



#DisabilityRightsAfrica21
#EmpowerSexualMinorities
#DisabledNotAsexual

Invitation

9th ANNUAL DISABILITY RIGHTS CONFERENCE (ONLINE)

‘Realising the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the African Region: The Promise of Disability Rights Treaties’

16 – 17 November 2021

Disability Rights Unit
Centre for Human Rights
Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria
www.chr.up.ac.za



Centre for Human Rights
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

INVITATION: 9th Annual Disability Rights Conference

‘Realising the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the African Region: The Promise of Disability Rights Treaties’

The Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, cordially invites you to its **9th Annual Disability Rights Conference on 16 and 17 November 2021** which will take place virtually via Zoom.

The theme of this year’s conference is “Realising the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the African Region: The Promise of Disability Rights Treaties”

Conference details

Date Tuesday 16 November and Wednesday 17 November 2021
Venue Online (Zoom)
Enquiries Please send an email to Ms Sabeeha Majid at sabeeha.majid@up.ac.za

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

Please note:

- *No registration fee is charged but pre-registration is compulsory.*
- *Kindly confirm your attendance by 5 November 2021 by completing the online registration form*
- *The conference proceedings will be recorded and live streamed on the Centre’s **YouTube channel***

About the Conference

The conference acts as a platform for convening dialogue amongst key stakeholders on disability rights, and to spotlight the pertinent and emerging disability rights concerns in the African region. More information on previous editions of the conference can be found [here](#).

The aim of the conference is two-fold, (1) to critically interrogate the intersection between the sexual and reproductive choices and aspirations of persons with disabilities and prevailing normative regimes at the domestic, regional or sub-regional level, taking into account human rights treaties, especially the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa; and (2) to suggest remedial responses for addressing gaps and weaknesses in the fulfilment of the sexual and reproductive choices and aspirations of persons with disabilities.

Even in jurisdictions that aspire to be progressive and protective of human rights, there is a marked reluctance to positively affirm the sexual and reproductive autonomy of persons with disabilities. Many jurisdictions sit with laws, policies and practices that deny the very notion of sexual and reproductive rights or condone their violation on account of an embedded inclination to treat persons with disabilities as asexual or even hypersexual, incapable of deciding about sexual relationships and unfit for reproduction and parenthood. Discrimination against the sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities is more pronounced in respect of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Clearly, the goal of protecting persons with disabilities from harm is not just desirable but also necessary. However, it is important to ensure that social institutions, including the family, care institutions, laws and policies and the courts strike an appropriate balance between protecting the individual and giving recognition to their sexual and reproductive desires and aspirations. Protective domestic regimes should not become oppressive prohibitory regimes that foreclose the exercise of sexual and reproductive choices as they, on the whole, presently do especially for some groups such as persons with intellectual disabilities. More importantly, such regimes are hardly tenable under the rights-based framework ushered in by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which has received wide ratification in the African region. This argument also applies to the framework under Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (African Disability Rights Protocol) that was adopted by the African Union in 2018 but awaits ratification.

The CRPD and the African Disability Rights Protocol contain several provisions that can be used to advance the respect, protection and, ultimately, fulfilment of sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities in the African region.

The conference seeks to bring together stakeholders interested in promoting the sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities, including persons with disabilities, scholars, social scientists, policymakers, lawyers, human rights defenders, carers and providers of sexual and reproductive health services. The prevailing prejudice against affirmation of sexual and reproductive autonomy in the African region is partly a result of ignorance through lack of intersectoral dialogue among stakeholders. Not enough is known publicly about the sexual and reproductive lifeworlds of persons with disabilities in the African region. The bulk of current research, published commentaries and activism on sexual and reproductive autonomy addresses the global north. There is a particular need to contextualise the experiences of the African region and bring them to the public domain for debate and exchange of ideas that speak to the locale rather than merely reproduce discourses from the global north.

