CONCEPT NOTE

**Side** **Event at the 15th COSP, 15 June 2022**

# Our Stories: How Youth with Disabilities are Changing the World of Work

*under Sub-Theme 2*

*Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship of Persons with Disabilities*

**Date and Time**: Wednesday, 15 June, 08:30 – 09:45 (EST)

**Organisers**: Permanent Mission of Austria to the UN; International Disability Alliance; Light for the World

**Co-Sponsor**: ILO Global Business and Development Network; Federation of Uganda Employers

**Format**: Storytelling session with concluding plenary discussion

**Platform**: Zoom, hosted by Light for the World

**Registration**: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArdOGrqjspHd2_ehqwCMALUpvcf01keLMK>

**Accessibility**: Simultaneous ISL interpretation and CART in all breakout rooms and in the plenary, provided by Light for the World

## Summary

785 million persons with disabilities worldwide are of working age, with 64% of them across age groups unemployed. Discriminatory hiring practices, underpayment, a mismatch in skills training, and inaccessible workplaces compounded by lack of reasonable accommodation are just a few barriers young persons with disabilities experience when entering the labour market.[[1]](#footnote-1) This exclusion from work is a major barrier to decent and independent living in inclusive societies. And yet, youth with disabilities along with their representative organisations, create change towards more inclusive and accessible employment on a daily basis.[[2]](#footnote-2) This Side Event gives the floor to them to interactively share their lived experiences with participants.

## Objectives

By the end of the Side Event, the audience will:

* Recognise that inclusive employment requires transformative shifts and is more than placing individuals in jobs.
* Understand how different stakeholders contribute to economic empowerment of youth with disabilities.
* Be familiar with the work of youth with disabilities to create more inclusive and accessible work places.
* Be aware of the imperative to act together with youth with disabilities and businesses to address various forms of discrimination in the labour market.

## Format

The Side Event follows a storytelling approach. The objective of the format is to allow more direct exchange between speakers and their audience, supporting listeners to understand the role of young persons with disabilities and the real impact of economic empowerment. In individual breakout rooms, speakers share their personal stories in free form, while participants are invited to ask questions related to the experiences shared. Key insights and moments from the storytelling are then taken into a plenary discussion for further reflection.

The breakout rooms are safe spaces. Participants must accept and respect the experiences shared by speakers and avoiding triggering or retraumatising remarks throughout.

## Agenda

* **Opening** **remarks** by the Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN (5’)
* **Introduction of format and speakers** by the moderators (10’)
* **Breakout rooms** with one young expert and a facilitator each, including a short statement by the experts followed by a dialogue with the audience (30’)
* **Sharing key insights** by the experts in plenary (10’)
* **Thematic dialogue** between a business representative and the moderators (15’)
* **Concluding remarks** by the moderators (5’)

## Speakers

Speakers will provide different perspectives and experiences regarding the economic empowerment of youth with disabilities. The final composition of speakers will reflect geographic and different lived experience with disabilities.

* **Breakout room 1: I became a social entrepreneur and help others on the same path**
	+ Ms Jane WAITHERA, Business Development Officer, Light for the World, Kenya
* **Breakout room 2: I am a young woman in the workplace**
	+ Dr Robbie Francis WATENE, Senior Researcher, Donald Beasley Institute and Founder, The Lucy Foundation, New Zealand.
* **Breakout room 3: I support work to transform the way that employers and businesses work**
	+ Mr Rejaul Karim SIDDIQUEE, OPD Engagement Officer, International Disability Alliance, Bangladesh
* **Breakout room 4: I found my first job, but it was not easy**
	+ Ms Patricia MATIVO, Vice Chair, UNFPA Youth Advisory Panel, Kenya
* **Thematic dialogue:**
	+ Mr Mustaphar FAYAGO, Human Resource Specialist, Federation of Uganda Employers, Uganda

## Moderators

* Ms Deborah IYUTE, Programme Officer for Inclusive Employment, National Union of Persons with Disabilities of Uganda, Uganda
* Mr Ambrose MURANGIRA, Disability Inclusion Advisory Unit Manager, Light for the World, Uganda

## Background

Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities urges States Parties to recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others. Sustainable Development Goal 8 calls for promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. However, according to the UN Disability and Development Report of 2018, 64% of all persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed, compared with just 40% of their peers without disabilities, which is a main driver of poverty.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The discrimination of persons with disabilities does not end when entering employment. Employed persons with disabilities are more likely to be low-paid, face a lack of accessible workplaces and reasonable accommodation, and bear additional costs associated with their impairment. Consequently, persons with disabilities are far more likely to be unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive than persons without disabilities.[[4]](#footnote-4) These effects are even more pronounced for young persons and women with disabilities.[[5]](#footnote-5) Consequently, economic empowerment is a main demand from Organisations of Persons with Disabilities towards development actors.

Economic empowerment includes aspects of waged employment, self-employment, skills development and access to finance. Being economically empowered means having the possibility to live up to one’s potential, fulfilling one’s needs and ambitions and strengthening self-confidence and autonomy.[[6]](#footnote-6) Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs), particularly young persons with disabilities, must be in the driving seat of transforming the labour market towards these goals – together with employers, businesses, governments and civil society organisations.

1. UN DESA (2018): Disability and Development Report. p. 109, 152 <https://social.un.org/publications/UN-Flagship-Report-Disability-Final.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UN DESA (n.d.): Youth with Disabilities. Employment. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/youth-with-disabilities.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UN DESA (2018): Disability and Development Report. p. 109, 152 <https://social.un.org/publications/UN-Flagship-Report-Disability-Final.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ILO (2020): Key Issues on Promoting Employment of Persons with Disabilities. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/disability-and-work/WCMS_741706/lang--en/index.htm>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. UNDP (n.d.): Livelihood Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, p. 10. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/pub-povertyreduction/livelihood-opportunities-for-persons-with-disabilities-summary.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Kett, M. (2012): Skills Development for Youth Living with Disability. UNESCO Background Paper. 2012/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/28. [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217882](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark%3A/48223/pf0000217882). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)