

# Spring 2024 Professional Fellow

**Name:** Clara Peter Maliwa  
**Country:** Tanzania  
**Job Title and Employer:** Project Officer, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lead  
Young & Alive Initiative  
**Project Title:** My Story, My Life

**Issue:** In Tanzania, people with disabilities, particularly girls and women, face a number of barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) services and accurate information. This is because of physical inaccessibility, communication barriers, lack of confidentiality, associated cost, mistreatment, and inadequate service delivery (UN Sexual and Reproductive Health Agency Tanzania, n.d.). In addition, they face stigma and attitudinal barriers perpetuated by healthcare workers about the social acceptability of women with disabilities to be sexually active and/or to have children (Mesiäislehto et al., 2021). The denial of these rights poses a threat to the well-being of women and hinders their full inclusion in all aspects of life. Clara, herself a mother, builds from her personal experience to address this issue.

**Project Objective:** Through her project, “My Story, My Life,” Clara aims to empower women with disabilities in Tanzania to realize their rights and make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive well-being. She plans to achieve this by leveraging a podcast platform to share women’s real-life stories and disseminate accurate SRHR information.

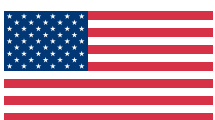
**Project Activities:** Clara will work with 15 women with disabilities, representing various compounding vulnerabilities, including those living in rural areas, to discuss and document their experiences, successes, and challenges in accessing SRHR services and information. She will actively involve them in co-creating solutions to these issues. To protect the anonymity of the women, Clara will use her storytelling expertise to develop scripts and create digital narratives. The stories will be featured in a weekly podcast aimed at initiating dialogues around the SRHR needs of people with disabilities and advocating for responsive policies to protect these rights.

Clara’s employer, the Young & Alive Initiative, a member organization of the National Family Planning Technical Working Group (NFPCIP), has agreed to support Clara in her efforts, allowing her to use their social media platforms and networks to distribute the podcast. Clara will monitor social media analytics to ensure her project reaches 250 individuals, predominantly women with disabilities, and gather feedback from listeners to understand the podcast’s impact. Additionally, Young & Alive has collected and vetted information on SRHR that will be shared with the stories on the podcast. This information is imperative to women with disabilities, who often turn to potentially unreliable sources, such as unverified web-based research or gossip.

## References:

Mesiäislehto, V., Katsui, H., & Sambaiga, R. (2021). Disparities in accessing sexual and reproductive health services at the intersection of disability and female adolescence in Tanzania. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(4), 1657. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33572337/>

United Nations Sexual and Reproductive Health Agency (UNFPA) Tanzania (n.d.). *How can women and young persons with disabilities realize their sexual and reproductive health and rights and their right to life free from violence in the United Republic of Tanzania?* (Policy Brief). Retrieved from: [https://tanzania.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/policy\\_brief.pdf](https://tanzania.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/policy_brief.pdf)



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