



Interessenvertretung Selbstbestimmt  
Leben in Deutschland



## Equality and Empowerment of Women with Disabilities

### Statement for the Open Working Group Session on Promoting Equality, including Social Equity, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – 5-6 February 2014

In this position paper, German Development and Disabled Persons' Organizations stress the need for equality and empowerment of women with disabilities.

Women with disabilities were not included in the Millennium Declaration and absent from the MDGs. From around one billion persons with a disability more than 500 million are disabled women. In most OECD states, women are more often disabled than men and the simple fact of being a woman represents a higher risk of having a disability. The social sex (gender) is one of the most important markers of difference in social systems. Disabled women face multiple discrimination: They are discriminated against e.g. due to their disability and gender. Their reproductive rights, their rights of being protected from violence and abuse, their right to education, to health services and to work and employment are violated every day in every country.

**The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), article 6 - Women with disabilities** requires that states parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Disability mainstreaming:** As early as in the preamble, the Convention emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of all relevant strategies of sustainable development. In article 4 (General obligations), the states parties commit themselves *"to take into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes"*.

## Key recommendations

1. The development, advancement and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities should be a cross-cutting theme across all goals of the post-2015 global development framework.
2. Ensure that women with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life and like this participate in decision making.
3. Education policies and programmes with the aim to include disabled women and girls must be included in a post-2015 global development framework.
4. Women with disabilities need to be included into the labour market. They need to have the same chances as their non disabled peers in order to avoid living in poverty.
5. As disabled women have the right to relationships and motherhood, effective and appropriate measures have to be adopted to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices and to promote awareness of their capabilities and contributions to society.
6. Health services and health related rehabilitation must be accessible for disabled women. Health services have to have the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care and programmes as provided to other persons, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health and population-based public health programmes.
7. All women, girls and boys with disabilities have to be protected from violence, sexual violence and abuse. They need effective women- and child-focused legislation and policies, to ensure that instances of exploitation, violence and abuse are identified, investigated and, where appropriate, prosecuted.

## Key facts around women with disability and empowerment

Ensuring disabled men's and women's equal right to participate in all economic, social and cultural rights is a mandatory and immediate obligation of the states. It is therefore crucial that disability-inclusive policies are included in all policies and programmes so as to ensure the full and equal fulfilment of human rights of women and men with a disability.

It is important to respect the gender equality principle by refraining from discrimination, analyzing all legislation, policies and programmes with regard to discriminating effects that they might have on women or men, and ensuring that discrimination is not continued (gender mainstreaming).

It is important to protect the gender equality principle by combating prejudices, overcoming cultural, traditional, religious and other customs that aggravate gender inequalities, establishing norms with regard to the gender equality principle within or outside constitutional law, prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of a person's gender in both the public and private sector.

- **Education:** UNESCO and other international organizations estimate that globally speaking, disabled women's literacy rate is at 1%, while the overall literacy rate among disabled people is at 3%. Statistics show that fewer women with disabilities complete vocational trainings than men with

disabilities.

- **Work and Employment:** On a world-wide scale, women with disabilities are excluded from the paid labour market by 75%, and by up to 100% in developing countries, even though the majority of them perform household work such as cooking, washing and taking care of children and relatives. Disabled men's chances on the labour market are twice as high as disabled women's chances.
- **Family rights:** In industrialized countries as well as in developing countries, neither partnership nor motherhood are realistic perspectives in disabled women's lives, since society does not think that they are capable of fulfilling these roles and therefore does not allow it. Moreover, due to the fear that disabled women pass their disability on to their children, women with disabilities are exposed to the risk of being sterilized on the initiative of governments or their relatives. Furthermore, it is difficult for disabled women to find suitable accommodation and services. The percentage of disabled women living in institutions is higher than among disabled men.
- **Health:** Disabled women from all age groups face difficulties when it comes to accessing health services. Women with disabilities are exposed to a higher risk of being infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. This is partly due to the lack of sex education. The percentage of women and girls affected by depression is twice as high as the percentage among boys and men.
- **Violence and abuse:** According to the United Nations, women and girls with disabilities suffer from sexual violence twice as often as girls and women without disabilities. According to the EU, women with disabilities' risk of experiencing sexual violence is as much as three times higher than the risk faced by women without disabilities. The danger is particularly high among girls and women who are living in institutions.

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