



**AFRICAN UNION OF THE BLIND (AFUB)
UNION AFRICAINE DES AVEUGLES (UAFA)**



**ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY-
DECEMBER 2013**



Left to Right: Madam Odette Juimo, AFUB Vice President, Mr. Jace Nair, AFUB President and Mr. Julius Kamyá, AFUB Executive Director during the March 2013 Board meeting in Nairobi

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report spans from January to December 2013, a period constituting the first year of implementation of the new constitution adopted in Bangkok in 2012. 2013 was also the first year in office of the seventh Board of Officers and the start of a new four-year strategic period (2013-2016) for AFUB.

The first section of this report gives some background information on AFUB, its vision, mission, governance/management structure, core values and the Union's target population.

The second part provides an overview of the projects/programs that AFUB implemented during the year, with focus on accomplishments and results geared at achieving the objectives mentioned in the introduction.

The last part sheds light on lessons learnt in the process of pursuing our mission and objectives, the challenges of the Union, possible measures to address these challenges, as well as the conclusion.

Significantly, the enthusiasm of the new Board, as well as the recruitment of a substantive Executive Director in March, are jointly viewed as key elements that will contribute towards stability and reconstruction of a more positive corporate image of the Union.

In tandem with this, the Union acknowledges and appreciates all financial and technical support from development partners, the membership and other stakeholders, which made it possible for the successful rolling out of all projects – human rights advocacy, membership development, inclusive education, HIV&AIDS mainstreaming, advocacy with the African Union, and institutional development alike.

The drawbacks that manifest in a narrow resource base, lapses in communication facilities/flow, staff turn-over, high stakeholder expectations and others notwithstanding, AFUB's road-map for 2013-16 is a clear demonstration of the requisite levels of professionalism, commitment and dedication existing in the Union to contribute to the agenda of an African continent where blind and partially sighted persons enjoy equal rights, social inclusion and full participation in development.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report provides highlights on AFUB's work dating between January 2013 and December 2013. It specifically relays the successes, lessons, challenges and the possible way forward for greater emancipation of blind and partially sighted persons on the African continent. In the same breath, the report provides a brief reminiscence of who we are under our regional umbrella, our vision, mission, organizational structure and core values.

1.1 Who is AFUB?

AFUB represents one of the six regional blocks of the WBU. It is a continent-wide conglomeration of national associations of/for blind and partially sighted persons in Africa, established in October 1987 in Tunis/Tunisia under the auspices of the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) - now African Union (AU), with an initial membership of 23 countries. AFUB enjoys observer status in the African Union under Resolution CM/Res.944 (XL); as well as in the African Commission on Human and People's Rights [ACHPR] [Number 447]. The Union also holds semi-consulate status in the Republic of Kenya. Currently, the numerical strength of AFUB stands at 59 national member organisations in 53 member states of the AU.

1.2. Our Vision

We envision an African continent where blind and partially sighted persons enjoy equal rights, social inclusion and full participation in development.

1.3. Our Mission

Our mission is to strengthen member organisations and create unity of purpose among them through capacity building and advocacy in partnership with governments, international agencies and other stakeholders.

1.4. Organisational Structure

AFUB is a membership organisation constituted primarily by ordinary members who are national member organisations of blind and partially sighted persons in Africa. The membership is currently organised into five regions namely, Central Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa. Other members include international members and honorary life members.

Each region has a regional assembly that meets at least six months before the union's general assembly. Part of its agenda is to elect a regional chair who will later be a member of the AFUB Board.

A General Assembly consisting of delegates from the member organisations, the members of the outgoing board, international and honorary life members and observers meets every four years to review the policies and progress of the Union. In addition the General Assembly elects and confirms the President, Vice President, the chairperson of the women's committee and other members of the board for a term of four years.

An eight member Board of Officers meets at least once every year to transact business on behalf of the Assembly. These consist of 5 regional representatives and the chairperson of the women's committee (out of whom a President and Vice President are elected), an Honorary Treasurer and the Executive Director who serves as ex-officio member and secretary to the Board.

A Table of Officers consisting of the President, Vice President and the Executive Director meets and consults regularly to review progress in implementing the policies of the Board and to make executive decisions.

A Secretariat headed by the Executive Director implements the policies and programs of the union.

1.5. Core Values

We believe in and practise the following values:

- Commitment and loyalty
- Transparency and accountability
- Gender equality and equity
- Unity in diversity
- Change and innovation
- Efficiency and effectiveness

1.6. Our Target Population

Through direct interaction with our national members, AFUB's programmes principally target the millions of blind and partially sighted persons in Africa, irrespective of age, race and sex. In addition, we provide technical assistance and advice to partners such as governments, international development organisations, Disabled People's Organisations, civil society

organisations and other stakeholders in development work who share our vision.

