

Second African Decade of Persons with Disabilities

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1999-2009 was the first African Decade of Persons with Disabilities, established by the African Union to encourage the full participation, equality and empowerment of people with disabilities in Africa. During the first Decade, the Secretariat prioritised facilitating partnerships throughout society; assisting the most vulnerable groups – such as persons with intellectual disabilities, persons who are deaf-blind and those with albinism – to have a voice; and launching the African Campaign on Disability and HIV/AIDS to mainstream disability in AIDS services and response programmes.

The Secretariat also advocates for the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and monitoring of different protocols relating to the rights of disabled persons in Africa.

The Decade has now been extended to 2010-2019 – the Second African

Decade. The Secretariat is part of the broader movement against conflict and is currently cooperating with the African Union on matters related to disability, peace and security and the plight of disabled people in countries emerging from war situations. An important aspect of this work is to advocate for the implementation of policies related to disability by agencies involved with disaster management, refugees and other displaced persons, including policies and strategies for repatriation and resettlement. For instance, when the camps in Gulu, Uganda, were dismantled in 2009, disabled persons were left in the camp with few support services. Their plight was addressed after an international outcry and intervention.

Words and images

The words and images used by the media can create either a positive view of persons with disabilities or an insensitive portrayal that reinforces common myths that leads to discrimination. The Secretariat

has run training workshops for journalists and facilitated the creation of a network of African journalists to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. At least 200 African journalists have been trained and are now running regular disability-focused columns in a range of African media.

The Secretariat has produced guidelines for journalists, as well as other training resources such as an advocacy and lobbying manual, an evaluation manual and a resource mobilisation/fundraising manual for DPOs. Online at: <http://www.africandecade.org/trainingmaterials>

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