with WID's mission and strategic focus areas.

During a twelve-month fellowship term, each fellow will engage in a unique combination of opportunities for thought leadership on national and global policy, research strategies, advocacy, program development, and contributions to initiatives aimed at advancing the rights of persons with disabilities globally. Fellows will focus on identifying and leading research with the support of WID, as it regards the fellow's respective region, expertise, and collaboration with WID.

For more information on the Global Heumann Fellowship's Requirements, Eligibility, and to Apply, visit: https://wid.org/global-heumann-fellowship/

To become a Corporate Sponsor, please visit: https://wid.org/corporate-partnerships/

About World Institute on Disability

The World Institute on Disability (WID) was established in 1983 as one of the first global disability rights organizations founded and continually led by people with disabilities.

We are proud of our history, including our founders – Disability Rights Movement leaders Ed Roberts, Judy Heumann, and Joan Leon. We are dedicated to designing, building, and supporting whole community solutions by removing barriers to include people with disabilities.

To build a more inclusive global society, the World Institute on Disability (WID):

- Helps assure that products and services are more accessible
- Promotes equity policies
- Provides consulting services
- Offers training and tools
- Supports emergency, disaster, and climate efforts

Our Mission is to, on a global scale, to continuously advance the rights and opportunities of more than one billion people with disabilities.

Our Vision is a world in which people with disabilities live freely where access, inclusion, equity, and resilience are embedded throughout every global community.

Find us on the web and join us on social media!

https://wid.org

https://www.linkedin.com/company/world-institute-on-disability/

https://www.instagram.com/worldinstituteondisability/?hl=en

https://www.facebook.com/WorldInstituteonDisability/

References

Abimanyi-Ochom, J. (2014). *Uganda's disability journey: Progress and challenges*. African Journal of Disability, 3(1), Art. #108, available on :

https://www.academia.edu/9600378/Ugandas_Disability_Journey_Progress_and_challenges?email_work_card=view-paper

African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). (2019). *Study on the situation of people with disabilities in Africa*. Banjul: ACHPR.

African Development Bank (AfDB). (2020). *Uganda country strategy paper 2020–2025*. Abidjan: AfDB.

AU. (n.d.-a). Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of people with disabilities in Africa. https://au.int_files_treaties_protocol_to_the_African_charter_on_human_and_peoples'_rights_for_people_with_disabilities_in_Africa_e.pdf

AU. (n.d.-b). The African model law on disability. https://pap.au.int

AU. (n.d.-c). AU disability inclusion guideline. https://au.int.documents

Booyens, M., & Lorenzo,T. (2015), Determining the competences of community based workers for disability-inclusive development in rural areas of South Africa, Botswana and Malawi, available on https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26048267/

Buliisa District Local Government. (2023). *Buliisa District Development Plan III (2020/21–2024/25)*. Buliisa, Uganda.

Chilemba, E. (2015). Disability rights and emerging disability legislation in selected African jurisdictions: A diagnostic commentary, available on

https://www.academia.edu/93134875/Disability_rights_and_emerging_disability_legislation_in_selected_African_jurisdictions_A_diagnostic_commentary

DFID. (2000). http://www.disabilitykar.net

Development Pathways. (n.d.). *Situational analysis*. https://www.developmentpathways.co.uk

Directorate of Petroleum. (n.d.). *Shareholders holding agreement (SHA)*. https://www.petroleum.go.ug/index.php

East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Ltd. (2023). *EACOP Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) summary report*. Kampala: EACOP Ltd.

