* **Title: The Rwandan approach of inclusion for people with disabilities: from being hidden and nameless to a community appreciating people’s diverse abilities**
* **Category: panel**
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* **Abstract:**

Ubumwe Community Center (UCC) is a non-governmental local organization founded with the mission of caring for people with disabilities, to enable them to access a place where people explore their common humanity. It is located in Gisenyi, in the North Western Province of Rwanda.

After a long time of marginalization and discrimination of persons with disabilities due to the lack of awareness and knowledge of parents’ and the community we started the UCC with the aim to build up their inclusion and their independent living. Developing skills (e.g. tailoring) enables people with disabilities not only to become economically independent and start their own businesses but also being empowered and proud of the skills gained. Caring for the special needs through medical assistance and therapy (e.g. physiotherapy) as well as offering inclusive education were crucial steps taken towards a community which appreciates people’s distinctiveness.

Inclusive education is rooted in the idea that children with and without disabilities learn and socialize together- both in a school dedicated to inclusive education but also in pilot schools cooperating with UCC. The impact of inclusiveness means empowerment for all children and the wider community. It encourages learning new forms of communication (e.g. braille).

The Community Based Living program offers children and adults with severe disabilities the opportunity to be well integrated in the community whilst being able to benefit from UCC`s services. It has a tremendous impact on an inclusive community which takes an affirmative rather than adverse view on disability.

Future plans include the establishment of an anthroposophical teacher training. Currently first steps towards the curriculum development are being taken. In the panel we would like to apply the World Café-method to present the UCC`s holistic approach but also to benefit from the delegates` vast experiences contributing towards the further development of UCC`s community.

* **Biography of presenters:**

Zacharie DUSINGIZIMANA

I am the co-founder and the Legal Representative of Ubumwe Community Center (UCC). Working with vulnerable people since 2000, in 2005 I founded the “UCC” especially for persons with disabilities. I have a bachelor’s degree in general management and an MBA with a specialization in project management.

Natascha HERMANN

Natascha is a lecturer at an Austrian university of applied sciences and working in a school of children in need of special care whilst completing her training as a Waldorf Teacher. She has international experience in health promotion and is supporting the establishment of an anthroposophical teacher training in Rwanda.