2.0 PROGRESS FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2013

2.1 Background

Before this reporting period, AFUB had gone through a rigorous process of developing a four-year strategic plan, stretching from 2013 to 2016. This plan was considered and adopted in AFUB's seventh General Assembly held in November 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand. Henceforth, the Union's annual plans are derived from this four-year strategy, whose focus is three major strategic pillars; thus:

- a) Advocacy towards policies and practices that guarantee the rights and promote inclusion of blind and partially sighted persons at national, regional and international levels;
- b) Membership strengthening; and,
- c) Organizational development.

The concentration in 2013 was therefore on the following specific objectives:

- a) Strengthening the capacity and role of national member organisations in promoting the rights of blind and partially sighted persons in their countries;
- b) Increasing engagement with the African Union to prioritize issues of blind and partially sighted persons in the agenda of African governments;
- c) Expanding membership in relevant organisations and networks to promote the priorities of blind and partially sighted persons in Africa;
- d) Increasing engagement with regional, bilateral, international, UN and corporate agencies for more inclusive policies for blind and partially sighted persons in Africa;
- e) Promoting Equal access to appropriate education by visually impaired children, youth and adults;
- f) Enhancing AFUB's capacity to effectively deliver on its advocacy and coordinative roles in Africa.

2.2 Accomplishments

As we have not yet secured the required funding to roll out the entire strategic plan, we are currently implementing it piecemeal under the following projects:

2.2.1. Advocacy work

a) Disability and Human Rights:

This project is a continent-wide intervention that seeks to address the denial of human rights of the visually impaired persons in Africa. The project aims to legitimise the needs of the visually impaired persons as rights holders as declared in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD].

The project is supported by the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired [SRF] and is being implemented by AFUB in conjunction with Uganda National Association of the Blind (UNAB). The project is using the CRPD as a tool for advocacy to ensure human rights of the visually impaired persons are recognised in Africa, with specific reference to three articles; that is, 24 on Education, 27 on Work and Employment and 28 on Adequate Standards of Living and Social Protection. The project is inspired by the conviction that implementation of the CRPD is the key to changing the desperate state of visually impaired persons.

This Project started in 2011 and employs a thematic and result oriented approach. In the first year, the focus was on internal capacity building of AFUB, as well as UNAB and its branches - including the support system in the civil society. In the second year, the focus was on knowledge building and consultation with the selected ministries and awareness creation at all levels. In the third year (2013), the focus was on advocacy at all levels and the review of policies at the national level. Year four is slated as the evaluation and exit year, which also includes preparation of a new application for expansion of the project to other countries. The project expectation is that its lessons and good practices are shared with other organisations of the visually impaired as part of AFUB's regional role to enhance the visually impaired movement in Africa.

From January 2013, there were national stakeholders' meetings; joint planning sessions with line ministries and wider civil society; review of national laws and policies in respect of the three articles to establish existing

gaps when juxtaposed with CRPD; training of trainees; national and district level advocacy campaigns – all in Uganda.

AFUB also held a number of planning and review meetings with officials from the development partners –SRF. Some of these were via skype and others on telephone. In the month of October, three SRF officials visited AFUB for a week, during which time the pilot project in Uganda and the regional human rights angle of the project were reviewed; plans were agreed on for the fourth quarter of 2013; and a timeline was drawn for the end-of-project in the year 2014.

During the same visit, it was also agreed that the human rights project as supported by SRF be extended to two other countries.

Accordingly, Ghana and Namibia were chosen for this extension. Communication has already been made to these countries to prepare themselves for the project.

Further, during the fourth quarter of the year under review, plans for the summative evaluation of the project were concluded, relevant terms of reference drawn, consultancy firm engaged, and the evaluation conducted. (A report of this evaluation is available for information).

In a bid to further augment our human rights initiatives as rolled out in the last three years, we developed an advocacy toolkit on the CRPD, with specific focus on five articles. These are Article 9 on Accessibility, Article 24 on Education, Article 27 on Work and Employment, Article 28 on Adequate Standards of Living and Social Protection, as well as Article 33 on National Implementation and Monitoring.

