



Annual Report 2022 Summary



The Hague Academy for
local governance



2022 We are Able! programme highlights

The We are Able! (WaA!) consortium engaged in numerous pivotal activities in 2022 to promote food security for persons with disabilities and to ensure their civic space in political decision-making. We are pleased to share snapshots of our 2022 work spanning seven countries:

Burundi

- » In the Cibitoke province of Burundi, the authorities are currently committed to taking the needs of persons with disabilities into account during the planning and designing of district community development plans and annual investment plans. Thanks to the development of the Local Inclusion Agenda (LIA), established by the local authorities in partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs), a person with a disability served on the Buganda district's planning team for the very first time.



- » UPHB, an organisation of persons with disabilities (OPD), is a valuable partner at the national level. The evaluation of partnerships in Burundi utilised the Partos Power Assessment Tool. Decisions are currently made jointly at the “partnership level,” which is a positive indicator of inclusion. This is a significant achievement and a sign of increased local ownership. Furthermore, the Head of Cooperation attended WaA!’s regional conference network event in September 2022. The WaA! programme intends to further involve the Embassy through briefings and invitations to activities.
- » Trained Model Households for Inclusion (MHI) sensitised, encouraged, and motivated neighbouring households to participate in newly established OPDs at the village level. Importantly, MHI expanded their community outreach to neighbouring villages. This created a positive connection between OPDs at the district level and the villages within that district. In their coaching activities, UPHB will work together with OPDs to ensure that these new opportunities are utilised. Through this, OPDs at the district level will gain legitimacy at the level of the local authorities. This is significant because local authorities do not formally recognize OPDs that are not fully represented in all villages in their district.
- » The need for land rights capacity building was identified: particularly the inclusion of groups with specific land rights needs. This prompted the joint development of a (disability) inclusive land rights training manual. WaA! project staff currently utilise this manual to gain more substantive knowledge on land rights and disability inclusion to improve project implementation. Furthermore, WaA! staff plan to facilitate disability-inclusive land rights training courses for OPDs, CSOs, Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs), and master trainers. The training manual was piloted in Burundi and Uganda in 2022 and will be finalised in 2023. The manual will enhance project implementation across all WaA! countries, thus increasing inclusive access to land and greater food security for all.

DR Congo

- » As a result of inclusive governance training, the relations between OPDs/CSOs and local authorities have significantly improved in DR Congo. This is largely the result of an improved understanding between authorities and organisations. In general, OPDs and CSOs now consider local authorities to be partners rather than adversaries. Within the *chefferie* (chiefdom), several advances in the Local Inclusion Agenda (LIA) have been witnessed. For example, persons with disabilities were included in the preparatory processes of local development plans in Rubenga, Ntambuka, and Buloho. Positive results have also been reported at the national governmental level. Case in point, the administrative secretary of the provincial governor installed an inter-ministerial framework. This structure was mandated to appropriate, monitor, and propose complementary texts for the implementation of law n°22/003 of May 3, 2022, on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.

- » Successful partnerships with local governments (*chefferies*, territories, provinces) have increased the exchange of information. The commitment of public authorities was marked by the signing of MoUs (memorandums of understanding) between WaA! and the decentralised entities.
- » Numerous OPD mini projects were funded by the *chefferies*' participatory budgets. Local development plans (LDPs) are currently formed and monitored with the full participation of CSOs and OPDs in all four *chefferies* targeted by the project. OPDs and CSOs act as secretariat in the implementation of LDPs and in the monitoring of projects financed by participatory development budgets.
- » After participating in sensitisation sessions for all levels of the community, and through the effects of Community Based Socio Therapy, community members – including persons with disabilities – report feeling greater concern about the issue of disability, participation and inclusion, and the rights of persons with disabilities from the family to the community level. WaA! observed a decrease in stigmatization, self-stigmatization, exclusions, and violations of rights to which persons with disabilities, including persons affected by leprosy, had been subjected and which had pushed them into food insecurity.
- » The societal agenda developed in 2022 will be implemented based on the milestones already reached by raising community awareness on disability inclusion with the participation of all, including persons with disabilities. A better understanding of their rights will inspire the design and implementation of measures to accompany laws relating to food security, such as the revised land law.



- » With the installation of the interdepartmental framework, we have seen a broad interdisciplinary commitment within the provincial government. New legislation that is favourable to persons with disabilities is gaining recognition, and additional recommendations were made on Disability Day. The interdepartmental framework has integrated the follow-up of these recommendations in its work plan for 2023, which WaA! will support.

