



**African Union of the Blind
Union Africaine des Aveugles**



ANNUAL REPORT

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**PREPARED BY:
AFRICAN UNION OF THE BLIND (AFUB)**

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A word from our President

From the onset, I would like to thank our members for electing me to head our beloved Union, and to serve as your President. I am privileged to be part of an organisation that strives for increased access by blind and partially sighted people to basic human rights through advocacy for the elimination of discriminatory laws and Practices affecting blind and partially sighted people. The founding fathers of our Union were motivated and persistent in pursuing a goal of success for the Union; I pledge to continue in the footsteps of these great leaders.

Strengthening the capacity and creating unity of purpose among the 60 member organisations that currently form the numerical strength of our Union is our mission. As we work towards realising it, we are faced with challenges that can only be surmounted by our desire for positive change in the lives of our fellow blind and partially sighted brothers and sisters on the continent.

As you will see in this report, in 2015 we had our fair share of challenges, but at the same time, we made significant progress in advancing our three strategic priorities of Advocacy, Membership development and Organisational strengthening.

Well into the third year of implementation of our strategic framework, and cognisant of the Union's financial instability which made it difficult to accomplish a significant portion of the work cut out in the strategic framework; the AFUB Board of Officers at its Brazzaville meeting in March 2015 decided to adopt a strategy to finish off the remaining phase of the plan. From this was born the 18 months Bridging Action Plan. This Action Plan, was to cover the period between July 2015 and December 2016, complement the current Strategic Framework and to be implemented concurrently with the latter. Implementation of the plan is currently underway.

We were also faced with a rather daunting task in 2015: with no Executive Director heading the Secretariat, we had to organise the 8th AFUB General Assembly. This was the first time that an AFUB General Assembly was held jointly with the Africa forum. We are proud to report that this event was a great success as it not only met the objective of strengthening AFUB governance, but also proved that it is possible to reduce the cost of holding future AFUB General Assemblies. We thank our members, partners, staff, volunteers and friends who contributed to the success of this event.

Despite our grave financial predicament, we continued delivery on our advocacy and coordinative roles in Africa through various initiatives born of our multiple partnerships.

We welcome the New Year 2016 and wish a Happy New year to all our members, partners and friends. As I take on the mantle of president of our Union, I thank our partners, members, staff, friends, volunteers and all well-wishers for believing in AFUB. I count on your continued support as we continue working together towards a continent where blind and partially sighted persons enjoy equal rights, social inclusion and full participation in development.

Yaw Ofori Debra - President, African Union of the Blind

Who is AFUB?

AFUB represents one of the six regional blocks of the WBU. It is a continent-wide umbrella NGO 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 60 national member organisations in 53 member states of the AU.

Our Vision

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

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.

Our Objectives

Our constitutional objectives are as follows:

- i. To influence public policies and practices governing the education, health, welfare, social security, rehabilitation, employment, sports and recreation of blind and partially sighted persons.
- ii. To strengthen and develop national associations of the blind and partially sighted persons and help establish national organisations where such organisations do not exist.
- iii. To encourage the exchange of information and experience between all organisations whose activities relate to the goals of the Union
- iv. To disseminate information in order to promote positive attitudes among the population on the continent towards blind and partially sighted persons.
- v. To encourage, co-ordinate and conduct research and studies in all fields of blindness, including its prevention.
- vi. To promote and co-ordinate technical and material assistance in accordance with the aims of the Union in areas where such help is required.
- vii. To solicit support for the programmes and policies of the Union and its members from national governments and international organisations, as well as assist and advise these bodies in the implementation of such programmes and policies.
- viii. To take any other measures necessary or conducive to the achievement of the purposes of the Union.

Organisation philosophy and beliefs

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

Our 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 General 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 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.

Highlights of Accomplishments for the year 2015

We continued to implement our four year strategic framework, 2015 being the third year of implementation. In collaboration with our development partners, we managed to implement new and ongoing projects as well as provide governance and administrative support to the Secretariat for effective delivery of our programs. We implemented the following projects under the three key strategic pillars of advocacy, membership strengthening and organisational development according to our strategic framework.