While still in draft form, the toolkit was shared out and obtained input from staff, the board, UNAB and the Country Director of ADD International – Uganda. Plans are underway to share it with our members electronically and on the AFUB website. With acquired funding, we also plan to translate the toolkit into French and Portuguese languages for the benefit of AFUB members in the Francophone and Portuguese-speaking countries.

b) AU-Advocacy Project:

According to the original Long Term Plan (LTP) supported by NABP, the AU Advocacy project commenced in May 2011 and was due for phase-out by the end of 2012. A one year extension was however secured, within which

period AFUB would build on its advocacy achievements and strengthen its advocacy capacity, especially in dealing with the AU. Work within 2013 therefore focused on the following three main areas:

- a. Building and strengthening partnerships between AFUB, other regional DPOs, civil society networks and UN agencies that work on the African Union;
- b. Strengthening AFUB's capacity among board members and staff to plan and implement advocacy programmes;
- c. Applying for national, regional and international donor support for building AFUB's advocacy capacity.

In essence, during the period under review, this advocacy project was purposed to influence legislation, policy and practice within the AU and its various power blocks for the benefit of blind and partially sighted persons.

To facilitate this, it was inevitable for AFUB to acquire necessary knowledge and information needed for development of an appropriate plan for 2013, as well as effective handling of the project. To this end, the following were accomplished:

- As part of the new Director's induction and orientation, literature on previous work of the project was accessed and read. This also included appreciating the current long term plan binding AFUB and NABP. The Director also liaised with the immediate former Director of AFUB, SADPD, Sightsavers and NABP to get more insight into the project. This sharing was through E-mails and telephone. Consequently, an annual work plan for 2013 was drawn to guide implementation and progress monitoring of this project.
- It was also planned within this review period that AFUB participates in the 2 ordinary sessions of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) planned for 2013, as well as the NGO Forums preceding them. In the months of April and October, the Executive Director, Project Officer for Human Rights and the ICEVI Africa Coordinator participated in the NGO Forums, as well as the 53rd and 54th Ordinary Sessions of the ACHPR respectively. During both events, the following was accomplished:
 - During the 53rd session, AFUB capitalized on its observer status within the Commission (acquired in October 2012) to present a statement. (A report on our participation and experiences in the 53rd session has been circulated and an article derived from it and posted on the AFUB website. Similarly, the AFUB Statement and activity reports related to both sessions are available for reference.
 - During the October event(s) in the Gambia, as disability human rights defenders, we managed to secure a slot on the programme of the NGO Forum for a panel discussion on the human rights situation of PWDs in Africa. The panel was chaired by Mr. Ongolo Thomas of SADPD. Panelists included a representative from Under the Same Sun; Anne

Robe of the PanAfrican Federation of People with Psychosocial Disabilities; Julius Kamyia of AFUB; Gertrude Fefoame of Sightsavers; and James Aniyamuzala of the African Youth with Disabilities Network. After presentations, the floor made contributions and posed questions, which were clarified by the panelists. Further:

- Disability still secured space for its consideration under the working group sessions, where the AFUB Director chaired the working group on older persons and persons with disabilities. We were fortunate to have the entire session with the Commissioner in charge of older persons and persons with disabilities. The presentation from our working group was highly appreciated by the NGO Forum, who chose to present disability as the first human rights issue in the NGO statement to the ACHPR.
- Dr. Lawrence Mute (blind) from the Kenyan Human Rights Commission was sworn in as a new member of the ACHPR.
- The SADPD organised a luncheon, which disability rights activists had with three commissioners. During the luncheon, PWDs re-emphasised the disability issues that the ACHPR and AU need to pay attention to. Major ones include expediting the process of coming up with an African Disability Protocol; investing in disability statistics in the Commission's activities and reports; implementation of the Continental Plan of Action on disability; as well as paying attention to the human rights situation of PWDs in conflict and post-conflict areas.
- The AFUB Director, together with Sightsavers, Under the Same Sun, Gambia Union of Persons with Disabilities and the Pan-African Network of People with Psychosocial Disabilities were held to a radio talk show on one of the Gambian FM stations. On the show, several human rights issues were articulated; listeners called in with contributions and questions as this was a live show. The show was moderated by a blind female journalist.
- It was part of this year's AU-Advocacy plan to develop position papers / statements for presentation to AU forums. As intimated above, a statement was written and presented to the 53rd Ordinary Session of the ACHPR in Banjul, the Gambia. After the Panel discussion and raising of issues in the working group on disability and older persons during the 54th Ordinary Session, AFUB restrained from making a statement to the Commission and instead left this to SADPD and Sightsavers. Plans are underway to make statements in subsequent sessions, as and when topical issues arise.
- The need to expedite the process of developing and adopting an African Disability Protocol that embraces the spirit of the CRPD was strongly reiterated in both sessions.
- One other result as a consequence of our advocacy work with the ACHPR is that this Commission (ACHPR) requested/challenged the

disability fraternity after the April session, to develop a concept on accessibility and share it with the Commission. Sightsavers and SADPD requested AFUB to initiate this work. A draft concept was accordingly written by AFUB and circulated to SADPD and Sightsavers within the month of September. Before accessibility being formally embraced fully by the Commission, already we registered signs of positive change during the 54th session in October; namely: the registration forms were disability-sensitive; session volunteers were more responsive; PWDs and disability issues had more space than ever before.

