



TRAINING WORKSHOP REPORT

Strengthening the Leadership and Advocacy
Capacities of Women with Disabilities in Malawi to
Advance the EVAWG Movement.

5-6 March, 2025 | Amaryllis Hotel, Blantyre



Funded by
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INTRODUCTION

Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA), in collaboration with the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), is implementing the UN Trust Fund-funded project, **INCLUSIVE AND EMPOWERED FEMINIST MOVEMENTS TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**. The project seeks to strengthen the leadership, collective voice and meaningful participation of women and girls with disabilities in movements and decision-making processes aimed at ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG). It also addresses the persistent exclusion of women with disabilities from mainstream feminist and EVAWG movements, despite their heightened exposure to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence.

Women and girls with disabilities continue to encounter significant barriers to leadership and participation, including stigma, inaccessible information and meeting spaces, limited access to leadership opportunities, weak representation in decision-making structures, and inadequate

recognition of their lived experiences within policies and programmes. These challenges limit their ability to influence decisions and hold duty-bearers accountable at grassroots, national and continental levels. The training was therefore organized to strengthen participants' knowledge, confidence and practical skills in feminist leadership, advocacy, movement-building and engagement with relevant policy and accountability mechanisms.

Against this background, DIWA organized a two-day capacity-strengthening workshop on 5–6 March 2025 at Amaryllis Hotel in Blantyre, Malawi. The workshop brought together women with disabilities from diverse backgrounds and impairment groups. It aimed to enhance their leadership and advocacy capacities, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the EVAWG movement at grassroots, national and continental levels. The workshop also provided a platform for participants to exchange experiences, build solidarity and establish a supportive network for sustained collective advocacy beyond the project period.

TRAINING METHODOLOGY



Photo: Virginia, DIWA program manager making a presentation on the project whilst participant Edna (left) and interpreter right

The workshop employed a participatory, inclusive and learner-centred methodology to ensure that knowledge was not only presented but also understood, discussed and connected to participants' lived experiences. Trainers facilitated interactive presentations and group discussions, creating an open and respectful environment in which participants could raise questions, share feedback, exchange experiences and propose practical solutions to the barriers affecting women and girls with disabilities.

Pre- and post-training assessments were administered to measure changes in participants' knowledge and understanding. PowerPoint presentations and other training materials supported the delivery of the sessions, while evaluation forms

gathered participants' feedback on the relevance, accessibility and effectiveness of the training. Reflective journaling and storytelling enabled participants to connect the training content with their personal leadership and advocacy experiences. Panel discussions also brought together diverse perspectives and promoted peer-to-peer learning.

A dedicated WhatsApp group was established to facilitate continued communication, networking, information-sharing and mutual support after the workshop. Collectively, these methods encouraged active participation, strengthened solidarity and helped participants identify how they could apply the knowledge and skills gained within their organisations, communities and wider EVAWG movements.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The overall learning goal of the workshop was to empower participants to confidently and knowledgeably engage on disability rights and inclusion matters within a human rights context and apply the obligations contained in international human rights instruments. Specifically, the workshop had the learning objectives for the participants to:

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of disability as a social construct and a human rights issue.
- Develop a nuanced understanding of gender, equality, equity, and inclusion through a disability and intersectionality lens.
- Explore the diverse forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) faced by women with disabilities.
- Analyse VAWG referral pathways and identify key barriers to reporting and accessing support services.
- Deepen understanding of continental and international women's rights and VAWG-related disability rights instruments within a local and national context.
- Acquire essential leadership and advocacy skills for effectively addressing VAWG affecting women with disabilities.
- Design impactful advocacy campaigns that promote the rights and well-being of women with disabilities.

PARTICIPANTS PROFILE



Photo: Virginia in Black jacket, DIWA program Manager with participants from Dzaleka refugee camp

12 participants attended the workshop. This cohort represented diverse regions across the country, including the Central, Northern, and Southern regions.

The selection ensured a wide range of disabilities were represented, including individuals from the **Deaf community** (3), people of **short stature** (2), individuals with **visual impairments** (2), those with **epilepsy** (1), individuals with **albinism** (2), people with **physical disabilities** (1), and individuals with **psychosocial disabilities** (1). This inclusive selection process underscored the project's commitment to reaching marginalized groups and incorporating diverse perspectives into the training.

Sessions



Photo: Mr Chiusiwa delivering a presentation on continental and international human rights instruments.

OPENING REMARKS

The workshop was officially opened by Mr. George Chiusiwa, Executive Director of the Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA). In his remarks, Mr. Chiusiwa emphasized that the rights of women and girls with disabilities are fundamental human rights and highlighted their disproportionate victimization. He stressed the critical need to build the advocacy and lobbying capacity of women with disabilities to become self-advocates and self-activists, ensuring their voices are heard and their representation is increased in all spheres of development and governance. He also pointed out the relevance of international human rights instruments and the Malawi Persons with Disabilities Act in advancing their rights. His message underscored the importance of the workshop in empowering women with disabilities to drive change.



Photo: Ruth Mkutumula, DIWA Executive Director making a presentation on the models of Disability

Presentations

The first day featured presentations focused on foundational knowledge and frameworks relevant to advocacy for women with disabilities.

□ Virginia – Programs Manager DIWA:

Provided an overview of the "Inclusive and Empowered Feminists Movement in Africa Project," outlining DIWA's mission and vision, the project's goals of strengthening the EAWG movement for women and girls with disabilities in East and Southern Africa, and the key strategies and activities planned. For advocates, this presentation was crucial in understanding the broader context of DIWA's work and the specific objectives they would be contributing to through their enhanced capacities.

□ George Chiusiwa:

Delivered a presentation on violence against women and girls with disabilities within the context of continental and international human rights instruments. He highlighted key frameworks such as CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), emphasizing their specific provisions for protecting the rights of women and girls with disabilities. This session was vital for advocates to understand the existing legal and policy tools available at global and regional levels that they can utilize in their advocacy efforts to demand accountability and promote the rights of women with disabilities.

□ Ruth Mkutumula – Executive Director, DIWA:

Delivered a presentation that critically examined disability as a social construct, moving away from purely medical or individualistic understandings. She elucidated four distinct approaches to disability: the medical model, which views disability as a problem within the individual; the charity model, which portrays persons with disabilities as objects of pity; the social model, which identifies societal barriers as the primary cause of disability; and the human rights model, which emphasizes the full and equal enjoyment of human rights for persons with disabilities. Ms. Mkutumula highlighted how the medical and charity models can inadvertently contribute to the vulnerability of women with disabilities to violence by focusing on individual limitations rather than systemic issues. She emphasized the empowering nature of the social and human rights models, which are crucial for advocates as they frame violence against women with disabilities as a societal problem requiring systemic change and the enforcement of rights. Understanding these models provided advocates with a strong foundation for challenging discriminatory attitudes and advocating for inclusive policies and practices.