The Regional Human Rights Project for the Visually Impaired in Africa

Since 2011, AFUB has been in partnership with the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired (SRF) towards the achievement of AFUB's objective of protecting and promoting the human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of people who are blind and partially sighted in Africa. Through the Regional Human Rights Project for the Visually Impaired in Africa, the partnership initially focussed on Uganda as a pilot country where the advocacy capacity of the Uganda National Association of the Blind was strengthened, leading to increased engagement with national and local governments.

In 2015, the partnership entered a new three-year phase focussing on two new countries Ghana and Namibia, where we are working with the Ghana Blind Union (GBU) and the Namibia Federation of the Visually Impaired (NFVI). The goal of this new phase of the partnership is to increase the capacity of AFUB, GBU and NFVI to promote human rights of persons with visual impairment in Africa using the CRPD as an advocacy tool.

Following organisational capacity assessments conducted jointly by AFUB and SRF for both GBU and NFVI, subsequent capacity strengthening activities were conducted. These primarily consisted of trainings on advocacy and the use of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD in advocacy. In Ghana, ninety-one national and branch leaders of the GBU benefitted from trainings on advocacy and on the CRPD and undertook follow up advocacy activities in their localities. A significant outcome of the advocacy work is the expansion of access to tertiary education by blind and partially sighted people as a result of three tertiary institutions committing to enrol visually impaired students. In addition the CRPD was translated into two local languages and reproduced in Braille, audio and large print.

And in Namibia, capacity building activities in the form of training and follow up engagements with government were conducted. Twenty leaders from NFVI were trained as CRPD advocates. Out of these efforts, the Namibian Ministry of Disability Affairs agreed to coordinate training for Namibian parliamentarians on the CRPD and to also lobby with other arms of government for the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty.

In keeping with our strategic objective of influencing legislation, policy and practice within the African Union and its various power blocks for the benefit of blind and partially sighted persons, we participated in the NGO Forums and the Human Rights Book Fairs and attended the 56th and 57th Sessions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), in Banjul, the Gambia, in April and October respectively.

At the two NGO Forums, AFUB participated in two focus group discussions leading to the development of statements that were later submitted to the ACHPR. At one of the forums, AFUB was granted a panel session where we presented on the Marrakech Treaty and sensitised over 200 participants from 29 African countries. In addition, we availed over two hundred packages of information on the Marrakech treaty to the Human Rights Book Fair.

In the two sessions of the ACHPR, AFUB presented statements on the situation of blind and partially sighted people in Africa. These presentations led to the adoption by the ACHPR of Resolution 305 which urges the African Union and its blocks to make their work accessible to persons with disabilities. The Resolution further urges African Governments to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty.

Education for all visually impaired Persons (EFAVI) funded by ICEVI

Since 2013, the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment, ICEVI in Africa is in a partnership agreement with AFUB to assist in the implementation of the Union's strategic objective on education – to advance the cause for equal access to appropriate education for all visually impaired children, youth and adults so that they realize their full potential.

In the year 2015, ICEVI continued to support EFA-VI Campaigns in the nine focus countries in Africa, namely Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mozambique, Kenya, Malawi and Ghana. Several promotional, awareness, advocacy, capacity building and networking activities were undertaken at the regional level and in specific countries in order to achieve the priorities of the Campaign. In Kenya, Resource centres and libraries in Meru and Busia Counties were strengthened and forums by the Ministry of Education and Civil Society Organizations working in education were held on curriculum review and promotion of EFA respectively.

In Uganda the EFA-VI Campaign supported various national and international celebrations including Women International Day, White Cane Day and World Sight Day while in Rwanda sensitisation and awareness activities were conducted about EFA-VI and general inclusive education in several schools.

In Malawi, several meetings with various government officials took place to advocate for inclusive planning and budgeting. Adaptation and transcription of Maths and Science subject text books took place in Burkina Faso while Ghana held two Braille reading competitions.

A total of seven capacity building sessions were conducted targeting education officials, parents, teachers and the community on inclusive education and the EFA-VI Campaign. A total of one hundred and sixty four people – eighty-seven males and seventy-seven females - benefited.

