



**AFRICAN UNION OF THE BLIND
UNION AFRICAINE DES AVEUGLES**

Report

**Strengthening the Capacity of Portuguese and Spanish
Member Organisations of AFUB**

Period

January to June 2017

I.0. INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, AFUB has been in partnership with the Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted, NABP working 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 organisations of AFUB to enable them improve their advocacy work towards influencing their national governments and become more active members and representatives of AFUB. This goal is to be achieved through technical and financial support to six national member organizations and consists of workshops, seminars, meetings, trainings, exchange visits as well as other capacity and strategy development activities.

In 2016, the partnership entered into a four-year phase two of the project focusing on the same six beneficiaries, namely; Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome. AFUB works with the national associations of the blind in these countries to improve on their capacities.

2017 marks the second year of the second phase of the four-year project.

This report covers the period January to June 2017. It begins with a short summary of an international training workshop for blind and partially sighted women and youth that took place in Praia Cape Verde aimed at improving governance and making women and youth more active in organisations of blind and partially sighted persons in the target countries.

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, this report goes on to give a summary sum of AFUB's engagement sessions with the African Union, AU through the participation of AFUB officials in various AU meetings.

AFUB appreciates the support of the Norwegian Association of the Blind, NABP which has made possible the successful rolling out of the project on strengthening the capacity of Portuguese and Spanish speaking member organisations of AFUB, and by and large contributing to the delivery of our advocacy and coordinative role in Africa.

2.0. ACTIVITIES

2.1. Training workshop in Praia, Cape Verde

From 20th to 24th May 2017, the Association of the Blind in Cape Verde, ADEVIC hosted an international training workshop for blind and partially sighted women and youth on policies, leadership, creation and strengthening of networks and/or committees for women and youth in and possibly among the lusophone countries. The workshop brought together 26 members both male and female from different organisations of the blind and partially sighted and was facilitated by AFUB Program Officer. The main objective of the workshop was empowering women and youth to have knowledge about how to work and be an active member of an association of BPS and advocate for development of by-laws for women and youth committees

aiming to increase their participation in the all lusophone associations of blind and partially sighted persons.

The Praia training workshop made recommendations on the best strategies to advocate for the effective participation of women and young people within their organization and society. These strategies include:

For the youth:

- i) Encouraging the creation of by-laws for youth committees
- ii) Division of tasks within the committees of young blinds
- iii) Training including advocacy and lobbying on the human rights
- iv) Leadership identification; inclusive planning; decentralization of power and functions.
- v) To raise awareness and influence local and national community actors on the problem of young people with visual impairments
- vi) To use and disseminate national and international policies about the blind youth
- vii) To publicize the activities carried out by blind youth through social media, radio and TV stations.
- viii) Involvement of the family to raise awareness and eliminate over protection of young people with visual impairments
- ix) To advocate with the government the possibility of introducing in the basic school curriculum subject link to especial education needs focusing on the young blinds
- x) Encouraging governments on the creation of disability desks in public institutions with a view to solving the problems faced by young blinds.

For the women

- i) Encourage the creation of internal regulations for the committees of women with visual impairments in all associations.
- ii) Training and sensitization for women with visual impairments in the associations and communities in matters of sexual education, autonomy, self-esteem, information and communication technologies.
- iii) Leadership training for blind women in the associations and communities.
- iv) Promotion of periodic meetings among women members of associations in partnership with communities, for example, dialog with tea, sport and leisure activities of daily life
- v) Advocacy and lobbying governments on the policies of associations in partnership with communities for visually impaired women.
- vi) Involvement of families of visually impaired people in the associations and communities.
- vii) Decentralization of power and functions within the women committees.
- viii) To advocate for the sexual and reproductive health of blind women.
- ix) To disseminate activities of blind women through social media, local radio stations and TV stations.
- x) To influence local and international partners to support visits for exchange information and experiences among blind women committees.