DAY 1

The discussion session following the presentations brought forth several critical issues faced by women with disabilities. Participants shared experiences of societal discrimination, including instances of divorce due to disability. Misinformation and harmful cultural beliefs surrounding the sexuality of women with disabilities, such as the myth that having sex with women with albinism can cure HIV/AIDS, were also highlighted. Concerns were raised about forced abortions due to societal perceptions that women with disabilities cannot be mothers. Participants emphasized the need for positive and accurate representation of

persons with disabilities in the media. Furthermore, challenges within the education system, such as inadequate support for children with disabilities, were discussed. A recurring theme was the gap between existing laws against discrimination and their actual implementation, particularly in rural areas, with participants citing instances of perpetrators of violence against women and girls with disabilities being released without proper justice being served. These discussions highlighted the real-world issues that advocates need to address through their work.

DAY 2 Day two of the workshop built upon the foundational knowledge established on the first day, delving deeper into key concepts and frameworks essential for effective advocacy.

Presentation:

Disability, Equality, Inclusion, Intersectionality, and VAWG:

Ruth Mkutumula continued the workshop by emphasizing the trajectory of persons with disabilities from exclusion to inclusion in African societies. She highlighted that many women with disabilities still experience exclusion from various aspects of life, including education, employment, and community participation. The presentation underscored the critical importance of an intersectional approach in addressing discrimination. It was explained that

without considering the multiple and intersecting identities of women with disabilities (such as disability, gender, age, ethnicity, etc.), equality and anti-discrimination policies risk perpetuating existing patterns of discrimination. This session emphasized that advocates must adopt an intersectional lens to understand the unique and compounded vulnerabilities faced by women with disabilities and to develop targeted and effective advocacy strategies.

Presentation:

international Frameworks (Continuation):

Ruth Mkutumula continued the overview of international frameworks relevant to the rights of women and girls with disabilities, as this topic was not completed on Day 1 due to time constraints. The session covered the following key instruments and their significance for advocates:

- **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol):** it was mentioned that this legally binding treaty specifically addresses women's rights in Africa and recognizes the heightened risk of gender-based violence faced by women with disabilities. Key provisions like Article 23 (Special Protection for Women with Disabilities), Article 4 (Rights to Life, Integrity, and Security), Article 14 (Health and Reproductive Rights), and Article 5 (Elimination of Harmful Practices) were highlighted as crucial tools for advocates to demand protection and ensure access to essential services for women with disabilities.
- **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** Presented as an international bill of rights for women, CEDAW defines discrimination against women and outlines state obligations to eliminate it in all forms. Its emphasis on incorporating gender equality into legal systems, establishing protective institutions, and ensuring equal access and opportunities for women in political, economic, social, and cultural life was underscored as fundamental for advocating for the rights of women with disabilities.

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The presentation highlighted Goal 5 on Gender Equality and the mainstreaming of gender across all SDGs within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Advocates were urged to utilize the SDGs as a framework for advocating for the elimination of violence against women and girls with disabilities and for their inclusion in broader development agendas.
- **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA):** This key global policy framework for advancing gender equality, adopted in 1995, was presented as a commitment by governments to address 12 critical areas of concern for women, including violence. The upcoming 30-year review (Beijing+30) in 2025 was highlighted as a significant opportunity for advocates to ensure the rights of women and girls with disabilities are prominently featured and that progress on commitments is assessed. The regional report "Powerful Yet Overlooked" was mentioned as a key advocacy tool in this process
- **Other Important African Union Development Instruments:**
 - **Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want:** This continental strategic framework aims for inclusive and sustainable development, emphasizing good governance, democracy, human rights, and the potential of women and youth. Its aspirations for gender equality and the elimination of violence against women with disabilities were highlighted as important advocacy targets.
 - **AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment 2018-2028:** This strategy acknowledges the multiple discrimination and higher risk of violence faced by women with
 - disabilities and calls for inclusive policies. Advocates were encouraged to use this framework to push for gender and disability-inclusive policies at the national and regional levels.
 - **AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU-CEVWAG):** Adopted in February 2025, this legal instrument aims to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls in Africa. Its objectives and key next steps, including ratification and implementation, were presented as critical advocacy priorities for ensuring the protection of women with disabilities.

Presentation on:

Advocacy by Ruth Mkutumula

The importance of advocacy for Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as a catalyst for policy change and raising awareness was emphasized. Different types of advocacy were explained including: Individual/Self-advocacy, Systems/Group advocacy Activism and Lobbying.

Various advocacy activities were also covered, including both traditional methods and online strategies utilizing social media, targeted messages, online petitions, click-to-call, legislator lookups, action alerts, event registration, online fundraising, texting, and Facebook lead ads.

This session equipped participants with a comprehensive understanding of advocacy principles, different approaches, and practical tools they can utilize to effectively champion the rights of women with disabilities and combat violence against them.

Presentation on:**Responsibilities of Advocates for Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities:**

Another crucial session on Day 2, led by Ruth Mkutumula, focused on the specific responsibilities of advocates working to end violence against women and girls with disabilities. Advocates were encouraged to actively push for the enactment and strengthening of laws and policies that specifically protect women and girls with disabilities from gender-based violence. Engaging with national governments, the African Union, and various human rights bodies to ensure the enforcement of existing legal frameworks was also highlighted as a critical responsibility. Furthermore, the importance of monitoring and contributing to treaty body reporting processes, such as those related to CEDAW and the CRPD, was underscored as a means of holding governments accountable. Advocates were also urged to champion the implementation of disability-inclusive GBV laws and to be actively involved in information campaigns and awareness-raising activities at community and national levels to challenge discriminatory beliefs, promote safe coping

mechanisms, reduce stigma, and encourage survivors to report incidents and seek support. The session also covered the importance of documenting best practices in disability-inclusive GBV prevention and response, fostering collaboration and movement building with other women's rights organizations, and promoting research and data collection to better understand the prevalence and patterns of violence against women and girls with disabilities. Finally, the session provided a summary of how advocates can engage with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights through strategic litigation, submitting complaints, participating in state reporting, utilizing special mechanisms, and advocating for the adoption of general comments. The vital role of movement building and collaboration among organizations of women with disabilities, feminist movements, human rights organizations, and AU bodies was also emphasized as essential for sustained and impactful advocacy efforts.