- In a bid to build and strengthen partnerships between AFUB, other regional DPOs, civil society networks and UN agencies that work on the African Union, AFUB has invariably teamed up with various Africa-wide DPOs/NGOs under the SADPD umbrella as elucidated above. Further, our conventions in the Gambia in April and October saw us (on both occasions) working as a team with Sightsavers, SADPD, Under the Same Sun, African Youth with Disabilities Network, Pan-African Network of People living with Psychosocial Disabilities, and other players within the disability sector.
- Building and strengthening consortia for joint advocacy work has always been part of this project. As a follow-up on the experts training in South Africa by the SADPD, a round table meeting was jointly organized and convened by SADPD and the Government of Lesotho, to take place between 1st and 5th of December 2013. AFUB was represented by its President, where among other activities, various players shared their practical experiences in working with the AU. The occasion was also used by the participants to devise ways and means of better engaging with the AU and all its power blocks. (AFUB's experience with the AU as shared in this convention is available for reference).

In order for this advocacy work to be carried out more effectively, capacity building through skills training was vital. To this end, the following training sessions were delivered:

- i) During the review period, specifically March, a training session for Board and staff on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and human rights of blind and partially sighted persons was delivered. The training, facilitated by a resource person from Kenya's Human Rights Commission, was organized to equip Board and staff with knowledge and skills on the UNCRPD, with a view to having a trickle down effect in the various African States. Specifically, this knowledge was viewed as vital in our advocacy work as we impress upon governments to sign, ratify,

domesticate and implement the Convention. What's more, the training was critical in as far as it provided knowledge and skills for monitoring the implementation of this international instrument.

- ii) In the month of August, the AFUB Director together with 14 others drawn from other Africa-wide DPOs participated in a three-day training on how to influence the AU and its power blocks to mainstream disability within their work. This training, conducted by the Secretariat of Africa Decade for Persons with Disabilities (SADPD) took place in Johannesburg. The 15 trainees now join the SADPD Board and senior management to form a team of experts to work as a consortium to influence the AU around disability inclusion and mainstreaming. At the end of the training, SADPD split the participants into working groups; and AFUB, in addition to being concerned about what happens in all other groups, was specifically placed in the working group working on the post-2015 development agenda. Since then, communication exchange has been going on; and the AU is being engaged to consider disability statistics as a central part of their work. This, we think, will be vital in evidence-based advocacy and planning.
- iii) In the month of June, the AFUB Director was appointed to the WBU working committee on the CRPD. Consequently, in the month of October, WBU organized a training seminar for this committee (the WBU CRPD Regional Coordinators). Specifically, the seminar was organized between 28th and 31st October in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. The purpose of the seminar was to deepen the understanding of the CRPD Regional Coordinators on the significance of the CRPD in the context of Blind and partially sighted persons. It was also aimed at devising ways and means of working as a team with WBU, and with national champions on the CRPD to further the cause of blind and partially sighted persons using the CRPD as an advocacy tool. Each participant was required to facilitate one session. The Director presented on Articles 25 and 26 on Health and, Habilitation and Rehabilitation respectively. Action points were also developed and agreed upon for the regional coordinators to implement. AFUB has also used the human rights and AU-advocacy projects as springboards to do the following:
 - i) Participate in the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Diplomatic Conference in June to conclude a treaty to facilitate access to published works by visually impaired persons

and persons with print disabilities. This conference, held in Marrakesh/Morocco, was a success that saw the concerted effort of all stakeholders and eventual adoption. We have now shared out this Treaty, and campaign has started to lobby African Governments to sign and ratify it. This protracted campaign is however hampered by lack of specific funding.