EACOP. (2024, December 2). EACOP receives inclusivity award at the 5th annual PAU conference. https://www.eacop.com/eacop-receives-inclusivity-award-at-the-5th-annual-pau-conference/

EACOP. (n.d.-a). *Gender equality and social inclusion policy*. https://www.eacop.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/EACOP-GENDER-EQUALITY-AND-SOCIAL-INCLUSION-POLICY-3-V3-002.pdf

EACOP. (n.d.-b). *EACOP's national content regional engagements (Uganda)*. https://www.eacop.com/eacops-national-content-regional-engagements-uganda/

EACOP. (n.d.-c). *Human rights policy*. https://www.eacop.com/publication/view/eacop-human-rights-policy

EACOP. (n.d.-d). *Tanzania land resettlement policy framework*. https://www.eacop.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/EACOP-Resettlement-Policy-Framework-TZ_-Summary_Swahili.pdf

EACOP. (n.d.-e). *Land acquisitions*. https://www.eacop.com/land-acquisition/

Electoral Commission (2021), List of elected representatives of people with disabilities at the national and local government levels. *Kampala: Electoral Commission.*

Electoral Commission. (2024, November 4–13). Nationwide exercise for identification and mapping of people with disabilities on the National Voters Register (NVR). https://www.ec.or.ug/node/726

Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). (2020a). *Strategic Plan 2020–2025: Promoting Equitable Participation of Marginalised Groups in National Development*. Kampala, Uganda: EOC.

Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). (2020b). *Strategic Plan 2020–2025*. Kampala, Uganda: EOC.

Ford Foundation. (n.d.). International strategy, available on https://www.fordfoundation.org/work/challenging-inequality/natural-resources-and-climate-change/international-strategy/

Government of Uganda. (1995, as amended). *Uganda Constitution*.

Government of Uganda. (1997). *Local Government Act*. https://ulii.org/akn/ug/act/1997/5/eng@2000-12-31

Government of Uganda. (2006a). *The People with Disabilities Act of 2006*. Kampala: Uganda Printing and Publishing Corporation.

Government of Uganda. (2006b). *National Policy on Disability*. Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda.

Government of Uganda. (2008). *National Oil and Gas Policy*. Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, Uganda.

Government of Uganda. (2010a). *Uganda National Disaster Preparedness and Management Policy*.

Government of Uganda. (2020a). *National Oil and Gas Policy for Uganda*. Kampala: Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development.

Government of Uganda. (2020b). *People with Disabilities Act, Cap 349*.

Government of Uganda. (2023). Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, *Revised national policy on people with disabilities*. http://www.mglsd.go.ug

IMF. (2022). *IMF Country Report No. 22/78, Uganda issue*.

Inclusive Futures / UK Aid / Development Initiatives. (2021, November). *Uganda's disability data landscape and the economic inclusion of people with disabilities*. www.devinit.org/asksource.info

International Labour Organization (ILO). (2004). *Achieving equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities through legislation: Guidelines*. Geneva, Switzerland: Magugwana CVE. http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/gladnetcollect/164/

International Labour Organization (ILO). (2021). *Inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace: Practices and lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa*. Geneva: ILO.

Kansiime, E. (2025). Key informant interview, Petroleum Authority of Uganda, Kampala, Uganda.

Katsui, & Kumpuvuori. (2008). Human rights-based approach to disability in development in Uganda: A way to fill the gap between political and social spaces? *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*. https://doi.org/...

Kasule, R. (2018, July 27). Addressing barriers to inclusive disability employment in Uganda [Policy brief]. BRIDGE CRPDSDGs Training.

Mbabazi, S. (2025). Key informant interview, Buliisa District, Uganda.

Menze, J. (n.d.). *The ILO approach to promote decent work for people with disabilities*. https://www.academia.edu/20566659/The_ILO_approach_to_promote_decent_work_for_people_with_disabilities

Mji, G. (2009). Realising the rights of disabled people in Africa: An introduction to the special issue. https://www.academia.edu/88154878/Realising_the_rights_of_disabled_people_in_Africa_an_introduction_to_the_special_issue

Milward, H., Ogwang, V. P., Carter, J. A., & Hartley, S. (n.d.). International guidelines and the inclusion of disabled people: The Ugandan story. https://International_guidelines_and_the_inclusi.pdf

Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development. (2008). *National Oil and Gas Policy*. Kampala, Uganda: Government of Uganda.

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). (2019). *Third National Development Plan (NDP III), 2020/21–2024/25: Inclusive growth and sustainable development*. Kampala: National Planning Authority.