Photo: Virginia making a presentation on VAWG

Presentation on:**Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities by Virginia Mzuzu**

The workshop sessions delved into critical aspects of violence against women and girls with disabilities (VAWG) and the power dynamics that underpin it. This session focused on developing a comprehensive understanding of VAWG, exploring referral pathways and barriers to reporting, and analyzing the role of power dynamics in perpetuating violence. This session was undoubtedly crucial for equipping the advocates with the necessary knowledge to address this critical issue in their advocacy work.

The following points were highlighted in the presentation:

- **Defining VAWG and Disability-Based Violence:** Participants explored the definitions of gender-based violence and disability-based violence, recognizing the intersectionality that increases the vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities. Disability-based violence was understood as stemming from social stigma and power imbalances, encompassing both direct (physical, psychological, economic) and indirect (structural) forms. The presentation highlighted that women and girls with disabilities often experience multiple and intersecting forms of violence, including psychological, emotional, neglect, financial abuse, and physical or sexual abuse. The unique vulnerabilities arising from their disabilities, such as reliance on caregivers, were recognized as potential avenues for abuse.
- **Understanding Power in Relation to VAWG:** The concept of power was explored beyond its negative connotations, recognizing its potential for positive change. The four expressions of power – power over, power with, power to, and power within – were discussed. The session highlighted how violence stems from "power over" and how fostering equality and nurturing "power with," "power to," and "power within" are crucial for preventing violence. Participants analyzed how perpetrators assert control through various means, including coercion, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, and financial abuse.
- **VAWG as a Human Rights Violation:** Participants affirmed that acts of VAWG are fundamental human rights violations, infringing upon rights such as the right to life, liberty, security, health, freedom from torture, and access to education and social security.
- **Barriers to Reporting:** Participants discussed the significant attitudinal, environmental, and institutional barriers that prevent women and girls with disabilities from reporting violence and accessing justice. These include inaccessible infrastructure, lack of accessible communication services, discriminatory attitudes, and fear of further harm or lack of support. Reference was made to the DIWA study findings on GBV experiences of women with disabilities which highlighted that 45 % of women did not report despite experiencing GBV.
- **VAWG Referral Pathways:** The importance of structured systems connecting survivors with essential services and support was highlighted.
- **Enhancing Participation in the EVAWG Movement:** The underrepresentation of women with disabilities in EVAWG efforts was acknowledged, along with the tendency to view their advocacy solely as disability issues. Barriers to their inclusion, such as environmental, communication, attitudinal, internalized, and institutional/policy barriers, were explored in group work, with participants brainstorming potential solutions.

Presentation on:
Fostering Confidence and Strengthening Personal Brand for Effective Advocacy.

The presentation was made by Virginia, and it underscored that self-confidence is the bedrock of impactful leadership and effective advocacy. Participants learned that confidence is not merely a personal trait but a fundamental requirement for making tough decisions, leading with authority, fostering open communication, and being receptive to feedback. The session highlighted that confidence distinguishes average leaders from great ones and is even more critical than skill, knowledge, or experience. For the women with disabilities participating in the workshop, this message was particularly relevant as it empowered them to recognize their inherent potential as leaders and advocates. Understanding the link between confidence and effective action was crucial for them to step into advocacy roles with conviction and assert their rights.

Building on the theme of effective self-presentation, Virginia also led a session on Strengthening Personal Brand. Participants

were introduced to the concept of a personal brand as what others say about you when you're not in the room. The session emphasized the importance of a well-crafted personal brand in communicating one's values, strengths, and what one stands for, ultimately enhancing career prospects, increasing influence, and maximizing personal and professional impact. Participants engaged in practical steps to define their personal brand, including introspective exercises to identify their strengths, passions, and limitations, as well as defining what they want to be known for and understanding their target audience. The session also covered the importance of developing a concise and compelling elevator pitch to effectively communicate their identity and goals. For the advocates, strengthening their personal brand is vital for building credibility, establishing trust, and effectively conveying their message to various stakeholders.