- ii) AFUB started working in liaison with SADPD to create a critical mass of experts to embark on strategic engagement with the AU and all its power blocks to ensure that disability is mainstreamed in their agendas. This was the prime-mover of the SADPD training of experts in the month of August in Johannesburg.
- iii) During the year, AFUB also utilised its WBU membership by appointing a couple of representatives to WBU's various committees and working groups, which in themselves, are advocacy arms of our movement. Current WBU organs on which AFUB is now represented include the Capacity Development Sub-committee, Scholarship Sub-committee, Membership Sub-committee, World Braille Council, Employment Working Group, CRPD Regional Network, Technology Working Group, Diversity Committee, Rehabilitation Working Group and Access to the Environment Working Group.
- iv) With support from International Blind Sports Association (IBSA), the Regional Officer for West Africa and Executive Director participated in a three-day meeting in Nairobi to rejuvenate blind sports on the African continent. A draft continental plan to this effect was drawn; and the ICEVI Regional Coordinator for Africa was elected IBSA President for Africa.
- v) After the unfortunate political tidings in Egypt, the CBR African Network (CAN) shifted their plans to hold the fifth CBR Africa Conference in that country and instead requested Kenya to consider taking this opportunity.

AFUB, together with a host of disability and CBR stakeholders in Kenya converged at the Association of the Physically Disabled – Kenya (APDK) offices to consider the opportunity. It was agreed in the first meeting that Kenya takes up the challenge to host the conference towards the close of 2014. By the close of 2013, three preparatory meetings had already been held. Working committees were set up for the smooth discharge of this duty. These focus on fundraising, public relations, invitations and protocol, programme, entertainment and logistics. AFUB was placed on the media and public relations working committee.

c) Equalise It

This project, funded by Positive Action for Children Fund from the U.K., is delivered in Nigeria and Ethiopia. It is concerned with making HIV&AIDS, as well as Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) programs accessible to blind and partially sighted adolescents and youth in Africa. The project commenced in November 2011 and scheduled to run up to the close of 2013. Within the period under review, national awareness campaigns were supported and conducted; facilitators' training sessions were delivered; adolescents and youth went for voluntary counselling and testing; mainstream service providers were sensitised to include visually impaired persons in their work.

d) Inclusive Education

This project is funded by World Braille Foundation (WBF). It commenced in August 2011 and, with an extension from May 2013 henceforth, it closes in January 2014. Implemented in Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Liberia and Mali, the project's focus is on equitable access to education for blind and partially sighted girls and boys in Africa.

Up to the close of 2013:

- (a) All countries had established a community committee of the project. Membership of the committees reflects all stakeholders involved in the project, including government and health departments. They meet on a quarterly or as needed basis for oversight and advocacy of the project.
- (b) On curriculum and policy development, each country has worked diligently with government officials for overall approval of a Policy on Inclusive Education. This Policy has now been approved in Mali and Burkina Faso - with Liberia's Policy just finalised and with government for approval. Lesotho's policy is still in draft form. The special needs teaching curriculum in all countries was developed and accepted by the various Ministries of Education. Governments in all the countries have provided letters of commitment to the Inclusive Education Program and have been totally involved in the process over the past two years. Commitments have been received to continue with the employment of special needs teachers; and the inclusion of teaching assistants on full-time employment by the Ministries of Education is being strongly encouraged.
- (c) All four countries are on target with the establishment of two resources centres in rural area of each country. Centres are fully equipped with Braille writing machines, Braille paper, slates and stylus, materials in Braille. In addition, WBF received sponsorship

from a Canadian company for about 600 white canes and these have been shipped to the four countries respectively during this past year.

- (d) For purposes of the project, there are at least 2 specialised teachers in each country (8 in total) and four teaching assistants (16 overall). Over a 6 – 12 weeks period in 2012, all these individuals received specialised training in special education as it relates to teaching blind girls and boys, along with Braille reading and writing skills.
- (e) Recruitment of blind students into the centres has been challenging especially in the two smaller countries of Lesotho and Liberia. During the review period, concerted effort was made to find creative ways of encouraging parents to send their blind children to school, which includes foster families so the children are close to the schools during the week and can go home on weekends. Accordingly, the number of blind girls and boys in the classroom or on a waiting list doubled. The “no cost extension” since May 2013 provided the additional time needed to meet the recruitment goals of 200 blind girls and boys receiving an education for the first time.

e) EFA-VI Campaign

Apart from the WBF-supported project, AFUB continued to host and provide management and monitoring support to the Education for All Visually Impaired persons (EFA-VI) Campaign. This regional initiative is a replica of the global campaign on education, implemented in eight countries of Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda - and is supported by the International Council on Education of persons with Visual Impairment (ICEVI).

