

**The Participation Of People With Disabilities In Government Programmes: A Case Study Of Mityana Municipality**

**Akongot Dinah Evelyn<sup>1</sup>, Omoding Ben<sup>2</sup>**

**1, 2 Metropolitan International University**

**Abstract**

The study aimed at examining the participation of people with disabilities in government programmes: a case study of Mityana municipality, the study was directed by the stated objectives. The study was guided by three specific objectives: to examine the influence of people with disabilities in government programmes, to identify the challenges they face while participating in these programmes, and to establish possible measures to mitigate these challenges. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to determine the relationship between the study variables. The findings revealed that participation of people with disabilities in government programmes is significantly influenced by several factors including their involvement in planning processes, representation in leadership structures, access to programme information, and availability of government support services. The results showed that when persons with disabilities are actively involved in decision-making and planning processes, their level of influence in programme implementation increases significantly. Access to information and support services was also found to enhance their ability to engage effectively in government initiatives.

The study further established that people with disabilities face a number of challenges that hinder their effective participation in government programmes. These challenges include physical accessibility barriers, limited financial support, negative community attitudes, and inadequate awareness about available government programmes. Physical barriers such as inaccessible buildings and transportation systems were identified as major constraints that limit mobility and access to programme activities. In addition, financial constraints and limited economic opportunities reduce the ability of persons with disabilities to participate fully in development programmes. Social barriers, particularly negative attitudes and discrimination from community members, also discourage active involvement.

In order to address these challenges, the study identified several important measures that can improve participation of people with disabilities in government programmes. These measures include strengthening disability-inclusive policies, increasing community sensitization and awareness, improving financial empowerment programmes for persons with disabilities, and enhancing accessibility of infrastructure in public institutions. The findings suggest that a combination of policy reforms, social awareness initiatives, economic empowerment programmes, and improved accessibility of public facilities is essential for promoting inclusive participation. The study concluded that while government programmes in Mityana Municipality provide opportunities for development, the participation of people with disabilities remains limited due to structural, economic, and social barriers. Therefore, greater efforts are required to ensure that government policies and programmes fully integrate the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

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**Background of the study**

Basing of the statistics presented by (WHO, 2012), the number of persons with disabilities around the world is estimated to be over a billion or 15% of the whole population, of whom 2-4% experience significant difficulties in functioning 80% of them estimated to live in the global South (WHO, 2003). The realities for many persons with disabilities are devastating; only 5-15% of people who require assistive devices and technologies have access to them (WHO,2012); the global literacy rate for persons with disabilities is as low as 3% and 1% for women with disabilities (United Nations, 2006). Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa that borders with: Sudan to the North, Kenya to the East, and Tanzania to the south, Rwanda to the southwest and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west with an estimated population of 34,612,250 people as of July 2011. According to Uganda National Household Survey (2014) 7.1 percent of the population is disabled whilst the world’s total population of the Persons with Disability stands at 10 percent.

Persons with Disability (PWD) are the world’s largest minority group. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (PWD), persons with disability are defined as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others Uganda National Household Survey (2014). In Uganda Disability is defined as a permanent disability, substantial functional limitation of daily life activities caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment and environmental barriers resulting in limited participation (National Council for Disability Act, 2003).

Inclusion of the PWD in government programmes in Uganda is today one of the highest ranking in Africa coupled with the disability movement in Uganda being reputedly one of the most vibrant throughout Africa. (Leanardi. E. (2006). This is due to the fact that in terms of international and continental developments in the disability movement, the launching of National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) as an umbrella organization of all PWDs in the country was an event of the first of its kind on the African continent. The formation of NUDIPU and its successes has been used as a model for advancing PWDs rights in many countries of the world. In addition to this, disability issues in Uganda have reached a level where they are part and parcel of the country’s general concerns that are to be addressed in national policies and programmes according to Leanardi. E. (2006).