Group Discussions

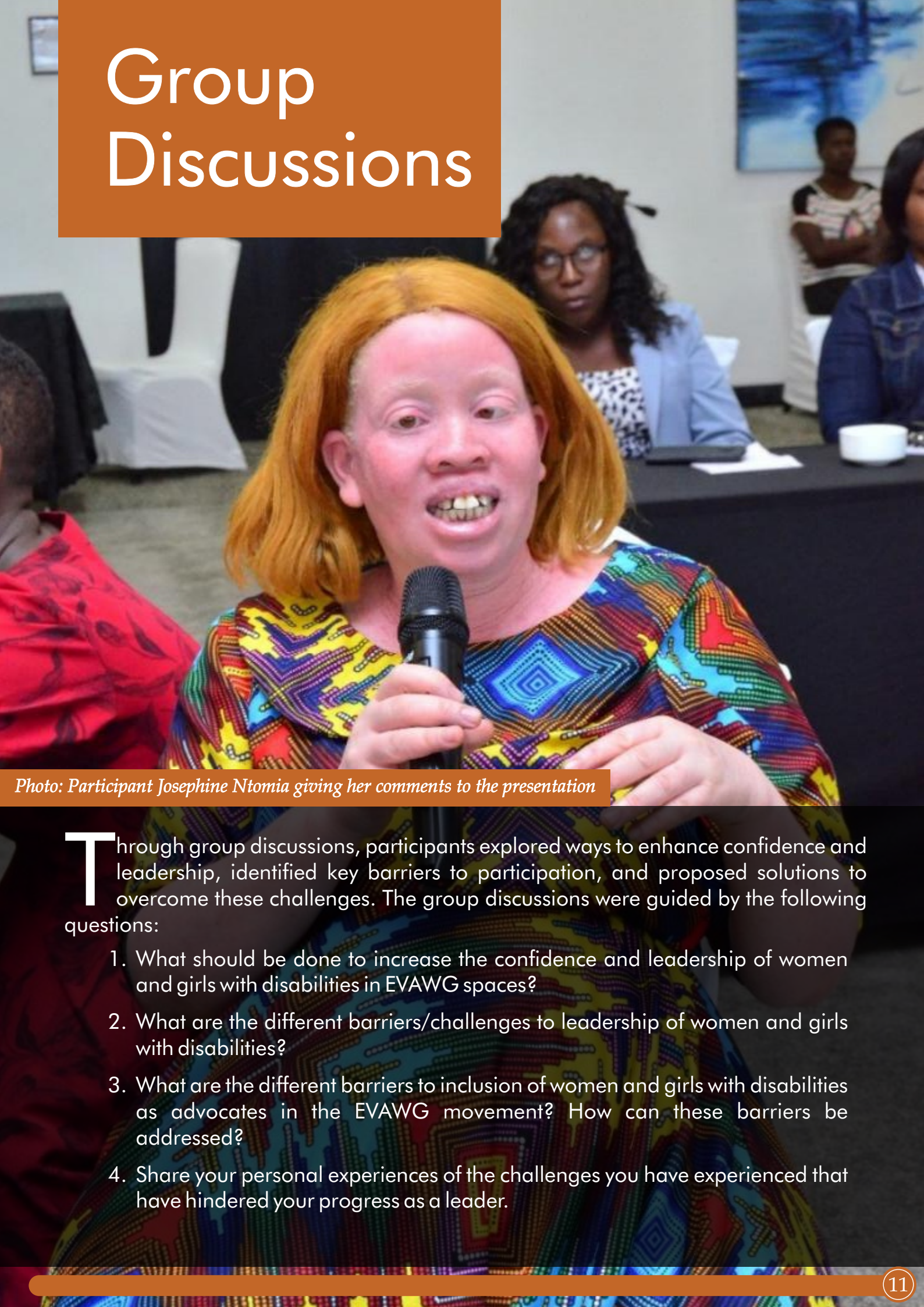


Photo: Participant Josephine Ntomia giving her comments to the presentation

Through group discussions, participants explored ways to enhance confidence and leadership, identified key barriers to participation, and proposed solutions to overcome these challenges. The group discussions were guided by the following questions:

1. What should be done to increase the confidence and leadership of women and girls with disabilities in EVAWG spaces?
2. What are the different barriers/challenges to leadership of women and girls with disabilities?
3. What are the different barriers to inclusion of women and girls with disabilities as advocates in the EVAWG movement? How can these barriers be addressed?
4. Share your personal experiences of the challenges you have experienced that have hindered your progress as a leader.



*Photo:
Ruth Mkutumula,
DIWA Executive
Director making a
presentation on the
models of Disability*

Key barriers highlighted included environmental barriers, such as inaccessible infrastructure and transportation. Many government offices, hospitals, and schools in Malawi lack ramps, elevators, and disability-friendly facilities, making it difficult for women with disabilities to access essential services or participate in public decision-making. Public transport remains largely inaccessible, with minibuses and buses not designed to accommodate wheelchair users, further limiting mobility and engagement.

Attitudinal barriers, including negative stereotypes and societal stigma, were also identified as significant obstacles to inclusion. Some participants shared experiences of being viewed as incapable of leadership or employment due to the widespread belief that disability equates to dependence. Women with disabilities are often denied opportunities to participate in traditional leadership roles, such as village committees or community-based organizations, because of deep-rooted cultural biases. Communication barriers were highlighted also as hindering participation. Despite Malawi having laws promoting disability inclusion, a lack of sign language interpreters in key institutions such as police stations, hospitals, and courts prevents women who are deaf from accessing justice or healthcare services. Braille materials and accessible digital platforms remain scarce, limiting access to information and education. Institutional barriers, such as limited representation in decision-making processes, further restrict opportunities. Women with disabilities in Malawi are under represented in local

councils, Parliament, and other governance structures. Many policies and programs addressing gender-based violence do not adequately consider the specific needs of women with disabilities, leading to their continued exclusion. Internal barriers, including fear, lack of confidence, and limited self-awareness, were also noted as challenges. Many women with disabilities in Malawi have grown up in environments where they are discouraged from pursuing leadership roles, leading to low self-esteem and hesitancy to advocate for their rights.

Participants emphasized the need for empowerment through skills development, self-belief, and resilience. They recommended accessible education, economic empowerment, and stronger policies to protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities. They cited the need for inclusive vocational training centers, financial support for women with disabilities to start businesses, and targeted leadership programs that build confidence and advocacy skills.

Participants urged organizations like DIWA to provide training, mentorship, and advocacy support to enable women with disabilities to take on leadership roles. They stressed the importance of targeted interventions, such as ensuring that women with disabilities are included in gender-based violence response programs, creating disability-friendly police stations, and advocating for government enforcement of disability inclusion laws. By addressing these barriers, women and girls with disabilities in Malawi can become more effective leaders and active participants in the EVAWG movement.

ACTION PLANNING



Concluding the empowering two-day training, participants engaged in a crucial action planning session, solidifying their commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities in the EAWG movement. Utilizing a structured form that was provided by the facilitators, they outlined concrete steps they would take, specifying the 'what, when, and where' of their planned activities. Many participants committed to conducting trainings, awareness campaigns, and advocacy initiatives targeting fellow women and girls with disabilities, often leveraging existing platforms such as the Umoja people with disabilities network and various WhatsApp groups. Several participants envisioned organizing seminars and workshops within their communities and even in settings like the dzaleka refugee camp. Advocacy campaigns aimed at influencing policy changes at the national level were also planned, with a long-term vision of over a year. Participants recognized

the power of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, as well as traditional media such as radio and newspapers, for disseminating information and raising awareness. Engaging with local stakeholders through stakeholder meetings at the community level was another key action point. Furthermore, participants expressed their intention to study the workshop materials, conduct further research on GBV data, and actively advocate for survivors within their localities and at the national level. The need for resources and support was also considered, with participants aiming to utilize opportunities within their office activities and collaborations with other Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). The overarching sentiment was one of proactive engagement and a determination to translate the knowledge gained into tangible actions within their communities and beyond.



Plenary Discussion

The plenary discussion provided a valuable opportunity for participants to ask questions, share their experiences, and reflect on the workshop content. A significant point that emerged was the limited prior engagement of the participants in key advocacy platforms. With the exception of one individual, the women with disabilities present indicated that they had never previously engaged in such platforms especially at regional, or international levels. This starkly highlighted the critical importance of this training in building their confidence and capacity to participate in these crucial spaces. It also underscored the vital role of organizations like DIWA in sponsoring and supporting women with disabilities to access and actively engage in international platforms where their voices can influence policy and drive change.



Photo: celebrating 2025 International women's day "accelerate Action" pose

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY 2025

As part of the workshop, on day 2 DIWA also acknowledged the significance of International Women's Day 2025, which was observed under the theme "Accelerate Action". Recognizing the importance of this global observance, a dedicated moment during the workshop was taken to reflect on what it means to accelerate action specifically for women and girls with disabilities within the Malawian context. This reflection underscored the workshop's commitment to not only impart knowledge and skills but also to connect participants with broader movements for gender equality and disability rights, fostering a sense of solidarity and shared purpose in their advocacy efforts.



