

Samuel Kabue, head of ecumenical network, advocates for people with disabilities by [Marcelo Schneider](#) in the [November 22, 2016](#) issue

Samuel Kabue believes in giving people chances. He was born during the “very, very hard” colonial days in Kenya and saw his hopes for life after national independence changed when he became blind at age 16.

“I am what I am because people gave me a chance to prove myself,” said Kabue, an ordained elder of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, who [leads the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network](#). He recently published a memoir, *From the Village to the World*.

In the 1990s he established a program for people with disabilities through the National Council for Churches of Kenya.

“At that time, they thought that was all I could do,” he said. Then “the general secretary recognized that my potential was beyond just doing disability work.”

He became director of advocacy for the NCCCK, including work with economic justice, peace and reconciliation, and youth.

He had faced many challenges up to that point.

“Before joining the university, I realized that I wanted to be a church minister,” he said. “At that time, in my church, there was quite a hierarchy of authority that stated that if you wanted to join the theological institution, you should be recommended by your local church.”

But the local body beyond his congregation, which was next in the chain to forward his name, didn’t do so, without giving Kabue reasons, so he couldn’t pursue studies in theology at that point. He received a bachelor’s degree in education and got a government job as a teacher.

More than a decade later, in 1989, he received a scholarship from the World Council of Churches for people with disabilities to study in England. After that he joined the ecumenical movement.

In 2012 he finally received his theology degree, having studied for a master's at St. Paul's University, in Limuru, Kenya.

“One of the biggest problems of people with disability is that they are rarely given a chance to prove what they can be,” he said. “You cannot give people a chance unless they are included and you can discover their potential.” —World Council of Churches