2.2.2 Membership Strengthening

a) Strengthening National Member Organisations in Portuguese and Spanish Speaking Countries

This project is mainly NABP-funded. It started in May 2011 and ends in December 2014. The project, in six countries of Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé & Príncipe concentrates on organisational leadership, management and advocacy capacity building. The following workshops were conducted during the year under review:

- In the month of June, we conducted an advocacy capacity-building workshop for all the six countries stated – with a thrust on the CRPD and human rights. The representatives from member countries came up with country plans/commitments, which in part included organising similar workshops at national level.
- In accordance with the work plan, a national workshop was delivered in Sao Tome and Principe in November. This was coordinated and facilitated by the responsible AFUB Officer and ACASTEP members. The workshop specifically took place from 29th to 30th November in the Cultural Centre in the capital city of the Republic of S. Tome and Principe. This was a capacity building workshop where members exchanged knowledge and experiences on the CRPD, with the purpose of lobbying and advocating for signing and ratification of the CRPD in this country. The workshop brought together 40 participants – including members of ACASTEP, various Associations of disabled people, NGOs working with disabled people, Government officials and representatives of the National Assembly of S. Tome & Principe. Participants were introduced to the key objectives of the Portuguese Project, the vision, mission and objectives of AFUB. Furthermore, the challenges faced by PWDs in S. Tome and Principe, as well as Government efforts to mitigate such challenges were shared.

The workshop outcomes were essentially related to the commitments made by disabled people and the representatives of the Government in working together so that the CRPD is signed and ratified as soon as possible. The Ministers had already approved the signing and ratification; and discussions were still at committee level in the country's National Assembly.

Meanwhile, ACASTEP agreed on the following strategies to influence the decision-makers in this regard:

- To work with media in relation to the image and visibility of ACASTEP;

- To raise awareness and knowledge on the CRPD content;
- To meet with influential personalities of S. Tome to request for their support in this regard.
- A similar workshop was organized and conducted in Equatorial Guinea from 4th to 5th of December 2013. The capacity building workshop conducted with our ONCIGE members took place in the Spanish Cultural Centre in Malabo – the capital city of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. It attracted 30 participants from ONCIGE, various Associations of disabled people and representatives from Government and the Senate.
- While the CRPD had not yet been considered by the Cabinet Ministers as was the case in S. Tome Principe, a key result during the workshop was that government representatives pledged to work together with DPOs to ensure that the Convention is signed and ratified. It was brought to the knowledge of participants that the Convention was still under consideration by the various Government ministries; who will henceforth forward it to the National Assembly before it is furnished to the Senate of the Republic for approval or ratification. Government officials present at the workshop reiterated the State’s commitment to better the living conditions of PWDs in the country. In addition, at the material time of the workshop, ONCIGE received a Government donation composed of Braille equipment; as well as Information, Communication and Technology equipment.

ONCIGE participants in this Equatorial Guinea workshop came up with the following strategies to influence decision makers in view of the CRPD and PWDs’ human rights:

- To work with the media in relation to the image and visibility of ONCIGE;
- To raise awareness and knowledge on the CRPD and its content;
- To meet with influential personalities of the country; say, the country’s First Lady, in order to vie for their support in a bid to sign and ratify the CRPD.

b) Other Interventions at Country Level

(i) IDP-Supported Work in Mozambique:

With funding and technical support from IDP, AFUB Conducted a pre-capacity assessment of ACAMO in Mozambique to determine entry points, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; and also scanned their political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental ambience. This was in the month of May. The pre-capacity assessment revealed that ACAMO needed intervention in a couple of areas, particularly institutional strengthening, rehabilitation, advocacy, gender development and education. Consequently, the results of the May visit prompted a training session for the ACAMO Board and staff in the month of November. This initial organisational development and leadership training was funded and technically facilitated by IDP, with AFUB providing back-up support. Through highly interactive "question and answer" sessions, this interaction unearthed the fact that speedy progress within ACAMO is possible if challenges within the national and branch leadership, as well as the social exclusion of individual blind and partially sighted persons from the mainstream are addressed. Accordingly therefore, a couple of action points / recommendations were agreed on to ignite the required change; thus, a need for the ACAMO leadership to:

- i) Get trained in good practices of running the organization.
- ii) Interact and Exchange experiences with other leaders outside Mozambique, for example, in Malawi and South Africa.
- iii) Improve the use of Information, Communication and Technology networking, and acquire additional reading material on leadership.
- iv) Train ACAMO members in attitude change.
- v) Train members in self-confidence and independent living skills.
- vi) Improve communication in the branches or local communities.
- vii) Strengthen networking within ACAMO branches in the provinces and other civil society organizations.
- viii) Facilitate the participation of the members in social activities in the communities.
- ix) Link members with existing services such as microfinance, HIV&AIDS, etc.

(ii) Southern Africa Regional Conference

With support from IDP and other development partners, a sub-regional conference for all member organisations in southern Africa was held in the month of August 2013.

This Lesotho convention provided members opportunity to share experiences, assess past performance and shape their future.