CONCLUSION

The two-day workshop successfully provided a comprehensive and empowering learning experience for women with disabilities activists, facilitated by engaging trainers who fostered a highly interactive environment. The training established a robust foundation by introducing the project's objectives and delving into critical human rights frameworks, offering both social and human rights perspectives on disability. This foundational knowledge, coupled with dynamic discussions where participants were actively encouraged to share feedback and ask questions, equipped them with essential tools and a deeper understanding necessary to amplify their leadership and advocacy roles in the ongoing struggle against violence and for the comprehensive inclusion and empowerment of women with disabilities across Africa. The workshop further enhanced participants' capacities by providing essential conceptual understanding and practical knowledge crucial for effective advocacy, enriched by interactive sessions and supported by comprehensive training materials. The detailed exploration of disability, equality, inclusion, intersectionality, and VAWG offered a vital analytical lens for dissecting systemic barriers and developing targeted interventions. Moreover, the thorough overview of international and regional human rights frameworks furnished participants with indispensable legal and policy instruments to bolster their advocacy efforts at all levels, from local to continental, ultimately strengthening their ability to champion the rights of women and girls with disabilities. The workshop's unique and engaging methodology, incorporating reflective journaling, storytelling, and insightful panel discussions, further deepened learning and encouraged peer-to-peer exchange. The establishment of a dedicated WhatsApp group also ensured ongoing communication and support beyond the formal sessions, making the workshop a truly impactful and sustained learning experience.

The established WhatsApp group will serve as a vital platform extending far beyond the duration of this workshop, fostering continued interaction, collaboration on planned actions, and crucial networking among the participants. This digital space will facilitate ongoing dialogue, the sharing of experiences and resources, and mutual support as advocates implement their action plans. This community of practice will be further enriched by including participants from similar training workshops conducted in Rwanda and Kenya, creating a powerful cross-border network of women with disabilities actively working to end violence and advance their rights across East Africa.

CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATION

- The workshop faced two key challenges. First, the project's target of 20 female participants was not achieved. Only 12 of the 13 selected participants attended, with one late withdrawal. More significantly, the budgetary constraints prevented us from expanding participation to reach the targeted 20. The need to provide sign language interpretation and personal assistance for the 12 attendees with disabilities significantly impacted the available resources. Therefore, the budget required to ensure inclusivity for a larger group was not available. Future budgets must prioritize and explicitly allocate funds for these essential accessibility accommodations to meet the project's participation goal.
- The breadth and depth of the topics covered, particularly the intricate details of the various human rights instruments, necessitated more time for thorough exploration and discussion. Many participants expressed a desire for more in-depth analysis and practical application exercises related to these frameworks. Future training workshops of this nature should consider allocating a longer duration, potentially extending beyond two days, to allow for a more comprehensive engagement with the complex issues and frameworks involved.
- The need for sustained engagement, ongoing capacity building, and continuous support was strongly emphasized by participants. A key lesson learnt from this workshop is that a single training session, while impactful, is not sufficient to address the complex and deeply rooted barriers faced by women with disabilities in achieving leadership and actively participating in the EVAWG movement. Beyond the workshop there is need Organize regular follow-up meetings or webinars: Facilitate periodic virtual or in-person gatherings to discuss progress, share successes and challenges, and continue learning.
- Based on the discussions and insights gained during this workshop, it is recommended that organizations working on disability rights and gender-based violence prevention prioritize sustained and comprehensive support for women with disabilities. This includes the provision of ongoing training and mentorship programs designed to build their leadership capacity, enhance their advocacy skills, and deepen their understanding of human rights frameworks and EVAWG strategies.
- Targeted interventions are crucial to address the unique barriers faced by women with disabilities, fostering their meaningful participation and leadership within the EVAWG movement.

CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATION

- The need for more advocacy to promote accessible environments, inclusive communication practices, and economic empowerment opportunities to create an enabling ecosystem for women with disabilities to thrive as advocates and leaders.
- Continuous collaboration and networking among women with disabilities, disability organizations, women's rights organizations, and government agencies are also essential for driving systemic change and ensuring the full inclusion and empowerment of women with disabilities in the fight against violence.
- The plenary discussion highlighted a critical lesson: women with disabilities have limited prior engagement in key advocacy platforms at national, regional, and international levels, underscoring the vital importance of targeted interventions like this training in building their confidence and capacity. Consequently, it is strongly recommended that organizations such as DIWA continue and expand their efforts in providing training and sponsorship to women with disabilities, enabling them to access and actively participate in these crucial spaces where their voices can influence policy and drive meaningful change.
- Participants highlighted challenges related to accessing learning materials in a timely and inclusive manner. The need for learning resources to be shared in advance of the workshop was emphasized to
- allow for adequate preparation. Furthermore, the importance of providing materials in accessible formats, such as braille, was noted to ensure inclusivity for all participants with diverse needs. To optimize workshop effectiveness and inclusivity, it is recommended to proactively share all relevant training materials (presentations, handouts, etc.) with participants in advance of the workshop. This allows for better preparation and engagement. Furthermore, look into options for sharing materials in diverse accessible formats (digital for assistive technologies, large print, and potentially audio or braille) to cater to the varied needs of all participants, ensuring an equitable learning experience.
- The creation of a WhatsApp group proved to be a powerful tool for engagement before and during workshop. To further strengthen this network, it is recommended to actively utilize the WhatsApp group for ongoing communication, resource sharing, and peer support among participants.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

PRE- AND POST-TEST ANALYSIS: ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE GAIN

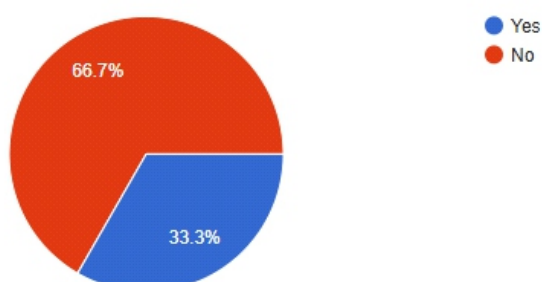
To evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop in enhancing participants' knowledge on key areas related to the training, a pre- and post-test was administered using Google Forms. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VlunjWRbU9ujeir6HCaUfKjzzYie4ZCUp_fV4cpMw0/edit#response=ACYDBNi6_U9Xj_w_G_7_I_D_H_6_W_f_3_S_M_V_puZ0edrfJQj_KwWyqqSVRwjXWGnd3xJTjRSBKKi2Zn8

Participants were asked to self-assess their knowledge level on five specific questions. The pre- and post-test results overwhelmingly demonstrate the positive impact of the workshop on participants'

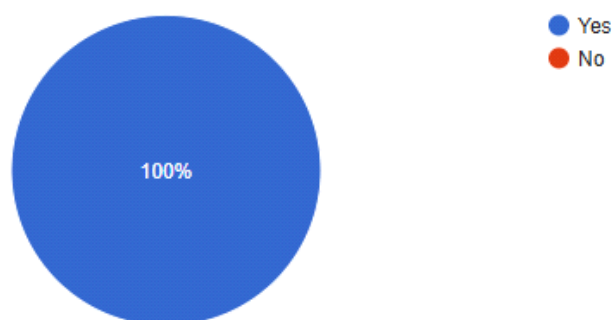
knowledge. Across all questions, there was a clear trend of participants moving from lower knowledge categories to higher ones, signifying a substantial increase in their understanding of VAWG referral pathways, leadership confidence strategies, advocate roles, engagement with human rights bodies, and the relevance of the AU-CEVAWG. This data strongly suggests that the workshop was highly effective in equipping participants with valuable knowledge and skills relevant to their work in ending violence against women and girls with disabilities. See below graphics detailing some of the changes.