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). (2022). *National Action Plan on People with Disabilities 2022–2030*. Kampala: MGLSD.

Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. (2015). *National social protection policy*. https://socialprotection.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/National-Social-Protection-Policy-uganda.pdf

Monitor News. (2020, April 30). How LUDUs made blind, deaf Oloya lose his leg. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/how-ldus-made-blind-deaf-oloya-lose-his-leg-1887556

Monitor News. (2020, July 19). Courts orders MPs to return shs 20m cash. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/court-orders-mps-to-return-shs20m-cash-1887498

Monitor News. (2021, November 2). Minister Onek threatens to resign, accuses PM Nabbanja of micro-management. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/minister-onek-threatens-to-resign-accuses-pm-nabbanja-of-micro-management--3604920

Monitor News. (2023, March 3). Minister Kitutu apologises over diverting Karamoja iron sheets. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/minister-kitutu-apologises-over-diverting-karamoja-iron-sheets--4144632

Monitor News. (2023, November). HRW accuses Uganda of crackdown on activists protesting oil project. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/hrw-accuses-uganda-of-crackdown-on-activists-protesting-oil-project-4421870

Monitor News. (2024, March 15). Parliament cash saga ties tongues of opposition MPs. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/parliament-cash-saga-ties-tongues-of-opposition-mps-4556974

Monitor News. (2024, May 25). Find lasting solution for Kasese flooding. https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/oped/editorial/find-lasting-solution-for-kasese-flooding-4634650

Morwane, R. E., Dada, S., & Bornman, J. (2021). Barriers to and facilitators of employment of people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries: A scoping review. *African Journal of Disability, 10*(0), a833. https://ajod.org/index.php/ajod/article/view/833

Mulumba, M. (2011). Mainstreaming disability into the poverty reduction processes in Uganda: The role of the human rights-based approach to the National Development

Plan. https://www.academia.edu/68357642/Mainstreaming_disability_into_the_poverty_reduction_processes_in_Uganda_the_role_of_the_human_rights_based_approach_to_the_National_Development_Plan?email_work_card=view-paper

National Council for Disability (NCD). (2021b). *Strategic Plan 2021–2025*. Kampala, Uganda: Government of Uganda. https://ncpd.go.ug

National Planning Authority (NPA). (2024a). *Uganda National Population and Housing Census 2024: Preliminary Report*. Kampala, Uganda: NPA.

National Planning Authority (NPA). (2024b). Comprehensive evaluation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy. https://www.npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Thematic-Report-3-Primary-Teachers-Training-for-Producing-Competent-Teachers-to-Deliver-UPE-080119.pdf

National Planning Authority (NPA). (n.d.). Third National Development Plan (NDPIII) 2020/21–2024/25. https://www.npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/NDPIII-Finale_Compressed.pdf

National Union of Disabled People of Rwanda (NUDOR). (2020). *Disability inclusion in extractive industries: Lessons and emerging practices*. Kigali: NUDOR.

National Union of Disabled People of Uganda (NUDIPU). (2021). *Employment and livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities in Uganda: Situational analysis report*. Kampala: NUDIPU.

National Union of Disabled People of Uganda (NUDIPU). (2024). Statement on the 2024 National Census results. Kampala, Uganda: NUDIPU.

NECOC. (n.d.). National Policy on Disaster Preparedness and Management. necoc.opm.go.ug/publications/1. National Policy for Disaster Preparedness & Management.pdf

Nile Post News. (2021, July 22). Ugandans protest as MPs get shs 200m for vehicles. https://nilepost.co.ug/news/110824/ugandans-protest-as-mps-get-shs200m-each-for-vehicles

NTV News. (n.d.). Progress, challenges surrounding the EA Crude pipeline. https://www.ntv.co.ug/ug/news/national/progress-challenges-surrounding-east-africa-crude-oil-pipeline-project-4597854

Ojok, P., & Gould, R. (2019). A comparison of disability rights in employment: Exploring the potential of the UNCRPD in Uganda and the United States. *Disability & Global South, 6*(2), 1698–1718.