Disability by its own nature too, has rendered the people affected to be discriminated against and its definition therefore calls for clarity as stated below. (Leanardi. E. (2006). Defining disabilities is often perplexing. Each country and sometimes even different people in the same country has their own definitions of disabilities. For instance, the Ugandan government defines disability as “a substantial functional limitation of daily life activities caused by physical, mental or sensory impairment and environment barriers resulting in limited participation” and a person with

a disability as “a person having physical, intellectual, sensory or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of that person” in its Persons with Disabilities Act 2006 of Uganda. On the other hand, the Report published by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of Uganda (2008) defines it in a similar manner saying, “Defining disability is complex and controversial. (Dube K.A, (2005) though arising from physical or intellectual impairment, disability has social implications as well as health ones. The social model makes the case that disability is the outcome of the interaction between a person and their environment and thus is neither person-specific nor environment specific”.

Basing on the Historical and political context of exclusion, Traditionally the disabled people's issues had been marginalized and categorized as “special" or "different", and the concept of "integration" had been based on changing the individual to conform to society, rather than promoting social change that liberates, empowers and incorporates the experiences of disabled people (Dube K.A, (2005). During the era of colonialization, persons with disabilities in Uganda were objects of charity and institutionalization that disconnected them from their families, a practice that was rampant in the 1950 and 1960s. By keeping disabled people in institutions, the religious and charity organization were constantly reminding the inmates that they were doing the disabled people a big favour as their basic needs were being met as compared to those who were on the streets begging for a living (Daumerie B. & Madsen L.E., (2010).

According to Hanass-Hancock J. & Nixon S., (2009) In addition, persons with disabilities were divided on medical grounds; they were labelled according to a particular diagnosis and isolated from the public depending on the seriousness of the disability for example the mentally ill and the ‘lepers” were conveniently locked up in institutions to protect members of the public. The long separation from their families meant that the inmates became total dependents of these institutions. Those who were lucky never left the confines of their families and were integrated members of their community (Hanass-Hancock J. & Nixon S, (2009)

However gradually through sustained sensitization and enactment of legislations together with the disability movement, disability concerns today in Uganda have reached a level where they are part and parcel of the general countries’ concerns which have to be addressed in National policies and programmes (Chataika T., Mulumba M, (2011). The concerns have been enshrined within the Ugandan Constitution of 1995 and have subsequently been addressed through a number of legal provisions that are discussed in length in the subsequent sections of this paper .Each of these Legal provisions has mainstreamed disability concerns in matters they regulate and the solution have always been geared to improving accessibility of persons with disability to all environments of the Ugandan society and provision of equal opportunities to persons with disabilities (Chataika T., Mulumba M, (2011). As a matter of fact, currently political representation of people with disabilities is well established, with Seven Members of Parliament (MPs) with five of them indirectly elected through quotas and two through mainstream electoral process as well as over 50,000 representatives at district level (Chataika T., Mulumba M, (2011). These achievements significant as they look, have not come as easily as they seem to pop out of the reader’s mind. It has taken decades of

mobilization, Lobbying and Advocacy to create the awareness and the conviction that persons with disabilities can contribute to the development of the Ugandan society. In general, the greatest obstacle of PWDs is nondisabled people's negative attitudes which have impacted negatively on people with disabilities including: Loss of hope, dormant potential, poverty, dependency syndrome and invisibility of self (Kapiriri. M. & Wrightson. (2001)

