



Disabled Women in Africa

Annual report 2024

Abbreviation List

ADF	African Disability Forum
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
DIWA	Disabled Women in Africa
EVAWG	Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GRG	Gender Reference Group
GEWE	Gender Equality Women Empowerment
INGOs	Inter-non-Governmental Organization
NEGWDM	Network of Women with Disabilities in Malawi
OPDs	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
PAP	Pan African parliament
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SIDA	Swedish Development Agency
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on Rights of persons with Disabilities
WEI	Women Enable International

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Foreword

As we reflect on the achievements and challenges of 2024, I am filled with immense pride in the work of Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) and the incredible resilience of the women and girls with disabilities we serve. This year has been a transformative journey—one that has strengthened our commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable society for all.

At DIWA, we believe in the power of women and girls with disabilities to lead, inspire, and effect change. Throughout the year, we have worked tirelessly to amplify their voices, advocate for their rights, and provide the support needed to break down the barriers they face. From tackling gender-based violence at the intersection of disability to championing inclusive education, access to justice, economic empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health rights, our efforts have been guided by our unwavering vision of equality and inclusion.

One of our most significant milestones this year was the launch of our Pilot project on strengthening partnerships to advance disability rights in Africa. This initiative not only united women with disabilities across borders but also demonstrated the strength of collective advocacy in addressing violence and promoting gender equality. Similarly, our ongoing collaboration with the African Union, UN agencies, and other stakeholders has enabled us to place the priorities of women with disabilities at the center of regional and global agendas.

As we look ahead, the challenges remain daunting. Resource mobilization, inclusion in policymaking, and the persistent stigmas surrounding disability and gender demand sustained effort and innovation. Yet, we are inspired by the growing solidarity among disability rights movements, women's rights organizations, and feminists across Africa. This convergence gives us hope that together, we can build a future where no woman or girl with a disability is left behind. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our team, partners, and donors, whose unwavering support has fueled our progress. Most importantly, I celebrate the women and girls with disabilities who are the heart and soul of our movement. Your courage, strength, and determination remind us why our work matters.

As we close 2024, let us carry forward the lessons learned and the partnerships forged into the new year. Together, we can continue to create lasting change and a brighter, more inclusive future.

In solidarity,

Wezi Mjojo

Chairperson

Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA)

Executive Summary

The year 2024 marked a period of growth, resilience, and impactful advocacy for Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA). Building on our mission to empower women and girls with disabilities across the continent, we have made significant strides in advancing their rights, addressing intersectional discrimination, and amplifying their voices in key decision-making spaces.

Our work in 2024 focused on three strategic pillars: advocacy, capacity building, and movement strengthening. At the regional level, we successfully launched a multi-country initiative to strengthen partnerships to advance disability rights in Africa in Zambia, Ghana, Benin and Malawi. This project not only mobilized communities but also fostered collaboration with key stakeholders, including civil society organizations, government agencies, and grassroots leaders.

We also deepened our engagement with international and regional bodies, such as the African Union, UN agencies, and the Pan-African Parliament. By contributing to processes like the Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity in Africa and advocating for the ratification of the African Disability Protocol (ADP), DIWA ensured that the lived realities of women and girls with disabilities remained central to policy discussions and development frameworks.

At the grassroots level, DIWA strengthened the capacity of women-led organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) through targeted training, mentorship, and technical support. These efforts empowered national network leaders to advocate for their rights, address gender-based violence, and participate in national decision-making processes.

Despite these successes, 2024 was not without its challenges. Limited resources, societal stigma, and systemic exclusion remain significant barriers to achieving gender equality and disability inclusion. However, we leveraged innovative strategies, including digital advocacy campaigns and multi-stakeholder partnerships, to address these obstacles and sustain our momentum.

Key achievements from 2024 include:

- A robust research on land rights and GBV for women with disabilities in Eastern and Southern Africa.
- Participation and gaining recognition in women rights organizations and feminist spaces

- CSW 68 and African union engagements
- Strengthened partnerships
- UN Advocacy-engagements with CESCRC committees, UNCRPD and CEDAW.
- Strengthened networks where they were weak-Malawi, Zambia

As we prepare for 2025, DIWA remains committed to scaling our impact, strengthening regional collaboration, and ensuring that women and girls with disabilities are not only represented but lead the charge in shaping inclusive policies and societies.

We extend our gratitude to our dedicated staff, partners, and supporters for making this year's achievements possible. Together, we continue to work toward a world where women and girls with disabilities live free from violence, discrimination, and exclusion, thriving as leaders and change-makers in their communities.

1.0. Introduction

Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) is a regional network organization dedicated to addressing the unique challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities throughout the African continent. Founded in 2002, the membership of DIWA is constituted of the Women's structures of the Regional Federations of Women's with Disabilities in Africa, i.e. DIWA- Central Africa; DIWA- East Africa; DIWA- North Africa, DIWA- Southern Africa and DIWA – West Africa that are representing the women with disabilities in these regions; and in addition to national organizations of Women with Disabilities in Africa. Among the members are:

- Disabled Women in Development (DIWODE) Malawi
- Botswana Federation of the Disabled (women's wing)
- Network of Women and Girls with Disabilities (NEGWDM) Malawi
- Associação Moçambicana de Mulheres Portadoras de Deficiência (Mozambique)
- South African Deaf Women Association
- Disabled Women Support Organization, Zimbabwe
- National Council of Disabled Person (Zimbabwe)
- Zimbabwe Women with Disabilities in Africa (ZWIDE)
- Zimbabwe Downs Syndrome Association
- Women and Girls Disability Rights of Zambia
- Réseau National des Femmes Handicapées de Madagascar (RNFH/MADA)
- Association Burundaise pour la Promotion des Droits des Femmes Handicapées (ABPDFH-URUUMU)
- Association pour l'Auto-Développement des Femmes Sourdes du Burundi (ADFSB)
- Endorois Indigenous Women Empowerment Network
- Triumph Uganda Mental Health Support and Recovery Program (TRIUMPH)
- Disabled Women in Development, Uganda
- National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU)
- National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU)
- Lira District Disabled Women Association (LIDDWA)
- Rwanda Organization of Women with Disabilities
- Women with Disabilities of Mauritius
- Rwanda Network of Women with Disabilities

