



UN Volunteer Pelgrina Shimanu Ndumba serves as a volunteer under the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities in her home country, Namibia.

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“Disability does not mean inability” – changing mindsets in Namibia

Pelgrina Shimanu Ndumba serves as a UN Volunteer Project Officer with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Namibia. She is visually impaired, and has been working on the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) project since July 2020. Pelgrina's assignment falls under the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities, and is funded by the Government of Sweden. A few months into her assignment, Pelgrina shares her experience.

“ Many factors motivated me to volunteer: I always wanted to be an agent of change to change mindsets towards persons with disabilities and disability-related matters. I further wanted to prove to the world –

“ through my actions and contributions – that disability does not mean inability. --Pelgrina Shimanu Ndumba, UN Volunteer with UNDP, serving under the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities

Namibia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Optional Protocol on 4 Dec 2007. The CRPD places emphasis on the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development. Namibia is a signatory to the 2030 Agenda and has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs place particular focus on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities including education, employment, participation and an increase in disability data.

In support of the SDGs, Namibia has a conducive legislative and policy environment, addressing the needs of vulnerable communities and persons with disabilities. However, a gap remains between policy and implementation, primarily as a result of a lack of information, public awareness and understanding. This in turn has led to stigma and discrimination, limited access to education, health care, employment opportunities and resources.

Through the UNPRPD, Namibia received funding of US \$400,000 from January 2019 to March 2022, earmarked for the project "Strengthening Integrated Systems to Promote Access to Services for Persons with Disabilities". The UNPRPD brings together UN entities, governments and organizations of persons with disabilities to effect systemic change to advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In Namibia, it has three outcomes:

1. Data collection systems are strengthened to inform planning, budget allocation and service delivery to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities, under the coordination of UNFPA.
2. Strengthened coordination and integrated mechanism in place including participation of organizations of persons with disabilities, under the coordination of UNDP.
3. Children with disabilities identified very early in life and referred for assessment and early interventions and access inclusive early childhood development programmes, under the coordination of UNICEF.

Under the second outcome, the project is mandated to strengthen and support organizations of persons with disabilities, service providers, Office of the President, Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, Disability Affairs, and other stakeholders by capacitating them to coordinate disability matters in Namibia.

Through my assignment, funded by the Government of Sweden, I am supporting this process, and have thus far written part of the national human development report and national disability forum.

“ Through volunteerism, I have been working with people from diverse backgrounds, and bringing my knowledge to the team from a disability perspective. I recommend volunteering 100 per cent; it will enable you to contribute to peace and development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. --Pelgrina Shimantu Ndumba

Pelgrina is a graduate of the University of Namibia, with an honours degree in adult education and community development. She has also completed courses as part of the Young African leadership initiative (business and entrepreneurship), and in financial literacy, customer care and capacity building. She served as a youth ambassador at the electoral commission (2019), was a student assistant at the University of Namibia Disability Unit (2018), and has interned at the Namibian Disability Council, Department of Research and Development (2016), and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Department of Primary Health Care (2014).

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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)