Uganda

- » Through the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MGLSD), the government of Uganda converted the district special grant into an operational grant to facilitate the technical team and the councilors of persons with disabilities to mobilize persons with disabilities to apply for the National Special Grant. This grant has significantly increased over the years – from 3 billion to 14 billion Ugandan shillings (approximately \$3,800,000) annually – due to the successful advocacy efforts of national OPDs and Members of Parliament. This has created an opportunity for WaA! partners to build the capacity of various groups to benefit from this grant and mitigate food insecurity.
- » Substantial improvements have been noted in the collaborations with local authorities, and the willingness of public authorities to share disability-related information about their decision-making process has increased. The active political support provided by local government leaders in operationalising the District and Sub County Councils for persons



with disabilities and the setting up of the District Unions of persons with disabilities across all the targeted local governments has greatly strengthened collaborations between public authorities, CSOs, and the OPDs. This has increased disability awareness among all actors and stakeholders. Arua City Council, for instance, increased their budget allocations for disability response by 6 million shillings, Yumbe District's budget increased by 3 million shillings, and Terego District's budget increased by 2 million shillings. In Acholi, local government leaders have been influential in rallying stakeholders to support disability inclusion initiatives within programmes such as the Parish Development Model.¹

- » Increased networking and partnerships with locally based CSOs at the district level have fostered a greater interest in a disability-inclusive agenda. This year Save the Children, The AIDS Support Organisation, World Vision Uganda, Freedom of Sanitation, Thrive Gulu, Africa Women Rising, SOS Children, SEED Effect, and NARO, among others, provided a platform to the District Unions (DU) to engage in inclusive programming. Consortium partners aligned with UN agencies: notably the UNFPA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNICEF.
- » An increased level of income from members of iSAVE groups and PIP households boosted the standard of living for households with persons with a disability.
- » VNG International and the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) instituted and strengthened the capacities of six district councils and 15 sub-county councils for persons with disabilities and will continue to lobby the Ministry for more resources for persons with disabilities in 2023.



¹ A government-initiated model for multi-sectorial community development on the parish level for the period of 2021-2026, under the national development plan.

Sudan

- » We are pleased to share similar positive developments are occurring in Sudan. Government and partner responses increased at all levels in Gedaref State. For instance, the State Governor (Wali) agreed to include persons with disabilities in the Islamic obligatory charity (Zakat Chamber). These Zakat committees have decision-making power regarding who receives Zakat support, which has led to increased access for persons with disabilities. Lobbying and advocacy efforts for the formation of the National Disability Federation were successful. All OPDs came together and commenced the process of establishing the National Disability Federation (NDF) and renewed their registration. Generally, the inclusion of OPDs in decision-making processes remains disputed, requiring continuous attention and engagement by all partners.
- » Orientation meetings were organised with the state governor (Wali) of Gedaref State as part of the collaboration of the consortium with the State Disability Council. The state governor became an advocate for disability rights and demonstrated this by allocating plots of land to the Intellectual Disability Institution.
- » The instability of OPDs and conflicts among OPDs – as well as conflicts between OPDs and the National Disability Council – have created additional challenges. Throughout 2022, efforts were made to develop conflict management strategies and conduct conflict sensitivity awareness sessions with persons with disabilities. As a result, tensions were mitigated, and the conflicting parties began to cooperate with one another within the framework of the project. These efforts allowed for the integration of parties who used to take sides against OPDs representing persons with disabilities in Gedaref State.

South Sudan

- » Vital consultative meetings with key ministries (Education, Agriculture & Forestry, Gender, Child & Social Welfare) took place in South Sudan in 2022. The inclusivity of existing policies and systems in Jonglei State was assessed during these meetings. It was noted that institutional policies, systems, and processes are still major barriers for persons with disabilities to access basic services and food security. The need to address state-level institutional barriers that deny persons with disabilities their rights has been identified collaboratively, which creates a path to joint solutions.
- » Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs) were trained and supported. DIFs utilise and encourage the use of inclusive language, fully participate in raising disability awareness, and serve as role models in their communities. This positively influences policymaking at County and Payam levels.
- » There is also strong collaboration, coordination, and networking with government line offices – particularly zonal and woreda labour and social affairs offices – in the planning, implementation, and review of the WaA! project. Field-level planning – including training, technical, support, and monitoring – has been organised and executed in close coordination with the Labour and Social Affairs Office.