- Mubende Women with Disabilities Association (MUDIWA)
- Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association
- Songambele Initiative Organization
- Association Malienne des Personnes de Petites Taille (AMPPT) - Association of Persons with Short Stature - Mali
- Association Nationale des Albinos du Sénégal (National Association of Persons with Albinism in Senegal)
- Guinean Network of Women with Disabilities
- Liberia Deaf Women in Action
- Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative (AWWDI)
- Handicap FormEduc, Senegal
- Organization Alaouite pour La Protection des Aveugles au Maroc (OAPAM) Organization for Protection of Blind Persons in Morocco)
- Plateforme Inclusive Society for Persons with Disabilities / Comité National des Femmes Handicapées du Cameroun
- Réseau Des Associations et Groupements des Femmes Handicapées du Tchad (RAGFHT).

DIWA is made up of and led by women and girls with disabilities; a population that is marginalised and faces intersectional discrimination and abuse by virtue of being both women and people with disabilities. DIWA focuses its work on women and girls with disabilities because it is a group of people that are found to experience greater discrimination than men with disabilities and non-disabled women, arising from the dual effect of their gender and disability. DIWA is headquartered in Malawi and has currently one office, however, projects are implemented in other countries through its members as well.

1.1. Objectives

- To ensure that women with disabilities in Africa are empowered to exercise their rights and positively influence their life situation and to promote effective communication and networking between women with disabilities in Africa and internationally in order to share information and knowledge on how to improve the lives of women with disabilities.

- lobby and advocate for legislation, policies and practices that promote the interests and inclusion of women with disabilities in Africa and advance Disability Mainstreaming in all socio-economic, political and cultural spheres.
- To provide a forum for full, deliberative debate on the needs and aspirations of women with disabilities in Africa, to lobby and advocate for legislation, policies and practices that promote the interests and inclusion of women with disabilities in Africa;
- To promote gender mainstreaming in Disabled People's Organizations in Africa and to spearhead the inclusion of women with disabilities in the systems, structures, organizations, and in the leadership of the Disability Movement in Africa;
- To advance disability mainstreaming in civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, development agencies, service providers, and government programmes and policies. To encourage the full participation of women with disabilities in all socio-economic, political and cultural spheres;
- To encourage the formation and development of structures and organizations of women with disabilities, to strengthen them in regions where they are weak and to promote unity of purpose among women with disabilities and the wider disability movement in order to strengthen their voice.

1.2. Vision

African women and girls with disabilities enjoy their rights, influence their destiny and are free from any gender and disability-based discrimination.

1.3. Mission

To empower African women and girls with disabilities through research, information sharing and networking, partnership and capacity development for unity in diversity.

2.0. Regional intervention highlights

2.1. Diwa Implements a Generation Equality Forum Commitments In Malawi In Collaboration With Women Enabled International

2.1.1. Women With Disabilities In Malawi Engage With CEDAW And UNCRPD Committee In GENEVA, Switzerland.

DIWA successfully managed to mobilize women with disabilities in Malawi to actively engage in the CEDAW and UNCRPD review in August and September 2023. This sought of engagement goes down the history as women with disabilities in Malawi had never engaged with the CEDAW



review process.

The engagement process which involved initial report submission, delivery of statements and private briefings and bilateral meetings led to stronger and relevant recommendations for women with disabilities to the government of Malawi by the committee unlike in the past where recommendations were almost none for women with disabilities.

These kinds of recommendations led to the government of Malawi fast tracking the persons with disability bill into an Act now known as Persons with Disabilities Act 2023, Disability Trust fund Launched , the

African Disability Protocol signed and ratified.

In addition, the review of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Policy of 2022 extended its consultation to women with disabilities.



DIWA at a private briefing with the CEDAW Committee, Geneva



DIWA delivering a statement at the CEDAW review in Geneva

2.1.2. Women With Disabilities In Malawi Are Supported To Establish Network



NEGWDM representative presenting the statement of demands to the Minister

DIWA spearheaded the establishment of the Network of Girls and Women with Disabilities in Malawi. During its launch, The Network for Girls and Women with Disabilities in Malawi (NEGWDM) presented a set of demands to the Minister of Gender, Community Development, and Social Welfare, calling for :Active involvement of women with disabilities in health-related policies and programs, ensuring accessibility and non-discrimination, Legal recognition for women with disabilities in judicial proceedings, with accommodations for intellectual and psychosocial disabilities Inclusive programs, laws, and policies with consultation from the Network during development, Comprehensive and accessible sexual and reproductive health services and dedicated social protection scheme with financial support and consideration of disability-related costs. The Minister expressed joy over the timeliness of the network and expressed optimism about its potential to advance the rights of women with disabilities.

The Director General of the Malawi Council for the Handicapped committed to supporting the network's goals, pledging to build its capacity and collaborate closely.

Pamela Mkwamba, the UN Women Manager, emphasized the significance of including women and girls with disabilities in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2063, and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) strategy.

