

Women Spaces Africa - Short Documentary on SHRH and disability in Kenya

Welcome, my name is Liliane Kifuti. I'm the co-founder of Women Spaces Africa, a feminist disability-led organization. We work to promote access to reproductive health services for girls and women with disabilities in Kenya.

And today, as we highlight the challenges that we go through, I would like to call upon different stakeholders to have intentional mind when programming, when funding. The challenges that you are facing as women with disability and as queer persons, there are a lot in Kenya. The first challenge that we face is stigmatization.

We as lesbian people, as a person with disability, as a sex worker, you get to find We face challenges when you're going to access the sexual and reproductive health rights service. You find that you're not given the medicine that you need. When it comes to health workers, girls and women with disabilities, the attitude is not so welcoming because there are those societal misconceptions about disabilities.

When they see you, they just think you don't have a right to access those services just because you have a disability. You find a person with a sexual disability, they see as a person who is not able to make informed decisions, like you're not able to make wise decisions. The first thing they do is just look at you and wonder, as a masculine representing woman, why do you want to do that? So we've already faced two things.

We've already faced stigmatization and we've already faced the attitude that comes from the doctors, from the pharmacy attendants. We get to find that at the end of the day, you will not acquire the condoms that you wanted. So even as trans men, they won't be given the services that they need.

We find out that at the end of the day, if they wanted the contraception pills or even just information about it, they won't be because they've already been judged from where they are. When I was getting married, my family thought that I was making the wrong decision of getting married because they were so concerned. What happens when I become sick? Or what happens when I'm in a crisis? Or what happens when I enter into a relapse? Will I be able to take care of my family? Will I be able to be a good mother? Will I be able to be a good wife? So you find the challenge that we face when it comes to decision making, that you are seen as a person who is not able to make decisions, informed decisions for that matter, because you are seen as a person who is not capable.

You are seen as a person who is incapable of taking care of children. I remember very well, when I was little, I got labour at around 10pm and I went to various hospitals and I was rejected just because I have cerebral palsy, that is, I'm a woman with disabilities. The other challenge is for the adolescents, girls.

They have a challenge. For example, they are not aware about the sex education. They have not learned about it, so they have inadequate information.

They don't know how to protect themselves. And some of them, they don't know how to use pants when they have their menstruation. And you also get to find a challenge when it comes to the heteronormative society.

You find that there are some norms that have been put in place that queer people shouldn't be in Kenya. Like right now as we are speaking, there's a lot that is happening in Kenya when it comes to religion and societal norms. We are facing a lot of fights, we are facing a lot of struggles.

You coming out as a person with disabilities and as a queer person in Kenya, right now it's like to call like a hot cake. You're either bashed, you're either beat, you're even killed. I once experienced that a few days ago.

I went to see someone. I was beaten thoroughly because of being a lesbian person. They didn't even want to know that I have a disability.

When you speak about religion, there are things, there are beliefs that they put that a family is made of male and a female, not a woman and a woman, not a man and a man. A baby is made through a man and a woman. We have the services, the HR services.

We have IVF. You can acquire that and have a baby. At the end of the day, it's a right to life and a right to give birth and a right to choose whoever you want to marry.

Thank you so much for listening to us. Those are our challenges, our realities, our day-to-day life. That is what we have to undergo through when we go to the health facilities.

And as a woman with disabilities, I know it is not possible for me to change my disabilities, but I know it is possible to change the attitude of health providers, to change the attitude of the stakeholders for me to be accommodated and for me to get services like every other person without having to undergo all those challenges. Thank you so much.