(iii) Revival of the ASTF

Work on the AFUB Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF) was revived. This, we did during our Board meeting in March; and a new Board of Trustees was appointed. One meeting has so far been held; a lot of information related to the Fund has so far been retrieved and shared; we have requested benefitting countries to furnish us with updates on how the Fund benefitted them so that we pick it up from there with European Blind Union (EBU).

2.2.3 Organisational Development

This mainly focuses on leadership and institutional development at AFUB headquarters. Support for this work is currently secured from NABP and IDP, with contributions from other partners. Within the review period, AFUB accomplished the following:

- (a) Employed a substantive Executive Director through a transparent recruitment and selection process. He assumed office at the beginning of March. The Director has already gone through a performance appraisal after six months on the job.
- (b) Held the second meeting of the seventh Board of Officers in March. Notably, among other resolutions, the Board welcomed two new national member organisations from Djibouti and Southern Sudan – raising the Union’s membership base from 57 member organisations in 51 African countries to 59 members in 53 African countries. Secondly, the Board also considered and principally adopted two important policy documents; one on human resources, and the other on financial management. Secretariat was left with the work of cleaning up the two documents.
- (c) Worked with the audit firm on the financial/audit statements for the year ending 31st December 2012.
- (d) Streamlined the operational and administrative systems within the AFUB Secretariat.
- (e) Currently working with IDP to hold the sixth IDP Africa Forum, which will take place in Uganda in October 2014. During this

occasion, we plan to hold an extraordinary General Assembly for AFUB. Apart from usual business of reviewing performance and projecting the future, this occasion will be used to achieve one goal; that is, coincide AFUB assemblies from then henceforth. This will mean that, either the members meeting cut short the term of office of the current Board of Officers by two years; or to extend the same term by two years.

- (f) The essence is to hold all future AFUB assemblies around the same time and venue with the IDP Africa Forum. This was reached at by the AFUB Board as a means to reduce on GA costs.
- (g) Two project proposals were developed and submitted; one on membership strengthening and organisational development for human rights promotion in post-conflict countries - to the US-based National Endowment for Democracy. The other was on blindness inclusion in HIV&AIDS programmes – submitted to USAID. None of the proposals yielded positive results.
- (h) Several internal meetings were held to ensure that administration and work implementation move on smoothly. A couple of these were general staff meetings, one-on-one meetings between Director and individual members of staff, meetings between Director or all staff with the President, or Honorary Treasurer, or the Regional Officer for East Africa – or the trio.

3.0 LESSONS, CHALLENGES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

3.1 Lessons

- a) Regular interaction with stakeholders through meetings always reminds us of what to do better or differently. This feedback is critical for organizational growth.
- b) Continued interaction with the membership through monitoring visits, E-mails, telephone and other means yields project ownership. To get even better results, this needs to be enhanced.
- c) Networking with other organisations/development partners like WBU, SADPD, NABP, SRF, ICEVI, WBF, PACF, IDP, IBSA, Sightsavers and others

brings synergy in the various programmes, all for the benefit of visually impaired persons.

d) Advocacy using role models continues to bring success. These demonstrate to those who lack awareness that visually impaired persons have untapped potential and should therefore be accorded their rights on equal basis.

3.2 Challenges

- (a) AFUB's funding and funding base are still very narrow in comparison to its mandate and members' expectations. To demonstrate this, the operational budget for 2013 was just about US\$ 500,000. It therefore becomes difficult to effectively deliver on critical aspects like facilitating the Board to play its governance role; publicising AFUB and its work; carrying our advocacy work to more blocks of the AU and to UN levels; etc.
- (b) In a similar vein, the funding support for administrative overheads, including the administrative staff, is in a real balance. While we thinly held on up to the close of 2013, this is very critical from January 2014.
- (c) Considering our resource envelope, the costs incurred on last year's financial audit were high when compared with the overall work load and annual operational budget of the Union.
- (d) Our continental Board of Officers and sub-regional executive committees are curtailed in their operations due to limited or no funding. This is in respect to communication and/or monitoring the countries they represent.
- (e) We are still curtailed in our noble desire to fully roll out our four-year strategic plan – again due to resource inadequacies.
- (f) Our thin Secretariat witnessed the resignation of a programme officer in the month of August. This created some backlog and overload as Secretariat adjusted to the new challenge posed by the officer's departure.
- (g) The projectisation of AFUB's work due to funding realities has administratively led to gradual detachment of project staff from the centre; for instance, their salaries are hardly determined by AFUB. This causes and widens discrepancies between project staff and administrative/support staff who have no specific funding base.