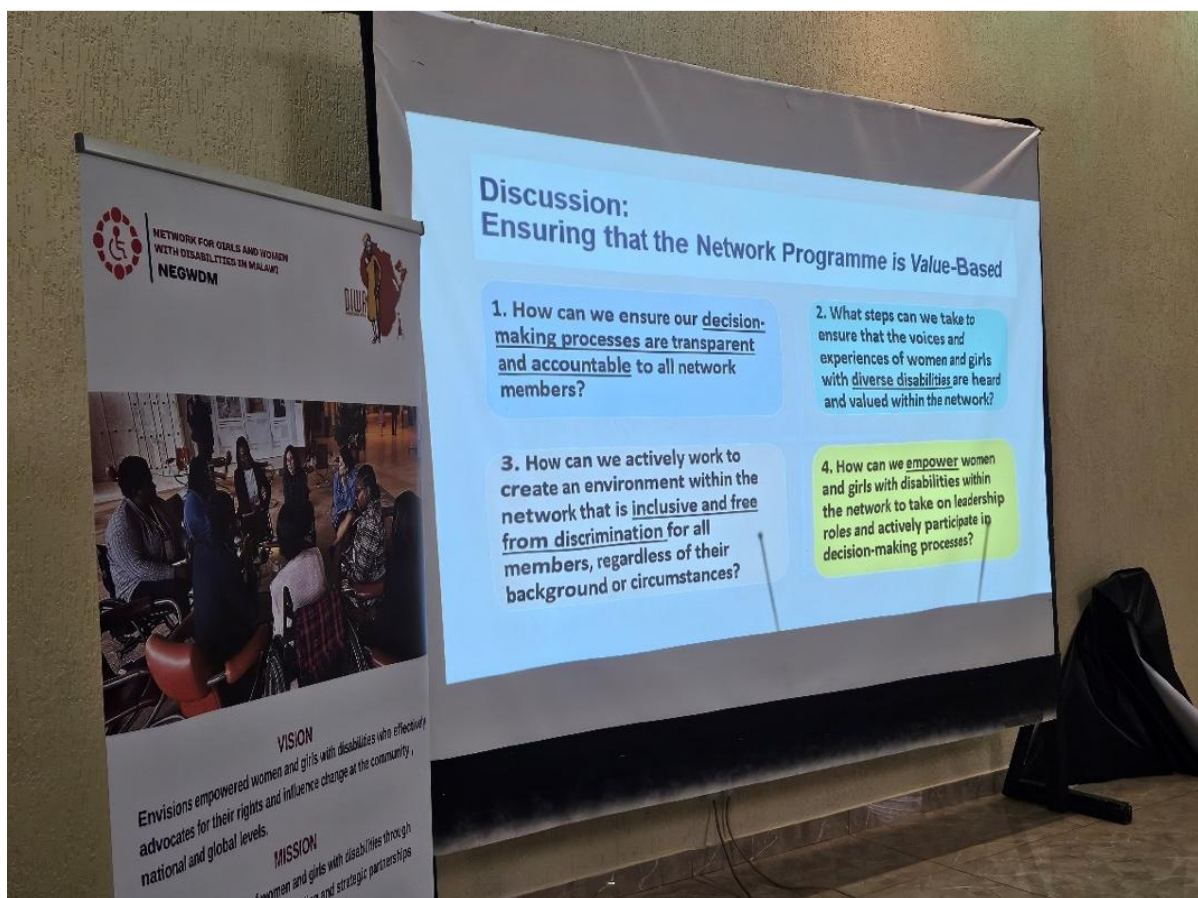
Esther Mbite, the chairperson of the network, expressed her profound joy at the realization of the network, reflecting on the struggles faced in the past to establish a similar initiative. She encouraged members to remain resilient and steadfast in pursuing their goals.

DIWA Executive Director madam, Ruth Mkutumula pledged support to continue supporting and building the capacity of the network in the next 2 years to ensure it is strong enough to independently drive advocacy efforts.



Figure 5 Ribbon cutting by the Minister and other NEGWDM members right after declaring the launch

2.1.3. DIWA Builds Leadership Capacity For The NEGWDM Members



NEGWDM the newly established network benefited from the capacity building trainings conducted by DIWA in Lilongwe, Malawi. The training which was delivered by a disability mojo coach, Lidia Pretorius from South Africa covered awareness on Disability and Gender Rights Instruments, Building a Representative, Inclusive and Diverse Leadership and Network as well as Building Cohesion and Networking.



Workshop participants (left) sitting in U shape and (right) in small group discussions

The training provided a platform for women with disabilities who had actively participated in the CEDAW and UNCRPD processes to share their experiences and emphasize the importance of capacity building and networking for sustained engagement in these processes. Recognizing the significance of the topics covered, DIWA has outlined a series of capacity-building trainings aimed at strengthening the network's members. Additionally, a targeted intervention is being planned to establish and enhance the network of women with disabilities in Zambia, where it currently remains underdeveloped.

2.1.4. DIWA Participates In CSW68, New York March 2024

2.1.4.1. Engagement With IASC On Disaster And Humanitarian Response

Following the first successful Women and Girl Leaders in Dialogue, a closed-door, in-person roundtable held in the margins of CSW 67, members of the IASC Gender Reference Group (GRG) on 15 March 2024 hosted a follow-up discussion during CSW68. The co-sponsoring GRG members included CARE International, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Oxfam International, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP), Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN). The dialogue brought together 24 representatives of women-led and girl-led civil society organizations who were participating in CSW in New York and who work in countries affected by complex and often protracted crises across humanitarian, peace and development contexts. Together, they related

their shared as well as specific experiences of systemic issues that the humanitarian sector, the UN and INGOs must address in all crises.

DIWA was among the only disability organizations in attendance and made its contribution on the status of women with disability in Africa.