Oxfam. (2020, September). *Empty promises down the line A human rights impact assessment of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline*. https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621045/rr-empty-promises-down-line-101020-en.pdf

Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). (2023). *National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy Review Report*. Kampala: OPM.

OPM / Asooha, I. (2023, February 17). President Museveni challenges people with disabilities representatives on wealth creation. https://opm.go.ug/president-museveni-challenges-people-with-disabilities-representatives-on-wealth-creation/

PAU / Ssekatawa, A. (2024, October 2). Fighting EACOP is a lost cause. https://www.pau.go.ug/fighting-eacop-is-a-lost-cause/

Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU). (2021a). *Strategic Plan 2021–2026: Ensuring Sustainable Development and Inclusivity in the Oil and Gas Sector*. Kampala, Uganda: PAU.

Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU). (2021b). *Strategic Plan 2021–2026*. Kampala, Uganda: PAU.

Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU). (2023). *Annual Report 2022/2023: Building a Sustainable Oil and Gas Sector*. Kampala: PAU.

Reuters. (n.d.). Ugandan MPs get $8000 each for work on extending president's rule: Spokesman. https://www.reuters.com/article/world/ugandan-mps-get-8000-each-for-work-on-extending-presidents-rule-spokesman-idUSKBN1CT1J5/

Rohwerder, B. (2020a). *Inclusion works – Uganda situational analysis*. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/articles/online_resource/Inclusion_Works_Uganda_Situational_Analysis_June_2020_update/26428897

Rohwerder, B. (2020b). *Uganda situational analysis— Disability-inclusive development*. Institute of Development Studies.

Thompson, S., & Rohwerder, B. (2023). Spaces of exclusion and neglect: The impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, and Uganda. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/12063312231159208

Tigere, B., & Moyo, T. (2019). Actualizing the rights of people living with disabilities in development policies, planning and programming in Africa: A review of selected country experiences. https://www.academia.edu/125414317

Total Energies. (n.d.-a). Ambition / strategies. https://totalenergies.com/company/ambition/strategy

Total Energies. (n.d.-b). Code of conduct. https://totalenergies.com/sites/g/files/nytnzq121/files/atoms/files/total_code_of_conduct_va_0.pdf

UBC Television. (2024, September 24). A month past, Kiteezi landfill collapse sparks waste management talks [YouTube video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksEjnuG-t4g

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). (2019). *Statistical abstract*. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/05_2019STATISTICAL_ABSTRACT_2018.pdf

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). (2020). *2020 Statistical Abstract*. Kampala: UBOS.

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). (2024). *National Population and Housing Census 2024: Preliminary report*. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/National-Population-and-Housing-Census-2024-Preliminary-Report.pdf

Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC). (2022). *Annual report on the state of human rights in Uganda*. Kampala: UHRC.

Uganda National Disaster Preparedness and Management Policy. (2010). Government of Uganda.

United Nations. (1994). *The standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities*. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/dissre00.htm

United Nations. (2006a). *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)*. New York: United Nations,

https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-people-with-disabilities.html

United Nations. (2006b). *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*. http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

United Nations. (n.d.-a). Early warning for All Initiative (EW4A). https

Appendix A – Glossary

ACHPR	:	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.
ADD	:	Action on Disability and Development
ADP	:	African Disability Protocol
AfriNEAD	:	African Network for Evidence to Action on Disability
AOI	:	Area of Interest
AU	:	African Union
CBR	:	Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme
CIDI	:	Capital and Community Integrated Development Initiatives
CLOs	:	Community Liaison Officer(s)
CNOOC	:	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CPP	:	Chine Petroleum Project
CRED	:	Civic Response on Environment and Development
CSOs	:	Civil Society Organizations
DFID	:	Department for International Development
DRIC	:	Disaster Risk Information Centre
EACOP	:	East African Crude Oil Pipeline

