UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING DISSEMINATION OF THE FINDINGS OF “BRIDGING THE GAP”: DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA HELD ON MARCH 28, 2018, IN ROOM 401, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI TOWERS AT 10.00 A.M.
• Representatives from the key stakeholders:

• Department for International Development (DFID)

• United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

• United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

• World Bank

• Special Needs Education Directorate

• Ministry of Labour and Social Services

• Ministry of Health
• National Council for Population and Development (NCPD)

• Council of Governors

• Lenard Cheshire Disability, University College London

• Invited Guests

• Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!
I am pleased to be here and to listen to the findings of bridging the gap in disability and development in Kenya.

I am informed that an estimated over one billion people are living with some form of disability globally, this translates to about 15% of the world's population. Sub Saharan Africa, unfortunately bears
80% of the population of Persons living with Disabilities (PWDs).

A growing body of research now shows a strong correlation between poverty and disability: people who are poor are more likely to become disabled because of disproportionate levels of malnutrition, ill-health, poor living and working conditions. In addition, persons with disability experience
significant exclusion in accessing opportunities and services such as education, health, social protection and employment.

In Kenya, the National Population Census (KNBS, 2009), reports that 1.3 million (3.5%) out of 38 million are living with disability. A Kenya National Survey of Persons with Disabilities conducted in
2008 by the National Council for Population and Development found the prevalence to be about 4.6%.

Kenya adopted a National Disability Act in 2003 and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) in 2008. Since then there have been a number of milestones at the policy level and programmes to address disability. An example is the
National Disability Development Fund (NDDF) to increase employment, education, training and rehabilitation for Persons with Disability.

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) have been perceived as ‘different’ and in need of special attention and separate programmes. This thinking and separation while well meant, continues to reinforce the stigma attached to disability resulting in social exclusion.
We now know that what hinders the participation of PWDs in development is not their impairments, but cultural, social and physical barriers created by society through acts of omission or commission.

In Kenya, section 18 (i) of the Persons with Disabilities Act (2003) states: “No person or learning institution shall deny admission to a person with a disability to any course of study by reason only of
such disability, if the person has the ability to acquire substantial learning in that course.”

In accordance with this act, all government institutions and corporations are required to mainstream disability in their functions and operations. With this in mind, disability mainstreaming has become a key performance indicator in government systems.
In line with this, the University of Nairobi has developed a disability policy to guide the mainstreaming of disability in the University.

The College of Health Sciences has for example established a disability mainstreaming committee spearheaded by the School of Public Health, to cascade mainstreaming of disability within the University. The purpose of this committee is to
assess the friendliness of service points at the College of Health Sciences to persons with disabilities and make recommendations.

In their report, the disability mainstreaming committee of the College of Health Sciences highlight areas of improvement especially access to service points by persons with disabilities which
include; parking, lifts, ramps and access to buildings and social amenities.

The University of Nairobi provides that any new building that is being constructed has to take into consideration the needs of persons with disabilities.
Ladies and Gentlemen

As a training and research institution we are responsible for generation of new knowledge to inform interventions for the benefit of the community who are our clients. “Bridging the gap; disability and development” project therefore fits within the current environment where the University of Nairobi has a focus on research that is geared towards contributing to the achievement of
sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the country’s vision 2030.

I believe all the key stakeholders including disability Peoples organizations (DPOs), development partners, policy makers and implementers will find the results of this study informative and use the findings to spearhead the agenda for persons with disability.
With those few remarks, it is now my humble duty to officially declare this dissemination workshop open and wish you productive deliberations.

Thank you.

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AND
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