Madam Ruth Mkutumula, making a point during the women leaders dialogue

It was noted that Women leaders made positive note of international humanitarian stakeholders increasingly recognizing the key role of women's organizations in humanitarian response. However, while the UN and INGOs increasingly engage with local women's civil society in crisis contexts, that engagement has not, so far, been translated into sustained practical support, in particular in the form of adequate and sustainable funding and ensuring local women-led organizations' (WLOs') access to decision-making spaces. Recommendations from these discussions included: the need to strengthen Partnerships with Local Women's Organizations, strengthen organizations led by women with disabilities and promote young women leaders with disabilities in crisis responses. It was also emphasized that Power imbalances in humanitarian aid must be addressed by fostering trust, providing constructive feedback to local organizations, and offering clear funding expectations, simplify funding applications and reporting to reduce the administrative workload on women-led organizations, allowing them to focus on their work. In addition, it was noted that Despite commitments, local women's organizations struggle to secure sufficient funds, often operating in 'survival mode.' Donors should replicate successful feminist funding practices, ensure localization, and address gaps in staffing and infrastructure and Increase

funding flexibility to cover indirect costs, simplify reporting, and provide competitive salaries to prevent talent poaching by INGOs/UN agencies.

Furthermore, UN/INGOs were recommended to ensure transparency on funding allocations, set clear targets for gender equality funding, and establish mechanisms for feedback and complaints.

2.1.4.2. DIWA In Collaboration With Women Enable International Holds A Side Event At The CSW68 On “Sustainable Movements Through Disability Funding.”

In a recent study by Women Enabled International (WEI) on Strengthening Gender Inclusion in Disability Rights Spaces, disability rights groups identified obtaining funding as a significant challenge in ensuring sustainable, intersectional movements. Over the last decade of WEI’s work, a plethora of challenges to funding for organizations working at the intersections of gender and disability were identified.



Ruth Mkutumula left DIWA ED and members of DIWA from Uganda Robina Alambuya and Gaudence Ishimiyan from Rwanda making key contributions

The 68th Session of the CSW which identified ‘Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective’ as its priority theme was an opportunity to interact with various key stakeholders and donors to ensure accessibility and inclusion of women led organizations.

The goal of the panel was to begin exploring ways in which funders and disability rights groups could work together to ensure sustainable intersectional movements. In addition, it also aimed to explore ways to ensure donors/funders address concerns of disability rights groups working at the intersections of gender. The audiences for the event were both civil society organizations and regional and global donors/funders who are funding both or either disability groups and/or feminist groups. DIWA submitted its presentation on the concerns as follows:

- Funding movements should be adaptable and innovative, responding to changing circumstances and emerging needs effectively.
- Sustainable funding requires commitments that extend beyond short-term grants. Establishing long-term funding mechanisms
- Encouraging collaboration and networking among organizations working in this space fosters knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and the amplification of impact.
- Representation and inclusion: Women with disabilities are often marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes and spaces. Strengthening their movement empowers them to advocate for their rights and ensures their voices are heard in policy-making discussions related to disability rights, gender equality, and other social justice issues

DIWA could not hide some of the challenges such as:

- Limited resources, that many disability women's organizations in Africa operate with limited resources, including funding, staff, and infrastructure. This makes it challenging for them to reach and support a wide range of women with disabilities and effectively advocate for their rights.
- Amplifying visibility: Women with disabilities are often invisible in mainstream media, public discourse, and representation. Strengthening their movement helps amplify their visibility and highlight their contributions, achievements, and perspectives, challenging stereotypes and promoting positive representation.
- Building solidarity: Strengthening the movement of women with disabilities fosters solidarity and collaboration among diverse communities and social justice movements. By working together, different groups are able to leverage their strengths and resources, hence the relevance of the SPADRA project in Africa through SIDA funding.
- In essence, DIWA stressed that strengthening the movement of women with disabilities is essential for advancing gender equality, disability rights, and social justice more broadly, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Through this presentation, with on the panel donors like Disability Rights Fund, Urgent Action Fund Africa, Mama Cash,

3.0. DIWA Engages With African Union

3.1. DIWA Engages With African Union On Family Values During The 3rd Pan African Parliament Ordinary Session In South Africa

Pan African Parliament (PAP) held a seminar aimed to equip parliamentarians on the current AU Policies, programmes and objectives on the family, to enable them to fulfil their role in monitoring their implementation. It will bring evidence-based family research into the policy arena and to stimulate discussions of how, in light of available evidence, family policy in Africa can be further developed and implemented or improved. In so doing, the seminar aligns with the United Nations General Assembly's Resolutions 60/133 (2005) and 62/129 (2007) in which Governments are encouraged to continue to make every possible effort to integrate a family perspective into national policymaking as well as to Resolution A/RES/64/133 of 2010 which urged Member States to stimulate public debate and consultations on family-oriented social protection policies.

Madam Ruth Mkutumula(DIWA) soon after making submission to the committee

The seminar was also an opportunity given that despite the apparent regional commitment to the improvement of family well-being,

socioeconomic policies in many African countries remain individual-focused rather than family-focused. Furthermore, many strategies and interventions meant to support families tend to concentrate on households, as opposed to families thereby causing policies to overlook intra-family dynamics. As a result, most of the benefits filter down to the family indirectly, if at all.

DIWA participated and made contributions to the committee on gender, Family, youth and people with disabilities under the theme “ enhancing African family values to achieve citizens socioeconomic protection and security” and made statement about the family values in context of persons with disabilities and especially women and girls with disabilities.

It was to this end that the Pan African Parliament (PAP) convened a full day seminar under the theme: “Enhancing African Family Values to Achieve Citizens’ Socioeconomic Protection and Security”.

3.2. DIWA Contribution to the Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity in Nairobi Kenya 22ND- 24TH April 2024.