ESIA	:	Economic and social impact assessment
FRIC	:	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
GDAP	:	Global Disability Action Plan (of the World Health Organization)
GRA	:	Global Rights Alert (GRA)
HOCADEO	:	Hoima Caritas Development Organization
HRIA	:	Human Rights Impact Assessment
HRW	:	Human Rights Watch
IFC	:	International Finance Corporation
ILO	:	International Labour Office
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
JLOS	:	Justice, Law and Order Sector
MEMD	:	Minister of Energy and Mineral Development
MOGLSD	:	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MCPY	:	Main Camp and Pipe Yard
NAADS	:	National Agricultural Development Services
NCEE	:	Northern Coalition for Extractives and Environment
NCPD	:	National Council for Persons with Disabilities

NEMA	:	National Environment Act
OPM	:	Office of the Prime Minister
PAF	:	Poverty Action Fund
PAHs	:	Project-Affected Households (PAHs)
PBDM	:	Parish Based Development Model
PEAP	:	Poverty Eradication Action Programme
PEPDEL	:	Promoting the Employability and Employment of People with Disabilities
RAP	:	Resettlement Action Plan
RoW	:	Right of Way
SAF	:	Sustainable Aviation Fuel
SAGE	:	Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SHA	:	Shareholders Agreement
TPDC	:	Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation
TVET	:	Technical and Vocational education and training
UBC	:	Uganda Broadcasting Corporation

UBOS	:	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UCE	:	Uganda Certificate of Education
UGX	:	Uganda Shillings
UHRC	:	Uganda Human Rights Commission
UNCRPD	:	UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDRR	:	United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFCCC	:	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNOC	:	Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC), a state- owned enterprise
UNOHCHR	:	UN Office for the High Commission on Human Rights
UPDF	:	Uganda People's Defence Force
UPE	:	Universal Primary Education
VEC	:	Value environmental and social component
WHO	:	World Health Office

Terminologies /Vernacular words

Abagongobala	:	Grotesquely twisted
Emyoga	:	Cooperative schemes
Entandiikwa	:	Kick start

INCLUDE : Promoting Decent Work for People with Disabilities

Kiggala : Blocked

Appendix B: Participant Quotes

Quote 1: “Challenge number one would be the work requirements. Maybe you are required to carry concrete. For you, you may think they were going to pick rubbish, but the person recruiting knew that after picking the rubbish, they will be carrying possibly concrete bricks, to support some civil works elsewhere.” Pg 10

Source: Edmond Kansiime, Petroleum Authority of Uganda (2025, Key Informant Interview)

Quote 2: “Challenge number one is the work requirements. You might think the job only involves picking up rubbish, but the recruiter knows that after collecting the rubbish, you may be required to carry concrete bricks to support some civil works elsewhere.”

Source: Edmond Kansiime, Petroleum Authority of Uganda (2025, Key Informant Interview)

Quote 3: On entrepreneurial pathways: "You may not directly get a job there, but you can get a service," **Source:** Edmond Kansiime, Petroleum Authority of Uganda (2025, Key Informant Interview) pg 12

Quote 4: “We do apply but they never consider us… I studied welding about five years ago.” – *Tugonza Paddy Buleme, District Councilor pg 12*

Quote 5: “One major issue is corruption in the loan disbursement process. Some officials demand bribes at various stages, enabling individuals to access funds improperly. As a result, loan repayment has been a persistent challenge.” **Source:** Chairman of Kitenga Parish, Uganda (2025, Key Informant Interview) pg 22

Quote 6: “One major issue is corruption in the loan disbursement process. Some officials demand bribes at various stages, enabling individuals to access funds

improperly. As a result, loan repayment has been a persistent challenge.” Chairman of Kitenga Parish, Uganda (2025, Key Informant Interview) pg 22

The chairman discussed challenges in the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM), particularly its microloan component, where approximately USD 334 is allocated per individual. His insights highlight how systemic corruption undermines financial inclusion and the PDM’s broader goal of uplifting Uganda’s poor population to the middle-income status.