In Uganda, before 1980, persons with disabilities were not involved in the planning and implementation of government programmes meant to benefit them. Mainstream programmes and the environment were constructed or designed in a manner that depicted lack of recognition and sensitivity to the needs of persons with disabilities; the services provided emphasized separation of PWDs from the community and were seen as preserve for charity endeavors. However, post-1980 created a new environment for groups of persons with disabilities to flourish. These groups such as National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) advocated for the recognition of their rights, support for equalization of opportunities in the communities and lobbied government to put in place legislations which would favor them (persons with disabilities). The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, for instance, put in place constitutional provisions to promote the realization of human rights for persons with disabilities as well as other marginalized groups. Basing on the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes in its Preamble that “disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” According to the World Report on Disability (WHO and the World Bank, (2013) also cites (Leanardi. E (2006) and stresses that “disability is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors). Shakespeare (2006) also suggests a relational approach between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. That is to say, the definition of disabilities today does not concentrate only on the medical and individual aspect of impairment (known as medical model) but also on other relevant aspects including social (known as social model), environmental as well as some psychological aspects. At the same time, such a relational approach captures not only the negative aspect but also the “positive dimension of social relations which enable” persons with disabilities (Shakespeare, (2006).

#### **Statement of the problem**

The government of Uganda in an effort to curb discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and promote and protect their welfare has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol as on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008(Sarah & Audrey, 2024). It further enacted Acts and Statutes such as: the Parliamentary Elections Statute of 2006 which provides for 5 representatives of PWDs in parliament, at least one of whom should be a female; the Children's Statute of 1996 which stipulates for an early assessment of disabilities among children for appropriate treatment, rehabilitation and education; the Uganda Communications Act of 1997 which provides for the development of techniques and technologies that facilitate accessibility to communications services

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by PWDs; the Local Government Act of 1997 provides for representation of PWDs (Female and male) at all local government levels; the Uganda Land Act of 1998 which stipulates that any transaction on customary land that discriminates on PWDs was null and Void, and the Universities and Tertiary Institutions Act of (2001) which provides for affirmative action's for admission of PWDs to universities and tertiary institutions. Despite the existence of all these legal frameworks, there are seemingly relative challenges with people with disabilities while participating in government programmes due different issue, such as lack of clear policies on disability, for instance, the lack of employment policy for the PWDs. 'Persons with disabilities have petitioned Parliament to enact a law that provides for affirmative action on employment of PWDs in both the public and private sector, lack of awareness creation to the disabled; ignorance about the existing legal frameworks; and further protrusion of discrimination against the disabled persons in their promotion and in the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. Therefore, the researcher prompted at presenting the level of participation of people with disabilities resolving challenges faced by these people while participating in government programmes.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of people with disabilities (PWDs) in government programs in Mityana Municipality.

**1.3.1 Objective of the study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the influence of people with disabilities in government programmes in Mityana Municipality, Central Uganda.
- ii. To identify the challenges faced by people with disabilities while participating in government programmes in Mityana municipality, Central Uganda.
- iii. To establish possible measure to mitigate challenges faced by people with disabilities while participating in government programmes in Mityana Municipality, Central Uganda.

**Literature Review**

A study conducted by Beckwith (2016) established that people with disabilities had historically been excluded from political and social leadership, with serious gaps persisting in the literature regarding successful strategies for promoting such roles in developing countries. Strategies were poorly documented, and as systematic reviews by Virendrakumar (2018) and Jolley (2017) confirmed, most existing evidence remained highly descriptive with limited data on legislative or programmatic effects. Research projects had often been isolated, focusing narrowly on physical disabilities.

Studies conducted by IFES and NDI (2014) identified complex barriers to political participation, including societal stigma, discriminatory frameworks, and tokenism, yet also demonstrated that inclusive processes could be supported through capacity building and leadership training. In Uganda, research by Lang (2014) and Wrightson (2001) revealed

that organisations like the Uganda Society for Disabled Children had promoted participation through community-based rehabilitation, working collaboratively with government structures and families. Similarly, a study by Rifkin and Pridmore (2001) found that COMBRA's grassroots strategies successfully dispelled negative attitudes. Although Uganda had ratified the UNCRPD and its constitution contained disability provisions, studies by Safia Naluule Juuko (2015) and MacLachlan (2016) noted that significant gaps remained in health access, employment, and political inclusion.