Pan-African Parliament Moves One Step Closer to a Landmark Model Law On Gender Equality And Equity In Africa.

Second Civil Society consultation on the legal and policy Framework of the Draft Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity, held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 22 to 24, April, 2024. The consultation was organized by the Permanent Committee on Gender, Family, Youth and People with Disability of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), in collaboration with the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

The objective of the consultation was to ensure that both the legal and policy framework surrounding the Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity incorporate the views and aspirations of the people of Africa, aligning with the mandate of the Pan-African Parliament. Thus the



Parliamentarians have a critical role to play to support the implementation of international and regional Treaties that aim at promoting the rights of women and creating an enabling environment for women and girls with disabilities including those with disabilities.

The three-day engagement brought together key stakeholders, including brought together Members of the PAP Committee on Gender, Family, Youth, People with Disability, and Sport; PAP parliamentarians from the Republic of Kenya, representatives of the African Union Commission, [African Union ECOSOCC](#), Regional Economic Communities - RECs (ECOWAS, SADC, ECCAS,) and civil society organizations (CSOs) from the Eastern, Central, Western and Northern African regions. DIWA

was the only disability organization present and making presentations on women and girls with disability inclusion.

On the day 1 of the engagement, DIWA made its submission and made a presentation on a panel



Madam Ruth Mkutumula in yellow at the opening ceremony of the Civil society engagement

with the former minister of Guinea and the chancellor of the university of Nigeria. DIWA's submission was on “**Towards Inclusive Equality: Addressing Barriers to Gender Equality for Women and Girls with Disabilities in Africa and the Proposed Solutions within a Draft Model Law**”.

Second day of the meeting were session where we were grouped to make contribution in the themes /various topics at hand. Hon. [Mariam Dao Gabala](#), Chairperson of the Pan-African Parliament Permanent Committee on Gender, Family, Youth, and People with Disabilities, guided the participants ahead of the working group sessions.

In these sessions, CSOs were expected to delve into various topics and provide views on topics such as: Access to Justice and Equal Protection before the Law; Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process; Health and Reproductive Rights; Women in Situations of Armed Conflict; Gender-Based Violence and Child Marriage; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); and Economic and Social Opportunities. In most of these topics, DIWA had already made a separate submission on gender and disability inclusion citing gaps in the model law.

Over the course of three days, discussions centered on key thematic areas to be addressed by the proposed Model Law. This resulted in the formulation of proposals and recommendations for consideration by the Pan-African Parliament Committee on Gender, Family, Youth, and People with Disability, forming the basis of the draft legal and policy framework of the Draft Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity in Africa. These proposals encompassed access to land, education, employment, and equal remuneration; access to justice and equal protection before the law; participation in the political and decision-making processes; health and reproductive rights; and the rights of women in situations of armed conflict, among other pertinent issues.

Hon. Prof. Massouda Laghdaf, First Vice President of the Pan-African Parliament, representing the Bureau, commended all participating organizations and experts for their active engagement and invaluable contributions. She expressed hope to see continued involvement from them in subsequent stages of the formulation of the Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity in Africa.



The African Union and ECOSOC delegates

Hon. Dao Mariam Gabala, Chairperson of the Permanent Committee on Gender, Family, Youth, and People with Disability of the Pan-African Parliament, assured CSOs that the Committee would ensure that all contributions are duly reflected in the final draft of the Model Law before its consideration and adoption by the Plenary of the Continental Parliament.

“As the Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity moves closer to completion, the Pan-African Parliament reaffirmed its dedication to crafting legislation that resonates with the needs and ambitions of all Africans. We are now ready to move into the next stage of the development of the Model Law at the Committee level where the document will be reviewed and finalized in preparation for consideration by all the representatives of African citizens in the Pan-African Parliament,” said Hon. Gabala.

Mr. William Carew, Head of the ECOSOC Secretariat, reiterated the commitment to fostering collaboration between Civil Society organizations and African Union institutions, particularly the Pan-African Parliament, in addressing Africa's most pressing issues.



Madam Ruth Mkutumula at the meeting

"It is imperative that we strengthen the synergy between Civil Society and AU bodies, like the Pan-African Parliament, to effectively tackle Africa's challenges. ECOSOC is proud to have contributed to this process that has enhanced the effectiveness of the policy framework of the Model Law on gender equality and equity, contributing to gender-related endeavors within the African Union,” said Mr.Carew.