Question : *I know the AU-CEVAWG and its relevance to ending violence against women and girls with disabilities*

Pre-test: Only a third of participants (33.3%) reported knowing about the AU-CEVAWG and its relevance.

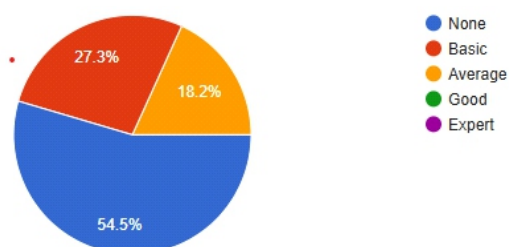


Post-test: Following the workshop, 100% of participants indicated they now know about the AU-CEVAWG and its relevance to ending violence against women and girls with disabilities.

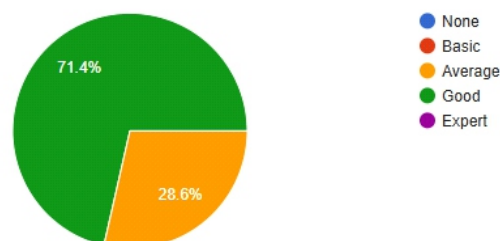


Question : *I know how to effectively engage with human rights committees and treaty bodies like the Banjul commission and Arusha court regarding ending violence against women and girls with disabilities*

Pre-test: A large majority (54.5%) initially reported having no knowledge of how to effectively engage with human rights committees and treaty bodies. 27.3% had basic understanding, and 18.2% reported average knowledge. There were no participants in the "good" or "expert" categories.

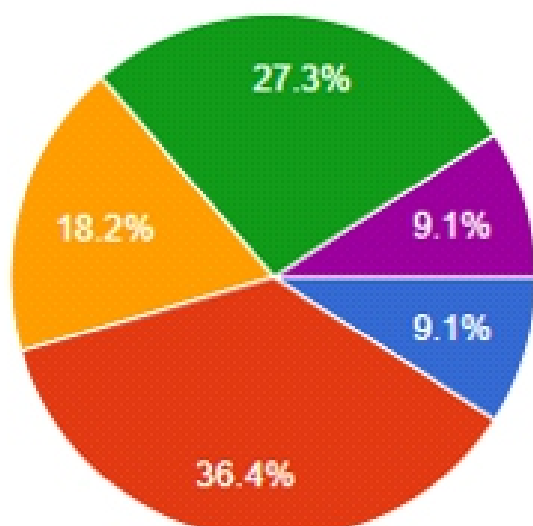


Post-test: After the training, a significant shift occurred, with 71.4% of participants reporting good knowledge in this area. The training demonstrably increased participants' understanding of how to engage with key human rights mechanisms like the Banjul Commission and the Arusha Court to address violence against women and girls with disabilities. The absence of "none" in the post-test (implied) and the strong presence in the "good" category indicate a substantial increase in knowledge and confidence in this critical area of advocacy

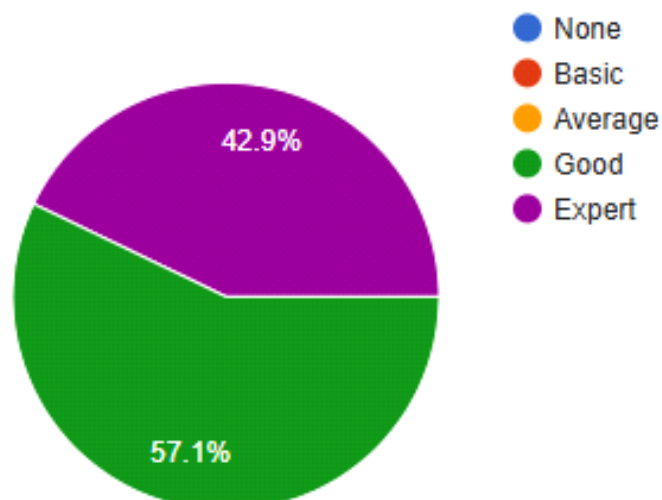


Question : *I know the roles and the responsibilities of advocates for violence against women and girls with disabilities within the regional EVAWG movement*

Pre-test: Participants showed varying levels of understanding, with 36.4% reporting basic knowledge, 27.3% indicating good knowledge, and 9.1% considering themselves experts.

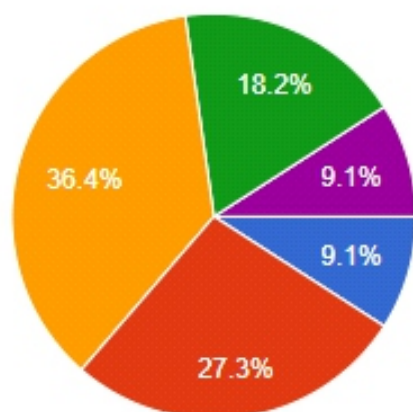


Post-test: Following the training, there was a clear improvement in understanding roles and responsibilities. 57.1% of participants reported good knowledge, and an impressive 42.9% now considered themselves experts. Notably, the "basic" knowledge category dropped to 0%, highlighting the training's effectiveness in empowering participants in this crucial aspect of advocacy.

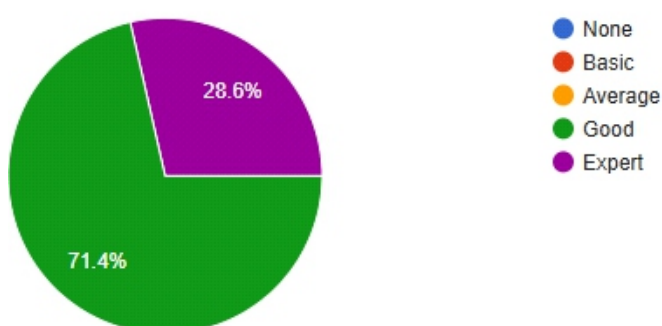


Question : *I know the strategies to prioritise in developing my confidence as a leader*

Pre-test: The majority of participants (36.4%) reported having a basic understanding of strategies to prioritize in developing leadership confidence.