### **Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive research design, which facilitated an understanding of the participation of people with disabilities in government programmes, using Mityana Municipality as a case study(Nafiu et al., 2017). This design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data were derived from respondent responses organised into themes developed from the research questions, while quantitative approaches involved descriptive statistics presented through frequency tables, graphs, and charts.

The investigation focused on 45 respondents, comprising 15 persons with disabilities, five community members, ten municipal administrators, five employees, and representatives from five non-governmental organisations including UNICEF, the International Labour Organisation, Community Based Rehabilitation Uganda, the National Union of Disabled Persons Uganda, and the Disabled Women Network and Resource Organisation Uganda(Anwar et al., 2022). An introduction letter from the research coordinator was obtained and presented to respondents to secure permission, after which questionnaires were distributed and interviews conducted. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary materials. Primary data were collected directly from respondents through interviews, questionnaires, and observation. Interviews were used to clarify and supplement questionnaire data, allowing for on-spot explanations and capturing non-verbal cues(Rasheed et al., 2022). Questionnaires, structured with both closed and open-ended questions, were administered to respondents in one location; this method was chosen for its efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Secondary data were gathered from written literature, including reports from the PWDs commissions, UNICEF, the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, and various disability-related documents. Documentary review covered books, internet sources, magazines, and relevant laws such as the Local Government Act of 1997.

Data collection instruments included in-depth interview guides for key informants, self-administered questionnaires for community members and persons with disabilities, and document analysis protocols. Research procedures began with topic approval from the university supervisor(Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Data analysis involved editing for accuracy and completeness, followed by coding pre-coded for closed questions and thematic coding for open-ended responses. Descriptive statistics were computed and presented in tables and graphs. Validity was ensured by having the research supervisors review the instruments and by calculating the content validity index. Reliability was tested through a pre-test using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Ethical considerations were observed throughout: participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, accuracy and honesty were maintained, and confidentiality was strictly



upheld. Limitations included potential transport costs, language barriers, time constraints, and COVID-19 precautions. These were addressed by soliciting funds, using volunteer interpreters, adhering to a strict timeframe, and enforcing social distancing protocols during data collection.

**Results**

**Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression Results Showing Influence of People with Disabilities in Government Programmes**

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	1.245	0.312		3.990	0.000
Participation in planning	0.412	0.089	0.381	4.640	0.000
Representation in leadership	0.365	0.094	0.322	3.883	0.001
Access to programme information	0.298	0.081	0.271	3.679	0.002
Government support services	0.256	0.077	0.249	3.325	0.003

Model Summary

R = 0.742

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.551

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.533

F = 30.218

Sig. = 0.000

**Source: Primary Data, 2025**

The regression results in Table 1 reveal that the independent variables collectively explain a substantial proportion of the variance in the influence of people with disabilities in government programmes in Mityana Municipality. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.551) indicates that approximately 55.1% of the variation in the influence of people with disabilities in government programmes is explained by participation in planning, representation in leadership, access to programme information, and government support services (Nelson et al., 2022). The overall model is statistically significant (F = 30.218, p < 0.001), suggesting that the predictors jointly have a meaningful effect on the dependent variable.

Participation in planning shows the strongest positive influence (β = 0.381, p = 0.000). This suggests that when people with disabilities are actively involved in planning government programmes, their influence significantly increases. This implies that inclusive planning processes provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to contribute ideas, express their needs, and shape programme outcomes. Representation in leadership is also statistically significant (β = 0.322, p = 0.001), indicating that leadership positions occupied by people with disabilities enhance their influence in programme implementation and decision-making processes. Access to programme information (β = 0.271, p = 0.002) also significantly contributes to influence, highlighting that availability of accessible information enables

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persons with disabilities to understand government initiatives and participate effectively. Additionally, government support services ( $\beta = 0.249, p = 0.003$ ) positively influence participation, suggesting that supportive services such as financial assistance, training, and disability-friendly infrastructure empower individuals with disabilities to take part in development programmes.