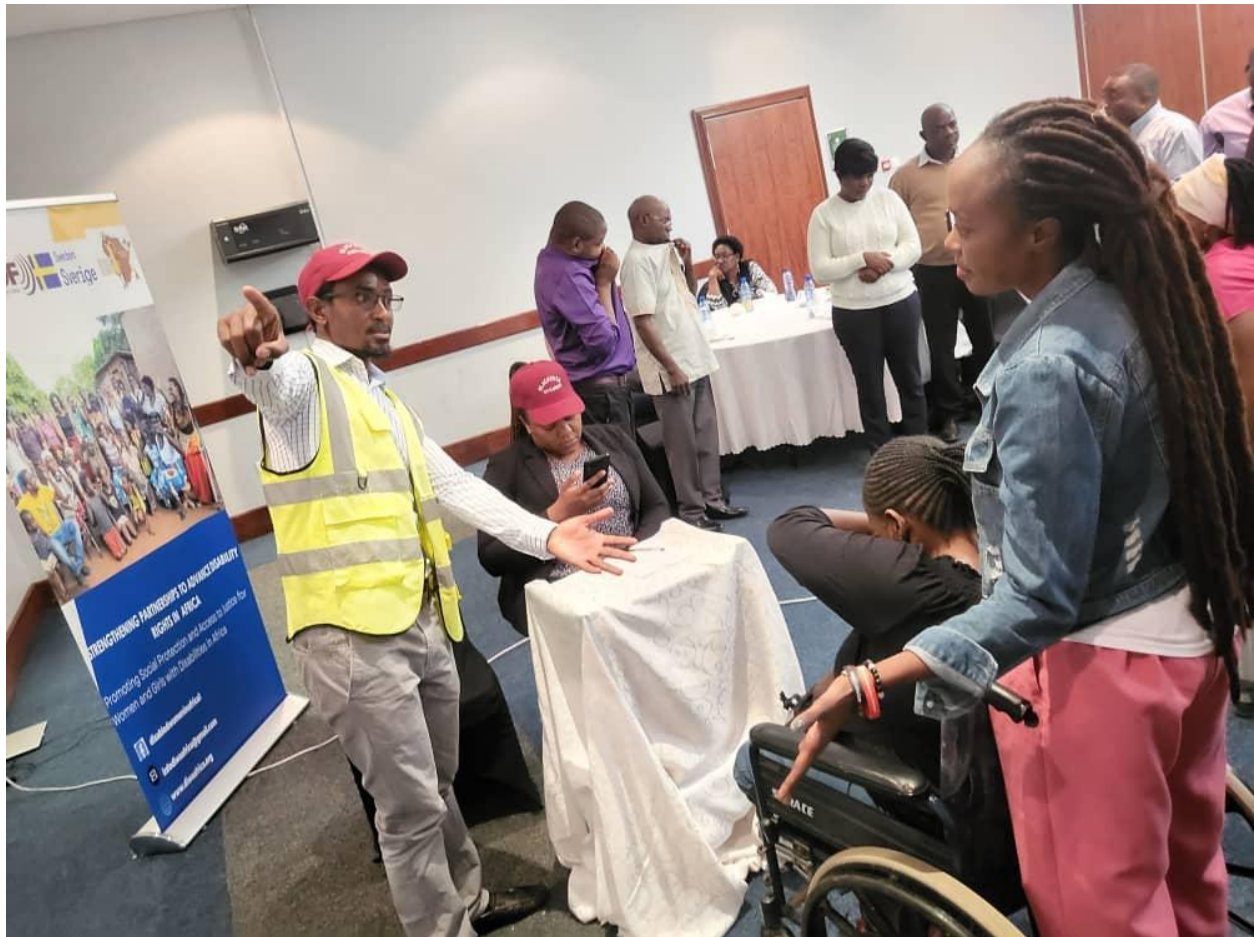
The Nairobi consultation, which followed previous engagements in Lusaka in July 2023 for the Southern Region, also played a crucial role in raising awareness and understanding of the Maputo Protocol and its significance in safeguarding women's rights. Adopted by the African Union in July 2003, the Maputo Protocol is a legally binding instrument aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women in Africa, with a specific focus on gender equality.

This public hearing process, conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, from 22 to 24 April 2024, marked a decisive phase in the development of a legal and policy blueprint aimed at reshaping gender norms across the continent. DIWA with support from African Disability Forum was able to participate in this vital process of which without, there wouldn't have been any women disability organization making contribution to the process.

3.3. DIWA Engages With The Committee On Convention On Economic, Social Cultural Rights (CESCR).

Following the alternative reports submitted and private briefings for Malawi, DIWA urged the Committee to hold the government of Malawi accountable for addressing access quality healthcare, secure employment, adequate housing, clean water, and participation fully in family life must be guaranteed for all Malawians, regardless of ability.

3.4. DIWA Implements A Project On Strengthening Partnerships To Advance Disability Rights In Africa In Zambia, Malawi, Benin And Ghana In Collaboration With African Disability Forum And Inclusion Africa.



Workshop taking place in Zambia where participants demonstrates access to justice challenges

DIWA in collaboration with ADF and Inclusion Africa Implemented a project in Africa with 2 key objectives: Strengthening cross-disability and mainstream partnerships to advance gender and disability rights at Pan-African and national levels, and Build capacity within Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to lead initiatives on gender and disability right.

Mapping of stakeholders were done in all countries, baseline study conducted and pilot activities on gender and disability rights engaging key stakeholders were conducted based on thematic areas of focus for each country identified in the baseline study. For instance, in Zambia, DIWA focused

on Access to justice, in Malawi, Social protection, in Benin, Inclusive education and economic empowerment in Ghana.

- DIWA worked with feminist groups, UN agencies, and other stakeholders to advocate for inclusive policies.
- Engagements included contributions to the Pan-African Parliament's Model Law on Gender Equality and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)



Training sessions on inclusive documentation for media professionals to improve the portrayal of gender-based violence and disability rights were conducted in both countries.

The SPADRA pilot laid a strong foundation for advancing disability rights through strategic partnerships and capacity building. The pilot outcome has informed the next phase of the project.

Key Achievements included:

- Enhanced advocacy capacity and visibility for DIWA as a leader in gender and disability inclusion.
- Established partnerships with government agencies, OPDs, and feminist organizations.
- Positioned DIWA to engage with donors and potential collaborators for Phase 2 of the project.