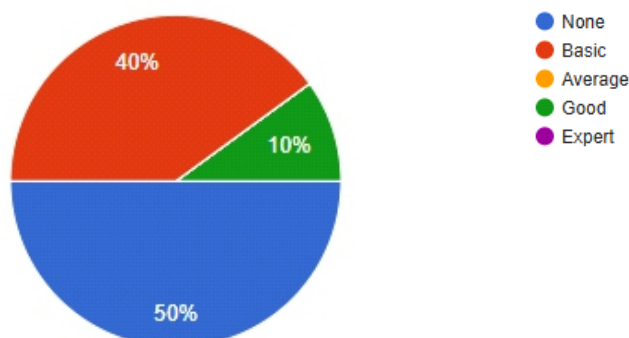
Post-test: The training had a strong positive impact on participants' confidence in this area. A significant majority (71.4%) reported having good knowledge of these strategies, while 28.6% considered themselves experts. The shift in responses indicates that the workshop effectively equipped participants with strategies and insights to prioritize their leadership development, leading to a high level of self-assessed knowledge in this area



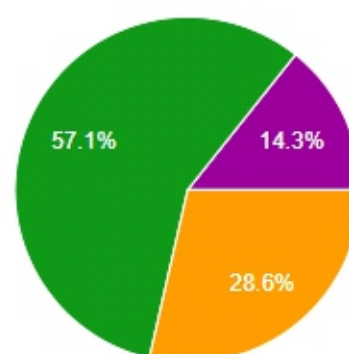
Question : *I Know the VAWG referral pathways and guiding frameworks at sub-regional level*

In the Pre-test, a significant proportion of participants (50%) indicated they had no knowledge of VAWG referral pathways and guiding frameworks at the sub-regional level. 10% reported good knowledge, while 40% had basic understanding. Notably, after the training, 0% of participants reported having no knowledge in this area. There was a substantial increase in those reporting good knowledge (57.1%) and expert knowledge (14.3%). The complete elimination of the "none" category signifies that the workshop successfully provided participants with foundational knowledge of sub-regional VAWG referral pathways and guiding frameworks. The significant increase in the "good" and "expert" categories further indicates a substantial gain in understanding for a majority of the participants.

Pre-test:



Post-test:



At the end of the workshop participants were also asked to evaluate the training in terms of relevance and effectiveness of delivery as well as meeting their objectives and expectations. The feedback received from the workshop participants provides valuable insights for improving future sessions and further strengthening the network among women, girls, and organizations. Participants found the content **relevant, timely, and empowering**, equipping them with **practical skills and knowledge** to advocate for the rights of women and girls with disabilities. Participants expressed appreciation for the facilitators' **expertise, engaging presentation style, supportive, and inclusive environment**.

The training was described as an eye-opener and critical for developing roadmaps and action plans to end violence against women and girls with disabilities. The opportunity for networking and collaboration was also highly valued.

- 80% of the participants reported that the training content was very useful, informative relevant and helpful to their learning.



However, participants also offered constructive criticism that can be used to enhance the workshop experience and foster a stronger, more connected community.

- A primary concern raised by participants was the **limited time** allocated for the training. Many felt that the content was extensive and required more time for thorough absorption, discussion, and practical application. Suggestions included increasing the duration of the workshop to 3-4 days to allow for more in-depth exploration of topics, additional practice sessions and case studies, and more time for group discussions and panel discussions, particularly involving girls with disabilities.
- Several participants also pointed out challenges related to access to learning materials. The need for learning resources to be shared in advance and provided in accessible formats, such as **as** braille manuals, was also highlighted.

By addressing the identified areas for improvement and building upon the existing strengths, future workshops can be even more impactful in empowering advocates and strengthening the network of individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities in Malawi. The enthusiasm and commitment of the participants provide a strong foundation for continued collaboration and collective action.



"It's a reality that women with disabilities in Malawi are underrepresented across all levels of governance – from local councils to Parliament. The societal discouragement from pursuing leadership roles has unfortunately led to low self-esteem and a reluctance to advocate for their rights among many. For me personally, as I am contesting for a ward councillor position in my constituency in Nsanje district, the confidence-building tips we received during this workshop have been incredibly valuable"

Mphamvu Kalima- The Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA)



"This was a powerful workshop. As I shared during our sessions, many girls with disabilities in refugee camps, specifically at Dzaleka Refugee Camp here in Malawi, are facing violence that too often goes unreported, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. Importantly, this workshop has equipped me with knowledge of GBV referral pathways. I will utilize this understanding to increase awareness of GBV reporting services, such as the available toll-free lines, ultimately advocating for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) in refugee settings"

Jeane Mwamba -UMOJA PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



"I found the workshop very useful. The understanding of legal instruments, the boost in our confidence, and the clarification of our roles as advocates were all beneficial. Moreover, the elevator pitch is a practical skill I will definitely take away and use when engaging with diverse stakeholders in my work and in future stakeholder meetings"

Maria Chael, National Network of Girls and Women with Disabilities in Malawi



As I reflect on what I have learned, I am reminded of the critical role we played as an advocate in promoting the rights and dignity of women with disabilities, I understand that that change should begin with us challenging discriminatory attitudes to be free from violence.

Sandra chimponda. Parents for Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM)



"From this workshop I learned a lot about the importance of legal frameworks, especially when they are recognized and enforced by the Malawian government. I now better understand how these laws can be used in advocacy work as an activist... As advocates, we must lobby for our rights rather than beg for them—we must demand what rightfully belongs to us"

Ester Mbite -Voice of women with disabilities

COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY

The workshop benefited from significant communications and visibility efforts. This included features on national radio and TV stations, ensuring broad reach across Malawi and beyond. Additionally, DIWA effectively utilized its Facebook page to generate publicity and raise awareness about the event. Furthermore, DIWA leveraged the workshop to record a video capturing the voices and experiences of women with disabilities. See one featured story about the workshop at: <https://malawiguardian.com/2025/03/07/diwa-and-macoda-engage-extra-gear-to-empower-women-with-disabilities-in-africa/>