In addition, networking and collaborative activities were undertaken. ICEVI engaged the Centre for Mathematics Science and Technology in Africa, CEMASTEVA, and the Global Campaign for Education, GCE and Civil Society Education Fund, CSEF Learning Event. Further networking and joint activities were conducted with Marrakech Advocacy Team in Africa, the CRPD Committee, the NGO Forum and 56th and 57th Sessions of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, ACHPR and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, IAPB.

During this period, the first ICEVI Centre of Expertise in Information Access was launched in Busia County, Kenya. Likewise, the Resolution on Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities by the ACHPR was adopted during the Commission's 18th Extraordinary Session.

ICEVI was a key partner in the planning and hosting of the 6th Africa Forum and utilised the opportunity to build more partnerships and increase its visibility. Several Executive Committee meetings were held in London, Pretoria and Kampala.

Despite the achievements of the year, a number of shortcomings were encountered. Key among these is acquisition of data. It has been a challenge obtaining numbers from countries on enrolment, drop out, retention and transition rates. Most countries do not have data management systems or such existing ones do not desegregate data based on disability and disability types. Such data is important in subsequent policy development and future programming.

ICEVI in Africa is convinced that our quest and effort to increase educational achievement for learners with visual impairment is being achieved. Our profile has tremendously been raised and we have greatly contributed to the gradual improvement in numeracy and literacy rates of

learners with visual impairment. With the advent of Sustainable Development Goal four – Inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning - with its particular targets and indicators, in 2016 and beyond, we and our collaborators will be guided by the Goal ‘to achieve Inclusive and quality education for all (persons with visual impairment in Africa) and promote (their) lifelong learning.’

Africa Marrakesh Treaty Campaign

The Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate Access to Published Works by Visually Impaired Persons and Persons with Print Disabilities is a treaty that was signed in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 27th June 2013. The treaty focuses on copyright exceptions to facilitate the creation of accessible versions of books and other copyrighted works. The treaty will come into force once twenty countries have ratified it.

The World Blind Union, WBU through the Open Society Foundation (OSF) allocated funds to the African Union of the Blind, AFUB for the African Marrakesh Treaty campaign. A team was set up comprising of a Technical advisor from WBU, some members of AFUB staff, ICEVI Africa and the AFUB President to roll out the African Campaign. Mauritania and Morocco in North Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Cape Verde in West Africa, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa, Cameroon and Congo Brazzaville in Central Africa, South Africa, Lesotho Zimbabwe, Mozambique in Southern Africa were selected as the target countries for the campaign.

Three objectives were identified according to the action plan for the first phase of the campaign, namely to build AFUB’s internal capacity by producing and sharing accessible literature on the campaign, establish right to read Alliances in the target countries; and support some member organisations to hold stakeholders’ meetings. These objectives were achieved to the extent that AFUB toolkit on the Marrakesh treaty as well as a training module which was used to train AFUB staff and Board were developed. A Drop Box account and CDs with resource materials on the campaign were made accessible to AFUB members.

AFUB Board of Officers and their deputies were coached on how to set up right to read structures for ratification of the treaty in their member countries. In addition, Kenya, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Cameroon received funding from the campaign to set up Right to Read coalitions, workshops and advocacy initiatives.

The Campaign team also participated in several meetings where they made presentations on the Marrakesh Treaty. Likewise, the team assisted South Africa and Nigeria in submitting language for amendment to their Copyright Act and accession to the Marrakesh Treaty.

At the end of the first phase, only thirteen countries have ratified the treaty and only one African country is among the number; Mali was the first African country to ratify the treaty and Morocco and Liberia have indicated that the treaty is ratified and needs to be signed by the Head of state and to be deposited at WIPO. Africa still lags behind in the number of ratifications achieved due to numerous challenges encountered.

The lack of knowledge on the Marrakesh Treaty by blind and partially sighted persons coupled with the lack of financial support needed to set up Right to Read campaigns as well as changes in political leadership makes ratification difficult to achieve. Furthermore, member countries and African Governments need to be assisted with drafting appropriate language for amendments of their National Copyright Acts and ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty at National level. The

setting up of a network of African Libraries and projects for cross border exchange of accessible books must also be considered.

So as to accelerate ratification, domestication/Implementation of the Treaty, Africa needs to develop the second phase of the Africa Marrakesh Treaty Campaign.