3.5. DIWA Implements a Disaster Response Project In Malawi

DIWA working with its members collaborated with various partners FEDOMA, MACODA and others engaging with relevant key stakeholders/ministries to lobby for inclusive social protection programs, carried out a disaster response research on Cyclone Freddy in Malawi, contributed to recommendations for the National Standard operating procedures on disaster response management for persons with disabilities and submitted position papers, conducted trainings to organizations of women with disabilities and engaged with influential leaders, policy makers and public figures to champion the cause and advocate for inclusive practices

3.6. DIWA Implements a Project on Leveraging Intersectionality, GBV And Land Rights For Women With Disabilities In Rural Southern Africa



Mwayi (DIWA) facilitating the training in April on HRD at Simama Hotel, Lilongwe

Rural women with disabilities in Southern and Eastern Africa face multiple forms of discrimination that limit their access to land and resources. These include both direct and indirect discrimination, as well as GBV. The lack of data and information on this population makes it

difficult to develop effective strategies to address their needs. In Africa, land is very crucial to people living in rural areas for various reasons that encompass their livelihoods, cultural identity and social structure. 90 % of rural women with disabilities earn their living through agricultural activities and land plays a pivotal role in their lives. Upon recognizing the critical importance of land in the development and well-being of African nations in 2006, Land Policy Initiative was established as a joint program of the tripartite consortium constituted by the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank (AFDB). The *Framework and guideline on land policy* were developed in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) through a highly consultative process and a rigorous roadmap of activities, including regional assessments and multi-stakeholder consultation workshops in order to facilitate land policy development, implementation and monitoring. It is evident that among those who were consulted, persons with disabilities were not included hence issues of disabilities were not incorporated.

DIWA carried out a desk research in 9 countries (South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi) to get an overview of the situation of rural women with disabilities in these regions East and Southern Africa, with a particular focus on their access to land and experiences of GBV. The research also wanted to identify promising practices and policy recommendations for improving the situation.

According to a Study of the Impact of Social Protection Schemes in Tanzania, Zambia, and Malawi by the London School of Economics, published in 2014, in Southern Africa, there are several studies that have looked at the intersectionality of women's land rights, GBV, and disability. In Zimbabwe, the ZimRights Trust conducted a study that found that women with disabilities were more likely to experience GBV and to have their land rights violated than women without disabilities. The study also found that there was a lack of awareness about the rights of people with disabilities among community members, which made it difficult for women with disabilities to seek help or justice when their rights were violated.

In Malawi, a study by the Department for International Development found that women with disabilities were more likely to experience GBV and land disputes than women without disabilities. The study also found that many women with disabilities did not have access to legal

services or support, which made it difficult for them to resolve disputes or access justice. In addition, the study discovered that women with disabilities were often not considered "real" landowners by community members, which further limited their ability to access their rights.

Another study, conducted by the Southern African Federation of the Disabled, found that people with disabilities were often excluded from traditional land dispute resolution processes, which further compounded their difficulties in accessing justice. The study identified that women with disabilities were particularly vulnerable to sexual and economic violence, which often went unreported. It was also discovered that women with disabilities were often excluded from decision-making processes around land use and access, which further limited their ability to access their rights.

In light of these findings, DIWA conducted a Workshop with human rights defenders and litigants in Malawi where the project is being pioneered. During this pilot, a success story of the project was recorded.

“Now I Can Farm on my land without any fear” Emma, A woman with disability in Malawi, Chiradzulu district.

In Chiradzulu District, Malawi, a significant victory for women’s land rights, particularly for women with disabilities unfolded following a community mobilization initiative supported by DIWA to its member DIWODE. This initiative aimed to sensitize both women with disabilities and traditional leaders about their land rights and the importance of inclusive governance.

One woman, living with a physical disability, faced the devastating challenge of having her ancestral land grabbed by relatives who falsely claimed she was incapable of managing it due to her disability. This unfair treatment left her vulnerable and without the means to sustain her livelihood. However, after attending one of the awareness-raising sessions, this courageous woman was empowered with knowledge of her rights. Armed with this new understanding, she bravely reported the injustice to her village chief, presenting clear evidence of her rightful ownership. The chief, recognizing the situation and understanding the importance of upholding land rights of all community members, especially those of marginalized groups like women with disabilities, acted swiftly and decisively.

The chief instructed the land grabbers to vacate the property immediately, reaffirming the woman's ownership of her land. This intervention not only restored her access to her rightful inheritance but also sent a powerful message throughout the community: women with disabilities will no longer be marginalized or deprived of their rights. As a result of this successful intervention: Women with disabilities in the community have been empowered to assert their land rights and the effectiveness of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms has been demonstrated, especially when combined with community awareness efforts.

"I'm deeply grateful for the chief's support. Now, I can farm my land without fear. This victory shows that women with disabilities can access justice and protect their rights"
Emma.

This success story highlights the transformative power of grassroots advocacy and the importance of inclusive land governance in ensuring that no one is left behind. Through this initiative, Emma (not real name) has reclaimed her land and feels respected as a woman with disability. Without the community mobilization initiative, Emma would continue to feel down, powerless and afraid to reclaim the land she had lost for many years. Unfortunately, this is the case for most women with disabilities around the continent of Africa whose possession of land is valuable and feel powerless to confidently walk away from violence if taken away from them.

4.0. DIWA And Its Members Participates and Makes Presentations At Disability Conference In Nairobi, Kenya

The first ever conference held in Kenya organized by ADF and various other partners such as IDA was ground breaking as it brought various stakeholders , partners , OPDs, CSOs together making it an atmosphere conducive for learning , sharing, building collaboration, harnessing partnerships and ideas.



On left DIWA Manager and Director on the panel making presentation on gender and on the Right, DIWA members, Burundi and Cameroon

DIWA made presentations on the progress and opportunities of gender and disability at African level sparking a debate and contributions of the need for collaborations , networking and more advocacy for inclusion and especially also strengthening participation of women with disabilities in political participation.