ANNEX 2: PARTICIPANTS LIST

Name	Type of disability	Organization	district	phone number
1 Kettie Mwamvani	Deaf	Malawi National Association of the Deaf (MANAD)	Dedza	+265 886 000 000
2 Bridget Banda	Short stature	FEDOMA	Blantyre	+265 998 234 126
3 Sandra chimphonda	Blind and hardly hearing	Network of girls and women with disability in malawi and PODCAM	Blantyre	+265 994 561 307 +265 881 452 525
4 Chrissie Chimphonda	Assistance	N/A	Blantyre	+265 886 193 337
5 Rabecca Harawa	Epileptic	Centre for Girls and Women with Disabilities in Malawi (CEGWDI)	Mzuzu	+265 888 450 130
6 Josophine Ntamila	Albinism	APAM	Thyolo	+265 888 935 686
7 Edna Makonyola	Deaf	Malawi National Association of the Deaf	Blantyre	+265 991 819 166 +265 886 727 881
8 Emmie Mitawa	Sign lan Inter		Blantyre	+265 994 674 568
9 Mphamvu Kalima	Little Statue	FEDOMA	Nsanje District	+265 889 892 58
10 ADIDJA ASSUMANI	ALBINO	UMOJA PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	CENTRAL REGION/ DZALEKA REFUGEE CAMP, DOWA DISTRICT	+265 994 000 000
11 Kaneza Liliane	Lang Assistance	N/A	DZALEKA REFUGEE CAMP, DOWA DISTRICT/ CENTRAL REGION	+265 999 267 448
12 JEANNE MWAMBA	PHYSICAL DISABILITY	UMOJA PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	DZALEKA REFUGEE CAMP, DOWA DISTRICT/ CENTRAL REGION	+265 998 915 717
13 Esther Mbite	visual impairment	voice of women with disability	Ntcheu	+265 888 148 777
14 Chancy Mbite	Personal ass	N/A	Ntcheu	+265 888 148 777
15 Maria Chale	Deafness	National Network of Girls and Women with Disabilities in Malawi	Ntcheu	+265 995 000 000
16 Jackson Msuku	Sign lan Inter		Blantyre	+265 988 377 674
17 Sungani Gondwe	Psychosocial	Centre for Girls and Women with Disability	MZUZU	+265 983 660 938
18 Dumisani Muyaba	N/A	DIWA	Lilongwe	+265 998 722 292
19 Virginia Mzunzu	N/A	DIWA	Lilongwe	+265 993 708 660
20 Ruth Mkutumula	Low visual (large print user)	DIWA	Lilongwe	+265 999 808 031
21 George Chiusiwa	physical	MACODA	Blantyre	+265 995 229 940
22 Stephano Joseph	N/A	Min of Gender	Blantyre	+265 888 387 952

Increasing the Engagement and Leadership of Women with Disabilities within the EYAWG Movement Workshop		
Amaryllis Hotel , Blantyre, 5-6 March 2025		
Time: 8:30am-4:30 pm		
DAY 1: 5th March ,2025		
Time	Activity	Responsible Person
8:30-9:00	Introductions ,pretest, workshop expectations, journal reflection and elevator pitch	Virginia
9:00-9:05	Welcome remarks	George Chiusiwa: Director General MACODA
9:05-9:20	Overview of the Inclusive and Empowered Feminists Movement in Africa Project ,and training objectives	Virginia Program manager,DIWA
9:20-10:30	<u>Violence against women and girls with disabilities in the context of Continental and international human rights instruments:</u> ○ Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ○ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ○ The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	George Chiusiwa: Director General MACODA
10.30 -11.00	Health Break and group Photo	All
11.00:-12:00	The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ADP),Maputo protocol, AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, and Other important African Union frameworks	Director General MACODA
12.00-13.00	Plenary discussion(question and answers, sharing experiences) How can we ensure that women with disabilities are engaging in key platforms	Group leaders
13:00-14:00	Networking Lunch	
14:00-15:30	Disability as a social construct; models of disability and VAWG: ○ The Charity ,medical ,social, and Human rights approach	Ruth Mkutumula: Executive Director,DIWA
Tea - Wrap Up Day 1		

ANNEX 3:

WORKSHOP AGENDA DAY 2

DAY 2: 6 March - 2024		
Time	Activity	Responsible
9:00-9.30	Recap of Day 1	all
9.30-10:00	Disability, Equality ,Inclusion, intersectionality and violence against Women and Girls with disabilities	Ruth
10:00-10:30	<u>Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities:</u> ○ Understanding VAWG ○ VAWG Referral Pathways and barriers to reporting ○ Understanding power in relation to VAWG	Virginia
10:30-10:45	Health Break	
10:45-11:45	BARRIERS TO INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE EVAWG MOVEMENT(Group work and plenary) What are the different barriers to inclusion of women and girls with disabilities as advocates in the EVAWG movement How can these barriers be addressed What are your experiences(using lived experiences through story telling)	Virginia
11.45-12.30	Confident Leadership Tips for Building your Self-Confidence as a Leader Strengthening my Personal Brand as a leader(elevator pitch exercise)	
12:30-13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30-14:30	Advocacy - Types of advocacy -Responsibilities of advocates for violence against women and girls with disabilities	Ruth
14.30-15.30	Action Planning (Group work and plenary) What is it they can do, When and where Existing platforms that they can utilize to do the planned activity Resources Needed/support (where to get) Post test and Workshop evaluation forms	Group leaders
15:30-15:35	Conclusions and Way Forward	Virginia
15:35-15:40	Closing Remarks	Ministry of Disability
15:40	Tea and Coffee – End of workshop	

Increasing the Engagement and Leadership of Women with Disabilities within the EAWG Movements Training Workshop

Country: _____

Name(optional) _____

Date: _____

The information you provide in this evaluation is one of the most important parts of our learning and development review process and informs the further development of this training. What you say today can make a difference to the training experience of the participants who come after you. Please take the time to answer each question thoughtfully and honestly.

Module Number (1-7): _____

OVERALL TRAINING FEEDBACK

Fill in the blank spaces below with numbers 1-5 to indicate your rating.

Please provide comments / suggestions to provide details:

	1	2	3	4	5
Scoring	Not at all useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Somewhat useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Reasonably useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Very useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning

*Please enter your score below

1. The entire training was: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

2. The supplied tools and resources were: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

3. The planning of the training and support I was given during the trainings was: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

4. The training facilitation was: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

5. Training was accessible and my reasonable accommodation requirements were met:

Comments/Suggestions:

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. What three things did you enjoy most about the training?

2. What three things did you enjoy least about the training?

3. Please describe the benefits you gained from this training module and how it will be useful to your work?

4. Which new ideas, skills or knowledge are you planning to apply in your work as a result of this training? How? When?

5. Would you recommend this training to other colleagues? Why? Why not?

6. Please provide any other feedback which may be relevant to the Facilitators.