- (h) Getting feedback from some of our member organisations is really slow, sometimes totally lacking. A quick example is the communication sent out a couple of times, requesting benefitting countries to provide information on their ASTF-supported projects. Feedback on this has been disappointingly wanting. Others are the countries that have hitherto been indebted in terms of WBU and AFUB subscription fees. A few like the Gambia responded and cleared. After tireless reminders (of even the possibility of a waiver for those members in critical financial squeeze), Swaziland finally secured the relief from WBU until their funding position improves. Others like Algeria, Egypt and Libya still remain silent.
- (i) Our participation in some of WBU's committee or working groups is hampered by language challenges. A case in point is Mr. Mohammed Salem, an AFUB Board member who was nominated to represent the continent on the Technology working group; but he couldn't cope in future meetings as it was clear that the committee had no provision for French translation.

3.3 Recommendations

(a) The Board needs to set aside a basic fund to support resource mobilisation efforts in terms of linking up with and appraising prospective development partners, as well as developing bankable proposals. A modest beginning of US\$ 4,000 per annum can trigger off the organisation.

(b) AFUB should establish a standard salary structure, as well as determine and manage its pay roll to which all development partners should contribute. In the interim, the Board is requested to consider temporary funding of the organisation's administrative function, especially the four administrative staff; that is, Director, Accountant, Bilingual Secretary and Driver. One of the sources to mitigate this is the endowment account.

(c) The Board needs to appoint a new and cost-effective team of auditors to conduct the audit for 2013.

(d) Revival of the communication facility to Board members is ideal for them to monitor progress within their regions. But this needs to be demand and work driven; with stringent monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

(e) AFUB will need to explore the use of modern communication facilities; say, Dropbox, Facebook and other social media in a bid to enhance smooth communication and information sharing with its internal and external publics.

(f) There is need for us to strengthen the provision of simultaneous interpretation during all AFUB and WBU meetings so that we reduce on the risk of our membership feeling alienated and therefore falling apart.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Despite the challenges of a narrow funding base, communication and feedback difficulties with the membership, high expectations from the members and low technological advancement, AFUB is fortunate to have a team of committed and professional Board members and staff. The support we still enjoy from our conventional partners, coupled with the looming funding prospects should leave us with a glimmer of hope.

As a new Executive Director, I wish to express my appreciation to the President, Honorary Treasurer, Regional Officer for East Africa, entire Board, development partners and staff for the unwavering support during this first, but very trying year. The journey to full realisation of rights and inclusion of blind and partially sighted persons in all development programmes is difficult and protracted. We therefore need to soldier on with courage, zeal and commitment!

ANNEX I: LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People’s Rights
AFUB	African Union of the Blind
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APDK	Association of the Physically Disabled – Kenya
ASTF	AFUB Solidarity Trust Fund
AU	African Union
CAN	CBR African Network
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
EBU	European Blind Union
EFA-VI	Education for All persons with Visual Impairment
HIV	Human Immune Virus
IBSA	International Blind Sports Association
ICEVI	International Council on Education of people with Visual Impairment
IDP	Institutional Development Programme
LTP	Long Term Plan
NABP	Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially sighted
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PACF	Positive Action for Children Fund
SADPD	Secretariat of the African Decade for Persons with Disabilities

SRF	Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UAFA	(French) Union Africaine des Aveugles
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAB	Uganda National Association of the Blind
WBF	World Braille Federation
WBU	World Blind Union
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organisation

ANNEX II : LIST OF AFUB BOARD OF OFFICERS

1. Jace Nair
AFUB President & Southern Africa Regional Representative

2. Odette Juimo
AFUB Vice President & Chairperson of AFUB Women's Committee

3. Ochieng Frederick Haga
Eastern Africa Regional Officer

4. Mohamed Salem Bouh
Northern Africa Regional Representative

5. Yaw Ofori Debra
West Africa Regional Representative

6. Paul Tezanou
Central Africa Regional Representative

7. Martin Kieti
AFUB Honorary Treasurer

8. Julius Kamya
AFUB Executive Director & Secretary to the Board

ANNEX III: LIST OF AFUB MEMBERS OF STAFF

1. Lucas Amoda Manuel
Program Officer - Strengthening National Member Organisations
in Portuguese and Spanish Speaking Countries
2. Peter Anomah-Kordieh K
Program Officer – Disability rights and Advocacy
3. Gladys Kemunto
Accountant
4. Dandy Mubima
Bilingual Secretary
5. Patrick Wanjala
Logistics Officer /Driver
6. We also host the Africa Regional Campaign on Education for all
persons with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI), coordinated by Martin
Okiyo.