- » Lobby and advocacy strategies have positively influenced people's thinking, perceptions, and attitudes in understanding persons with disabilities within their respective communities. For example, Radio Jingles, Drama and Radio Talk Shows aim to address stigma and understanding.
- » Persons with disabilities and key stakeholders are now vastly more aware of the rights of persons with disabilities, including legal frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN-CRPD). Lobby and advocacy strategies have also encouraged meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, OPDs and other CSOs in decision-making on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of economic plans, particularly those related to food and nutrition security.
- » A key milestone was realized in 2022 as OPDs and CSOs participated in joint discussions with the Jonglei State Government to assess the strengths and limitations of the existing food security policies in Jonglei and whether these policies are inclusive enough. This created a platform for a joint review of food security policies and practices in 2023.
- » Public authorities recognized their obligation to work towards the realization of the UNCRPD in the policy areas within their jurisdictions. Combined training on inclusive governance and on the LIA was provided to the four public authorities and respective CSOs/OPDs. This led to CSOs/OPDs gaining greater recognition and improved civic space in society and public life. For instance, the Public Authorities and CSOs/OPDs in Jonglei were able to organize the commemoration of World Disability Day at the state level.



Ethiopia

- » Activities to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and persons affected by leprosy were organized on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) and World Leprosy Day (WLD). Community engagement workshops concerning leprosy, disability, and entitlements/access to basic resources and segments were conducted for members of OPDs, CBOs, Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), CSOs and public authorities. These activities contributed to the approval and implementation of new policy measures regarding employment, salary, and benefits for civil servants with disabilities in Addis Ababa. This removed a major barrier for persons with disabilities to become civil servants. Concrete progress has been made on account of the strong influence of networking platforms. For instance, the Harari Women with Disability Association received an office to run its official business.
- » The monthly task force meetings, in which OPDs and government representatives are members, have strengthened collaboration and coordination. Most importantly, discussion agendas during task force meetings forged a foundation for strong collaboration. They revealed transparency in planning and implementation and provided a platform to raise issues, feedback, and complaints as part of transparency and trust building.
- » Ongoing capacity-building training for persons with disabilities, together with public campaigns through diverse media outlets, including audio-visual channels, improved the awareness of the wider public on the rights of persons with disability to access resources and other public services. In addition, persons with disabilities themselves were familiarised with their rights to basic social services and entitlements as well as their citizenry obligation. Newly empowered persons with disabilities and OPDs now claim, lobby, and advocate for their rights and representation at government offices and councils, and in all social, political, and economic affairs of the society. This has significantly improved the capacity of persons with disabilities, and the engagement of formal and informal public authorities. The consortium established and supported 19 income-generating activities and savings groups that have improved household food security.
- » As a result of lobby and advocacy capacity building, OPDs were able to identify local, regional, and national lobby and advocacy agendas. They commit to their realisation in 2023 through strengthening networking and collaboration with other CSOs, FBOs, CBOs, universities, and local government authorities. Furthermore, the establishment of the Urban Refugees with Disability Association gave new impetus to lobby and advocacy, through familiarisation with the country's commitment to refugees and the provisions of the UNCRPD.

» The Disability Mainstreaming Committees (DMCs) and the successful approach to influencing local inclusive agendas via role models are also providing hope for project sustainability by ensuring the public authorities' engagement in fair and equitable opportunity and service delivery. The aforementioned parties and approaches played a key role in lobbying and advocating for persons with disabilities, especially in ensuring the mainstreaming of disability-related issues in the local government plan and budget. Moreover, the capacity-building training provided to the government on mainstreaming the issues related to persons with disabilities promotes and encourages the proper implementation of the existing policy and legal frameworks concerning persons with disabilities, refugees with a disability, and other underrepresented groups of society. This is evidenced by the government incorporating the inclusion of disability issues into its thematic sector programme planning and budgeting. As a result of training and coaching on district-level, planning and budgeting, 10 LIAs were formulated to facilitate the design and implementation of policies for the inclusion of women and men with disabilities. In total, 25 actions were initiated in 2022 that cultivate a supportive and inclusive environment for persons with disabilities.



The Netherlands

» In the Netherlands, the government announced the development of a Feminist Foreign Policy aiming to address the root causes of inequality. The ongoing focus on gender and youth will be complemented by a focus on disability as a full and integrated part of the proposed intersectional approach. This was complemented by lobbying efforts around the Global Disability Summit in Norway, with a side event around inclusive food security. With the Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development (DCDD) network, we have also promoted disability inclusion in other 'Power of Voices' consortia, for example at the successful 'Power of Disability Inclusion' conference in Uganda. We connected to the networks of Food4All and the Netherlands Food Partnership to further promote inclusive food security policies and practises. In late 2022, a new lobby and advocacy strategy was developed and aligned with the WaA! communication strategy. The WaA! lobby and advocacy strategy is based on the local and national strategies in all six countries.

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