We are grateful to WBU, Open Society foundation and other funding and developmental partners, the Technical Advisor to the Africa Marrakesh Treaty Campaign, ICEVI Africa and to the AFUB Board and staff for making this campaign possible.

Strengthening of Portuguese and Spanish-Speaking Member Organisations of AFUB

Since 2011, AFUB has been in partnership with the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted, NABP towards the achievement of AFUB's objective of Establishing, strengthening and developing national associations of the blind and partially sighted persons. The overall goal of this partnership is to strengthen the Portuguese and Spanish speaking member organizations of AFUB to enable them improve their advocacy work towards influencing their national governments and become more active members and representatives of AFUB.

In 2015, the partnership entered into a one-year extension focusing on the same six beneficiaries, namely; Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome. AFUB worked with the national associations of the blind in these countries to improve on their capacity.

In Equatorial Guinea, AFUB supported the development of a new strategic plan for the national association of the blind (ONCIGE). This process involved a wide range of stakeholders of ONCIGE and included a strategic planning workshop in May which was attended by AFUB staff.

In Guinea Bissau, AFUB undertook capacity building activities for the national association of the blind in the country, AGRICE on the use of the CRPD as a tool for advocacy. The activities included a workshop on knowledge sharing and skills development on how the CRPD can be used to engage with government and other service providers and decision-makers. Guinea Bissau is one of the few countries in Africa that have ratified the CRPD.

And in Angola, AFUB facilitated strengthening of the capacity of the national association of the blind, ANCAA, towards campaigning for the ratification of the Marrakesh treaty. A workshop to sensitize members of ANCAA as well as other stakeholders was convened. A Right to Read Campaign group was also established.

In keeping with AFUB's strategic objective of influencing legislation, policy and practice within the African Union and its various power blocks for the benefit of blind and partially sighted persons, we participated in the NGO Forums and the Human Rights Book Fairs and attended the 56th and 57th Sessions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), in Banjul, the Gambia, in April and October respectively.

At the 6th Africa Forum held in Kampala, Uganda in October, we shared the progress and successes of the AFUB and NABP partnership with our member organizations and other participants during a leadership seminar on work and employment opportunities attended by all NABP partners.

Through our partnership with the NABP, we managed to make great strides towards strengthening our governance, management and administrative processes. Through the support of the NABP to the AFUB Secretariat in 2015, we were able to prepare for and convene the 8th AFUB General Assembly. The support from the NABP further included sponsorship to the Africa Forum and the General Assembly for participants and delegates from Lusophone countries.

In addition to the General Assembly, through the support of the NABP, AFUB was able to hold three meetings of the Board, one in March and two during the Africa Forum, as well as assemblies of the Women and the Youth Departments.

Through the administrative support provided by the NABP, we were able, during the year, to meet our administrative obligations, including payment of personnel, utilities and communication as well as other secretariat overheads.

AFUB Solidarity Trust Fund, ASTF

The AFUB Solidarity Trust Fund, ASTF is an initiative of the European Blind Union (EBU) in conjunction with the African Union of the Blind (AFUB) for the purpose of supporting economic empowerment projects within AFUB member organisations for the benefit of blind and partially sighted persons at grassroots level. In March 2013, during AFUB board meeting, this fund was revived and a new board of trustees voted in. Applications were received from AFUB member countries at the close of 2013. In 2014 three countries namely the Gambia (Gambia Organisation of the Visually Impaired, GOVI), Kenya (Kenya Union of the Blind, KUB) and Lesotho (Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired Persons, LNLVIP) were selected as beneficiaries of ASTF.

In 2015, work began and The Kenya Union of the Blind, KUB started implementing a Pig project in Busia, Kenya.

A site for the project was allocated within the KUB Busia office backyard.

The Gambia Union of the Blind, GOVI on the other hand chose to implement Beekeeping and Cashew Farm project in the village of Bwiam.

The Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired, LNLVIP is implementing a poultry and piggery project with a total of four beneficiaries for a start and the project is progressing well though not without challenges.

Organisational Development

Through our engagements with our development partners, we managed to make great strides towards strengthening our governance, management and administrative processes. Through the support of our partners to the AFUB Secretariat, we were able to prepare for and convene the 8th General Assembly. The support from the partners further included sponsorship to the Africa Forum and the General Assembly for participants and delegates from a number of member countries.