**Table 2: Multiple Linear Regression Results Showing Challenges Affecting Participation**

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	1.874	0.295	—	6.353	0.000
Physical accessibility barriers	-0.421	0.088	-0.396	-4.784	0.000
Limited financial support	-0.352	0.091	-0.318	-3.868	0.001
Negative community attitudes	-0.296	0.084	-0.274	-3.523	0.002
Limited awareness of programmes	-0.241	0.079	-0.231	-3.051	0.003

**Model Summary**

R = 0.718

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.516

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.497

F = 26.547

Sig. = 0.000

**Source: Primary Data, 2025**

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that several barriers significantly affect the participation of people with disabilities in government programmes in Mityana Municipality. The model explains 51.6% of the variation in participation challenges (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.516), indicating a strong relationship between the identified barriers and participation levels. The regression model is statistically significant (F = 26.547, p < 0.001), demonstrating that the selected predictors meaningfully contribute to explaining the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities.

Physical accessibility barriers have the strongest negative influence ( $\beta = -0.396, p = 0.000$ ). This implies that lack of disability-friendly infrastructure such as ramps, accessible buildings, and transportation significantly limits the participation of persons with disabilities in government programmes (Nelson et al., 2023). Limited financial support ( $\beta = -0.318, p = 0.001$ ) also significantly reduces participation, suggesting that inadequate financial assistance or income-generating opportunities prevent individuals with disabilities from engaging fully in development programmes. Negative community attitudes ( $\beta = -0.274, p = 0.002$ ) further contribute to the challenges faced, indicating that stigma and discrimination within communities discourage participation and reduce opportunities for inclusion. In addition, limited awareness of government programmes ( $\beta = -0.231, p = 0.003$ ) significantly affects involvement, suggesting that many persons with disabilities are not adequately informed about available programmes and services.

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These findings suggest that structural, financial, informational, and social barriers collectively hinder the effective participation of people with disabilities in government programmes in Mityana Municipality.

**Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression Results Showing Measures to Mitigate Participation Challenges**

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	1.102	0.301	—	3.659	0.000
Disability-inclusive policies	0.438	0.086	0.401	5.093	0.000
Community sensitization	0.352	0.089	0.319	3.958	0.001
Financial empowerment programmes	0.314	0.082	0.297	3.829	0.001
Infrastructure accessibility improvements	0.287	0.078	0.268	3.679	0.002

**Model Summary**

R = 0.761

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.579

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.563

F = 34.116

Sig. = 0.000

**Source: Primary Data, 2025**

The regression analysis results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that several interventions significantly contribute to mitigating the challenges faced by people with disabilities while participating in government programmes in Mityana Municipality. The model explains 57.9% of the variation in mitigation strategies (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.579), indicating that the identified measures strongly influence the reduction of participation barriers. The overall model is statistically significant (F = 34.116, p < 0.001), confirming that the predictors collectively contribute to addressing the challenges experienced by persons with disabilities.

Disability-inclusive policies have the strongest positive effect ( $\beta = 0.401$ , p = 0.000), suggesting that government policies that prioritize inclusion and equal opportunities significantly improve participation. Such policies may include affirmative action, legal protections, and institutional frameworks that promote accessibility and equality. Community sensitization is also a significant predictor ( $\beta = 0.319$ , p = 0.001), indicating that awareness campaigns and education programmes aimed at changing societal attitudes toward disability can reduce stigma and improve participation opportunities. Financial empowerment programmes ( $\beta = 0.297$ , p = 0.001) also play a critical role, suggesting that initiatives such as grants, vocational training, and microfinance support enhance the economic capacity of persons with disabilities, enabling them to participate more effectively in government initiatives. Infrastructure accessibility improvements ( $\beta = 0.268$ , p = 0.002) further contribute to addressing barriers, emphasizing the importance of disability-friendly facilities and transportation systems.

