

If you would like to find out more about MDAC's work in Africa, or if you have suggestions for MDAC, please contact **Eyong Louis Mbuem**, MDAC Legal Officer at mdac@mdac.info.



The Mental Disability Advocacy Center is an international human rights organisation which advances the rights of children and adults with intellectual disabilities and psycho-social disabilities.

MDAC uses law to promote equality and social inclusion through strategic litigation, advocacy, capacity-building and research.

Address: Hercegprímás utca 11, H-1054 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: +36 1 413 2730 | Fax: +36 1 413 2739
Email: mdac@mdac.info | Website: www.mdac.info



**Prepared for the Third Conference of States Parties
to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
1-3 September 2010**

MDAC Africa Programme

Remaining firmly grounded in central and eastern Europe, MDAC is developing its programming in certain African States. It is identifying the specific needs and challenges that people with intellectual disabilities and psycho-social disabilities in Africa face in realizing their human rights. It is identifying NGO and academic partner organisations.

Eighty percent of the world's 650 million people with disabilities live in developing countries. The stigma of mental illness in Africa is immense. Such stigma manifests itself in different ways than in central and eastern Europe. Although family ties are stronger and there are fewer mental health and social care institutions, there is more poverty, sometimes harmful treatments are carried out by unregulated traditional healers, and people with psycho-social disabilities are feared as being possessed by the devil. Although the situation is different, international human rights norms are the same, and MDAC takes its lead from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which many African States have ratified.

By working in collaboration with local partners and governments in Africa, MDAC aims to contribute to fighting the stigma, poverty and discrimination that over eighty million persons with disabilities in Africa experience every day of their lives.

What is MDAC planning to do?

MDAC's work in all regions focuses on six priority human rights themes: the right to legal capacity, community living, integrity, inclusive education, access to justice and political participation. In 2010, MDAC carried out field mission to Uganda and Kenya and carried out a need assessment in order to develop programmes that are responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities in Africa.

The way which MDAC carries out its work is through strategic litigation, advocacy, capacity-building and research.

Strategic Litigation in Africa

MDAC engages in strategic litigation by working with local lawyers and NGOs to select specific cases and bring them before domestic and international courts. Strategic litigation is a powerful tool to promote equality and social inclusion. This will happen when amicable settlements are not possible. Strategic litigation seeks out cases which have the potential to force the implementation or change of a law, which could help more people than the individual complainant.

Advocacy in Africa

MDAC engages in both domestic and international advocacy. Domestic advocacy can flow from research and strategic litigation, and targets policy-makers and other influential stakeholders to persuade them to think or do something differently. MDAC also carry out international advocacy at the regional and global level and engages with UN treaty and charter bodies.

Capacity-Building in Africa

Strengthening advocacy skills and increasing knowledge about the CRPD and other human rights instruments will enable NGOs to advocate more effectively for the rights of persons with disabilities in Africa. MDAC works with self advocates, disabled people's organisations, human rights organisations, policy-makers, lawyers and judges to achieve this goal.

Research in Africa

MDAC utilises and carries out research on specific human rights issues that affect persons with intellectual disabilities and people with psycho-social disabilities. Research provides an evidence-base for advocacy and litigation. In August 2010, MDAC began to research the right to legal capacity in Kenya, and this research will run until 2011. MDAC is in addition developing plans to investigate the interface between traditional/faith healing, mental health and human rights in particular African countries.

In realising these programmes and enhancing the rights of persons with disabilities in Africa, MDAC work closely with disabled people's organisations, human rights organisations national human rights structures and academics.