In addition to the General Assembly, through the support of the development partners, AFUB was able to hold three meetings of the Board, one in March and two during the Africa Forum, as well as assemblies of the Women and the Youth Departments, both of which adopted plans of action for the next four years and conducted their elections.

Furthermore, the support of our partners allowed us to hold two staff retreats in 2015 which aided in completion of HR policy, financial policy, development of a membership policy, as well as a devolution policy, streamlining of AFUB staff job descriptions and development of project model for AFUB projects

Through the administrative support provided by our noble partners, we were able, during the year, to meet our administrative obligations, including payment of personnel, utilities and communication as well as other secretariat overheads. In addition, we managed to procure much needed computer equipment to assist in the operations of the organisation.

In addition, through the support of the development partners, a number of AFUB Board and staff members, as well as representatives of AFUB national members, attended the 6th Africa Forum where they interacted with 400 other participants. The Africa Forum was a great learning opportunity for AFUB.

During the AFUB board meeting in March 2013, a fundraising workshop took place out of which a fundraising strategy was developed. This strategy highlighted ways of generating financial resources to ensure long term operation of the Union. In 2015, the Union put measures in place to reduce its dependency on partners' funding. AFUB organised a Fundraising Sustainability workshop on 6th October 2015. This was due to the fact that, the Union's financial resources have been declining gradually over the years and there was need, therefore, to establish long term sustainability measures.

We thank our partners for their support in 2015 which saw us strengthen our governance, management and administrative processes.

Our finances

The following is a summary of our financial position for 2015. Please see our audited financial statements for detailed information.

Sources of Revenue

Grants	90.61%
Membership fees	1.36%
Other revenue	7.99%
Bank interest	0.04%

Use of funds

Program cost	54.05%
Administration costs	32.53%
Governance cost	11.63%
Research Monitoring and Development	1.23%
Capital cost	0.55%

Challenges

Despite the achievements and successes of the year, AFUB faced a number of challenges during the year, the greatest of which was lack of sufficient financial resources to sustain the organisation in the coming years.

The conclusion of ongoing funding partnerships coupled with the inability to enter into new funding agreements has significantly reduced AFUB's restricted revenues

The Union also suffered a significant financial setback through exchange fluctuation, which adversely affected some of the work planned for the year. This particularly affected the work within the countries.

A huge continental mandate versus a reality of meagre resources contributes to a very limited capacity of AFUB to meet the overwhelming needs of the membership. In addition, lack of an appropriate communication mechanism makes information flow between the secretariat and national member organisations and among member organisations themselves difficult

Future plans

AFUB plans to expand and diversify its resource base by developing an AFUB Financial Sustainability Plan, Building funding relationships with new development partners and strengthening collection of membership dues.

In order to strengthen operational and management systems within the AFUB Secretariat, AFUB will develop an interactive electronic information management system for effective management of information. AFUB will also embark on developing a new strategic plan to guide the Union work for 2017 to 2019. Further AFUB will recruit an Executive Director to head the secretariat.

So as to enhance AFUB's profile and visibility at regional and international levels, AFUB will develop cost-effective medium of communication for AFUB tele-meetings; Review and revise content on AFUB website; and Develop an AFUB Communication Policy

Overall, we are pleased but not yet satisfied with the progress and the milestones we've reached so far, and we cannot remain complacent, work has to continue.

If 2015 teaches us one overarching lesson, it is that if all is done together with the concerted effort of our membership, development partners and stakeholders as well as our team of dedicated staff and board of officers to be the best at what we do, this will carry us to greater gains ahead.

Even with the great challenges faced during the year 2015, now more than ever AFUB needs to push forward its vision of a continent where blind and partially sighted persons enjoy equal rights, social inclusion and full participation in development remains alive.

Acknowledgment

AFUB acknowledges the support of its development partners including but not limited to: Norwegian Association of the Blind (NABP), Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired (SRF), International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), World

Blind Union (WBU), Institutional Development Programme (IDP), Danish Association of the Blind (DAB), European Blind Union (EBU), Francophone Blind Union (FBU), Sightsavers and Abilis Foundation whose support has made delivery of our advocacy and coordinative roles in Africa a success.

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