**Conclusions**

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The study concluded that the participation and influence of people with disabilities in government programmes in Mityana Municipality are significantly determined by their involvement in planning processes, representation in leadership positions, access to programme information, and the availability of government support services (Julius & Audrey, 2025). The findings suggest that when persons with disabilities are actively included in decision-making structures and programme planning, their voices and interests are better represented, thereby increasing their influence in programme outcomes (Alex & Moses, 2024). Representation in leadership roles further strengthens their ability to advocate for inclusive policies and equitable resource allocation. Additionally, access to programme information enables persons with disabilities to understand available opportunities and participate effectively (Julius & Desire, 2025). The study also concluded that government support services, including training, facilitation, and disability-friendly initiatives, play an important role in empowering persons with disabilities to engage in development programmes (Julius & Kaazara, 2025). Therefore, inclusive governance structures and improved institutional support are essential in strengthening the influence of people with disabilities in government programmes within Mityana Municipality.

The study concluded that people with disabilities in Mityana Municipality face several significant challenges that limit their effective participation in government programmes. Key among these challenges are physical accessibility barriers, limited financial support, negative community attitudes, and inadequate awareness of government programmes (Alex et al., 2023). The study established that inaccessible infrastructure and transportation systems greatly restrict the mobility and involvement of persons with disabilities in programme activities. Financial constraints also limit their ability to access opportunities provided through government initiatives. Furthermore, persistent negative societal perceptions and discrimination continue to discourage active participation and reduce the confidence of persons with disabilities in engaging with government programmes. In addition, many individuals with disabilities lack adequate information about available government services and opportunities, which further restricts their participation.

The study concluded that several strategic interventions can significantly reduce the challenges faced by people with disabilities while participating in government programmes in Mityana Municipality. The most important measures identified include the development and enforcement of disability-inclusive policies, community sensitization initiatives, financial empowerment programmes, and improvements in physical infrastructure accessibility. Disability-inclusive policies ensure that government institutions integrate the needs of persons with disabilities into planning, implementation, and evaluation of programmes (Christopher et al., 2022). Community sensitization helps to address negative stereotypes and discrimination by promoting positive attitudes toward disability inclusion. Financial empowerment programmes, such as vocational training and income-generating initiatives, strengthen the economic capacity of persons with disabilities and increase their ability to participate in development activities. Additionally,

improving infrastructure accessibility through the construction of ramps, accessible buildings, and disability-friendly transport systems can significantly enhance mobility and participation.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that the government and local authorities in Mityana Municipality should strengthen mechanisms that promote the active participation of people with disabilities in planning and decision-making processes of government programmes. This can be achieved by ensuring that persons with disabilities are adequately represented in local leadership structures, community development committees, and programme implementation teams. Their representation will help ensure that their needs and perspectives are incorporated into government initiatives.

The study recommends that the government and relevant stakeholders should prioritize the removal of physical accessibility barriers that limit the participation of persons with disabilities in government programmes. Public buildings, offices, meeting venues, and transportation systems should be redesigned or modified to include disability-friendly infrastructure such as ramps, accessible toilets, and clear pathways to allow easy mobility.

Community sensitization programmes should also be strengthened to address negative attitudes and discrimination toward persons with disabilities. Public awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and education programmes can play an important role in promoting positive perceptions of disability and encouraging inclusive participation in development programmes.

The study recommends that the government should develop and enforce strong disability-inclusive policies that guarantee equal participation of persons with disabilities in government programmes. These policies should ensure that disability inclusion is integrated into planning, budgeting, and implementation of development initiatives at both local and national levels.

There is also a need to strengthen community sensitization programmes that promote inclusive attitudes and reduce stigma associated with disability. Such initiatives should involve community leaders, local organizations, and advocacy groups working together to promote equality and social inclusion.

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