Women and girls with disabilities constitute at least 19% of the world's female population.[1] The majority of these women and girls face double discrimination based on their gender and disability. Poverty, age, ethnicity, and lack of access to education and health care also contribute to their marginalization in society. Ensuring the **inclusion of disability in gender policies and programs will greatly reduced the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse of ALL women and girls with disabilities** who continue to be at risk, as well as prevent discrimination in access to services.

Article 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes the link between disability and gender and is, therefore, obligated to protect and promote the equal rights of women and girls with disabilities, including their right to be protected from violence.[2] Furthermore the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995)[3] and the Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030 Framework recognize the obligations of state parties to address the rights of all women, specifically mentioning the marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities to not be left behind.[4]

QUICK FACTS

- **19.2%** of the global female population is estimated to have a disability (World Bank/ WHO 2011)

- Women with disabilities are **twice as likely**, and girls with disabilities are **up to 4 times more likely**, to be affected by violence than their peers without disabilities. (The Lancet 2012, UNICEF 2013)[5]

- Household data in Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe shows that up to **18%** of children of 5 years or older without a disability had never attended school, compared up to **39%** of children with a disability had never attended (WHO/ World Bank 2011)

- Only **59%** of women with a disability participated in the Cambodian national elections compared with **99%** without a disability. (UNDP/ HI/ COMFREL in 2010)[6]

GAPS IN POLITICAL AND PROGRAM RESPONSES

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However, international and regional documents do not adequately promote the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities, nor is there systematic mainstreaming of disability in gender-based violence and women's empowerment programming. The majority of gender-based violence responses, empowerment initiatives and global policies, are designed for women without disabilities.

Where leadership programs for women with disabilities do exist, they are often separate from mainstream programs. As a result few women with disabilities are in positions of political leadership to engage with mainstream programs and thus the female voice is seldom heard in global dialogues on disability.

Over the years Handicap International has been engaged in economic empowerment programs, ensuring that also women with disabilities, equal to men, enjoy opportunities to enhance their income. In Cambodia, for instance a program financed by the European Union offered opportunities to women with disabilities to enhance the income of the household through upscaling of small scale businesses. The effect has been that women and their households are able to reduce the poverty they find themselves in by contributing to the family through small scale income activities.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Human rights provisions: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, Article 6) | Convention on the Elimination of all Violence against Women (CEDAW) | Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

International Frameworks: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) | 4th World Conference on Women for inclusive and equitable education for all now enshrined in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goal 2015-2030 in New York.

References [1] World Report on Disability | [2] UN Convention on the Right of People with Disabilities | [3] Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, 1995 | [4] Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030 | [5] Addressing violence against women: a call to action, The Lancet, 2012 | [6] UNDP, HI, COMFREL Research Report. Political participation of women with disabilities in Cambodia 2010.

WHAT CAN DEVELOPMENT ACTORS DO?

Development agencies

- Gender and disability audits need to be undertaken, ideally in partnership with women and men of diverse backgrounds, to identify gaps and facilitate equality and equity in accessing services;
- Undertake disability and gender inclusive action plans and/or strategies to address gaps systematically;
- Ensure human resources offer disability **and** gender equality training as well as sensitization and capacity development by sector;
- Collect data disaggregation by sex, disability, age and other factors.

Donors

- Call for INGOs and other development and humanitarian actor's project/program proposals to be disability and gender inclusive with gender and disability markers giving particular attention to the key sectors of **governance and legal reform** such as education (including girls education); social, child and gender based violence protection; health and economic programmes;
- Ensure that bilateral and multilateral aid receivers' report on the benefits for, and inclusion of, women and girls with disabilities as well as men in addressing gender and disability inequalities;
- Ensure human rights bi- and multilateral dialogues are disability and gender sensitive, including diplomatic efforts.

States

- Ensure Beijing, CEDAW, CRPD **and** CRC State reports and administrative national data collections are disaggregated by gender and disability and reporting on the situation of all women and men, girls and boys equally, with a specific focus of violence and cruel behaviour;
- Carry out reviews and/or development of national gender or disability policies, budgets, and/or action plans take into consideration gender and disability vice-versa, systematically, and consult with women with disabilities;
- Ensure identified disability and gender gaps are addressed with sufficient resources allocated in line with respective legal obligations with particular attention to health, education, employment and violence prevention and response programs.

With development actors working together to end poverty and address humanitarian crisis better through the sustainable Development Goals and the World Humanitarian Summit, opportunities now exist for humanitarian and development agencies to adopt a **4 step approach** to gender and disability responses:

1. Carry out gender and diversity analysis to address disability and gender gaps in policies and programs.

2. Develop a new, more inclusive, policy framework through their programming and consult women and girls with disabilities in decision making.

3. Engage with women and girls with disabilities to implement these new policy frameworks, collect data on nature, scope and extent of the intersectionality of gender, disability and other factors, through research, surveys and monitoring and evaluation systems.

4. Engage men and boys in the prevention of, and response to, gender based violence, including those with disabilities so as to change social norms related to the acceptability of violence against women and children.

The Making it Work (MIW) initiative on "disability and gender inclusion" started by Handicap International works with a Global Technical Advisory Committee, who have identified and documented 10 Good Practices in 9 countries on how to end gender and disability based violence, abuse and exploitation. The TAC, all of whom have a disability, are supported to network with, and learn from each other and promote their good practices for a change of policies and programming towards gender and disability inclusion at global level.

For instance in Fiji a multi-stakeholder process between State and non-State gender and disability actors resulted in the production of a toolkit on ending gender based violence in order to help build working relationships with gender actors. The process was led by the Gender Officer of a Disabled People's Organization and supported by UN WOMEN and the Australian Government.

Toolkit on Eliminating Violence Against Women And Girls With Disabilities In Fiji

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HOW TO MEASURE PROGRESS?

Access to services: Women and girls with disabilities access key sectors (eg, education, health, protection) equally
- Women and girls with disabilities participate in gender based violence programming, economic empowerment, rural livelihoods, and civil society programs • Women with disabilities in leadership positions in civil society organizations.

Legislation and policies: National gender policies and action plans include women and girls with disabilities and mainstream disability along with gender • Inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in national Disability Rights and Inclusion Laws and national Constitutions • Women and girls with disabilities engaged in political processes.