5.0. Women With Disabilities Convene For Beijing Preparation In Kenya, Nairobi

Ahead of the review of Beijing Platform for Action after 30 years, Women with disabilities looked back and reflected how the 30 years had made an impact in their lives and meeting in Nairobi awakened and brought realization of the continued struggles that women with disabilities are continuing to face across the 12 critical areas of the BPFA. A consensus was reached through this meeting that women with disabilities are going to put together a report and participate and contribute in-country meetings and reports but also to follow up and contribute to FEMnet's regional consultations. A decision was also made to ensure supporting women with disabilities be part and parcel of the consultations and inter-ministerial meetings taking place in Addis Ababa. Among the women were members of DIWA such as Burundi (Burundi association of women with disabilities), Cameroon, Nigeria, UNABU Rwanda, Kenya (women challenge to Challenge), Uganda(Triumph Uganda, LIDWA). A decision was also made to ensure women with disabilities are participating at the CSW69 as the theme would be around 12 critical areas of Beijing.



Women with disabilities from Nigeria, Burundi, Malawi and Cameroon , meeting to strategies on Beijing reporting and participation in Nairobi Kenya.

6.0. DIWA RE-organizing

In 2023 after holding an Annual General meeting with its members, DIWA began a journey of re-organizing itself and in 2024. Through selected committee task members from Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon, Zambia, Nigeria, Burundi and Senegal, DIWA reviewed its constitution, developed its strategic plan for 2025 to 2030. Throughout this process, ADF and IDA played an instrumental role including SALC and HI. A number of consultations and meetings took place virtually and validation conducted with all members. Finally, the constitution and the strategy is ready for adoption at the General Assembly scheduled for 2025.



a task team has been set in place to plan and organize and ensure smooth running of the general assembly. Organizations like ADF and HI have been reached to support the process which due to resources may take place virtually.

This picture shows some of the members of the task team meeting to discuss in Kenya, Nairobi in 2024.

Part of Task committee members of the General assembly preparations meeting in Nairobi

7.0. Financials

In the year 2024, DIWA's funding rose from USD30,000 in a financial year to \$122,609.48. The year of 2025 is estimated to be over \$500,000 with confirmed projects with UN Trust fund, EVAWG project for Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda, another full project from SIDA funding through ADF implementing in Zambia and Malawi and southern Africa litigation Centre for the land rights project.

8.0. Conclusion

As we close the chapter on 2024, we reflect on a year of profound impact, challenges, and unwavering determination. Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) has continued to champion the rights and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities across the continent, ensuring that their voices are amplified and their leadership recognized.

This year, DIWA's work has demonstrated the power of collective action, innovative partnerships, and grassroots mobilization. From addressing violence at the intersection of gender and disability to driving regional advocacy for inclusive policies, DIWA has solidified its role as a leading force in advancing disability and gender justice in Africa.

While the challenges of systemic exclusion, limited resources, and persistent stigma remain, 2024 has reinforced our belief in the strength and resilience of the women and girls with disabilities we serve. They are not just beneficiaries of our efforts, they are leaders, advocates, and changemakers shaping the future of Africa.

Looking ahead, DIWA is committed to building on the momentum we have achieved. Our focus will remain on fostering sustainable movements, influencing policies at national, regional, and international levels, and empowering women and girls with disabilities to lead transformational change in their communities.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our staff, partners, donors, and all those who have supported our mission this year. Together, we have proven that inclusion is not just an ideal but a necessity for creating a just and equitable world.

As we step into 2025, we call on all stakeholders to join us in this journey. Let us continue to dismantle barriers, challenge injustices, and co-create a future where every woman and girl with a disability can thrive.

9. Board And Staff Members Of DIWA Management Team



Ruth Mkutumula
Executive Director



Aida Sarr
Project Manager



Dumisani Muyaba
Finance Manager



Mwayiwathu Kusakala
Projects Advocacy Officer



Annie Mandundu
Assistant Officer



Chifundo Phulira
Projects Officer



Chimwemwe Kankhande
Project Intern



Deliwe Fweta
Project Intern



Brandon Masakha
Project Intern

Board of Trustees Members



**Wezzie Mjojo (Physical Disability)
Chair Person (Malawi)**



**Frendick Mzoma(Physical Disability)
Board Member (Malawi)**



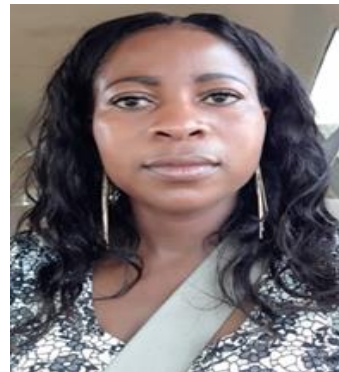
**Rose Achayo (Physical Disability)
Board Member (Uganda)**



**Jessy Chiyamwaka (No Disability)
Board Member (Malawi)**



**Eufemia Ameya(Physical Disability)
Board Member (Mozambique)**



**Lauryn Sulani
(Parent of Child with disability)
Board Member (Malawi)**

10. Our Donors

Appreciation Message to Our Donors and Partners

At Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA), the progress and impact we achieved in 2024 would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors and partners. Your belief in our mission and your commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities have been instrumental in driving meaningful change across the continent.

Through your generous contributions and invaluable collaboration, we have been able to strengthen movements, amplify voices, and address critical issues such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment, and inclusive policy advocacy. Your partnership has empowered us to stand alongside women and girls with disabilities as they break barriers, challenge discrimination, and lead in their communities. We deeply value the trust you place in us and the shared vision we hold for a more inclusiveness and equality.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to stewarding your contributions responsibly, ensuring transparency and accountability in all we do. Together, we will continue to build on this foundation of trust and collaboration to achieve even greater outcomes in the years to come.

On behalf of the DIWA team and the women and girls whose lives you have touched, we extend our heartfelt gratitude. Your partnership is not just a contribution to our work—it is a testament to the power of solidarity and the belief that every woman and girl, regardless of ability, deserves a life of dignity, opportunity, and inclusion.

Thank you for walking this journey with us. We are stronger together.

