

By Viateur Nzeyimana

The National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) puts the number of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in Rwanda to 391,000. About 5 percent of the Rwandan population has some kind of handicap in one way or the other which means that out of the 13 million people at least 500,000 are PwDs.

Emmanuel Ndayisaba, the Executive Secretary of NCPD says, they have a mandate to advocate and mobilize on issues affecting people with disabilities in order to build their capacity and ensure their participation in the national development.”



Emmanuel Ndayisaba, the Executive Secretary of the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)

He used his voice to advocate for their rights that were lacking in the beginning, the laws protecting people with disabilities were later introduced and luckily the bills were passed by large a margin in parliament.

According to the National Census, among those aged over 5 years, there were almost 450,000 persons with disabilities in Rwanda, which corresponds to approximately 5% of the total population above the age of 5.

Pelagie Muhorakeye, the chairperson of the Board of Directors at Rwanda National Association of Deaf Women, RNADW “Umucyo” notes that they have members from rural and urban areas that were not able to use sign language, know how to write or read.

This organization was established in 2005 to serve as an advocate for people with hearing and sight disabilities because previously they didn’t have information regarding whom they would run to as their advocate.

“We advocate for their rights, in order to build capacity, which includes; Gender based violence, Education, economic empowerment, and to carry out campaigns to sensitize people with hearing and visual impairments so that they can understand their basic human rights,” observes Muhorakeye.

Before, they did not know how to use birth control, or how to use sanitary tool pads for young girls, and how to clean their bodies.

Also, we have helped them to embrace agriculture, animal breeding and use modern technology, all in order to help them fight against poverty reduction.

We have managed to give them different domestic animals like chicken to help them improve their economic status within families, so far we are now taking care of 3,500 women and girls in 19 districts countrywide.

Muhorakeye underlined that they will continue to reach out in other districts as they gain more support from partners and well-wishers like NCPD, GIZ and UNFPA among others.

According to the Executive Director of Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD), Samuel Munana, the union helps people with hearing and speech disabilities so that they can enjoy their lives as a basic human right.



Samuel Munana, Executive Director of Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD)

“We advocate for people with hearing and visual impairments through the help of the government,” he said.

Munana explains that in order to provide continuous service to people with disabilities, what often helps is the ability to use sign language and want it to be used throughout the country, so that a person with a hearing or speech impairment can be easily communicate.

Knowing the sign language is not only for deaf and mute people but also for friends, family and society in general.

We educate the deaf and blind to know their human rights as it is called for within this modern world, he adds.

We do so in order make them feel safe and comfortable to develop them and their families, while also have or encourage them join cooperatives.

Also, we connect them within their districts where they are based and they are known how to help them with support through the NCPD.

In education, they train teachers and provide them with teaching tools to help

improve the quality of education for children with hearing and speech disabilities.

Doctors, nurses, hospital and health centers' personnel are also trained so that people with disabilities can also get better healthcare.

Lastly, Munana notes that they now strive for the economic development of members so that they can have a better living for themselves and their families.