As a result of the workshop the organisations committed to establishing youth and women's committees. ACAMO in Mozambique reported that they revised their by-laws to include good governance requirements and ensure full participation of women and youth in the association. These revised by-laws will be adopted in September at their next board meeting.

ANCAA committed to implement Praia recommendations and set up a youth committee in their next strategic period.

ACASTEP in S. Tome & Principe and ONCIGE in Equatorial Guinea confirmed that they would like to use Praia recommendations and by-laws from AGRICE in Guinea Bissau to get inspiration to produce their own by-laws by 2019.

As a key deliverable, a document detailing Praia recommendations will be developed to include guidelines on how to advocate for full participation of women and youth in Associations of blind and partially sighted persons in Portuguese and Spanish speaking member countries of AFUB.

This training workshop constitutes a step towards realising AFUB's strategic objective of working with national member organisations to strengthen their governance, management and operational capacity to effectively deliver on their programs.

2.2. Participation in AU meetings

In keeping with AFUB's strategic objective of increasing our engagement with the African Union to prioritize issues of blind and partially sighted persons in the agenda of African governments, from 24th to 28th April, AFUB attended the Second Meeting of the Specialised Technical Committee (STC) on Social Development, Labour and Employment in Algiers Algeria.

Social protection for older persons was discussed as one of the issues on the agenda and it was said that Social protection for this category of persons on the continent should be intensified as their numbers are growing rapidly and they play a critical role in social and economic development; they also shoulder a heavy burden regarding care giving to family members.

Social and economic inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, was an agenda that was debated and persons with disabilities have to be encouraged to use their abilities and talents so as to contribute in harnessing the demographic dividend. The practice of early marriage for girls is a practice that needs to be stopped as it impedes the girl from completing their education and as a result they are not able to contribute in increasing the demographic dividend.

Labour and Employment is pertinent to economic development on the continent. With the growing numbers of young people on the continent entering the informal sector, skills training and education to match the demands of the labour market, alongside productivity improvement, have become critical not only to transform the informal sector into the formal sector. Furthermore, labour rights need to be realized to attract trade and investment to the continent. Expanding social security and social protection provisions for workers in the agricultural, informal and handicraft/ artisan sectors, among other sectors, will contribute greatly to social and economic development of African societies.

AFUB was also represented at the meeting organised by the African Union Commission (AUC) Department of Social Affairs. This meeting focused on the final revision of the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa. The AUC also decided that it would prioritise issues discussed at the STC including the Draft Protocol on Persons with disabilities; the signature and ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons; development of the Protocol on the Rights of Citizens to social Protection and Social Security as well as Agenda 2063; tackling child marriage from the root and progress on the AU Campaign to end Child Marriage; the five year priority

programme (2016 – 2020) on Employment, Poverty Eradication and inclusive development built on the relevant targets of Agenda 2063 and aligned with the UN Agenda 2030.

The Ministers' meeting on the AU Disability Architecture (AUDA) mandated the AUC to commence the development of the successor policy document to the Continental Plan of Action (2020 – 2030) on the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010 – 2019) for consideration by the STC-SDLE3 in 2019; Requested member states to establish a ministerial committee; and endorsed the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for onward submission to the STC on Justice and Legal Affairs.

AFUB Officials participated in the NGO Forums, the Human Rights Book Fairs and attended the 60th Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR), at the Palais de Congrès in Niamey, Niger, in May 2017. At the NGO Forums, AFUB participated in focus group discussions contributing to the development of statements that were later submitted to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, ACHPR. From the FGDs recommendations were made on rights to education, employment and health as well as political rights and other infrastructure, all these as relates to persons with disabilities.

3.0. CONCLUSION

The training workshops to build the advocacy capacity of the target countries as well various engagement sessions with the AU through participation in various meetings where policy issues affecting blind and partially sighted persons are shaped contribute towards achieving our constitutional objective of protect and promote the human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of blind and partially sighted people in Africa.

It is hoped that with the rolling out of this project until 2019, significant strides will have been made towards achieving this objective.