

PPP



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The 3P's for inclusion of women with disabilities
The Personal, The Political, The Policy

I am a woman with an intellectual disability. I went to school and college, I am a self advocate and a trainer of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, I want to say find your dream and realise it within your community, as this is the right place to live in your life.

Mia Farah, Lebanon

I think it's important to look at intersectionality of identity. I believe we focus too much on just one ... in fact we are never just one thing. I identify myself as not just a woman, I identify myself as a woman who is black, from the south and Deaf.

Maegan Shanks, US

I don't always want to be labelled 'oh that's the woman with a psychosocial disability' - I am a mum, a wife, a dog lover, a countryside lover.

Diane Kingston, UK

The Personal

We are a diverse group

The disabled women's movement is incredibly diverse. Women, men, girls and boys with disabilities have always faced the problem that people perceive us as the same, without any differentiation on the grounds of gender or other identifying characteristics. Women with disabilities are a diverse group. We are indigenous women, we are young girls, and older women. We are lesbian, bi-sexual transgender women and intersex persons. We are refugee women, migrant, asylum seeker and internally displaced women, and women in detention (hospitals, residential institutions, juvenile or correctional facilities, prisons). We are women who come from all walks of life, we are women who live in poverty. We are women from different ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds and we are women with different types of disabilities.

Our capabilities are limited because of disability and gender inequality

The potential for women and girls with disabilities to have the choice of how we live our lives is limited by discrimination. As disability is a source of stigma in many cultures, many of us are hidden away by our families. The stigma is reinforced by stereotypical views that portray women and girls with disabilities as sick, helpless, childlike, dependent, incompetent and asexual, greatly limiting our options and opportunities in life.

In many countries, outdated laws and policies continue to limit our potential. Discriminatory laws deny many of us our basic rights of having equal recognition before the law and also limits our access to justice. As women with disabilities, we can often find ourselves facing legal challenges in areas such as custody of our children and managing our own financial resources. Redress for women with disabilities who are victims of violence and abuse is particularly problematic for those of us who have psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, as the 'credible witness' argument is used against us and we are denied access to justice. Women who are Deaf also face similar issues of being perceived as not being capable to speak for ourselves. In addition if a Deaf woman has someone supporting them give evidence,



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the court can question the role of the support person. Negative attitudes like these and linguistic barriers create difficulties for of us who are Deaf women, and those of us with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

Furthermore, the combination of these outdated laws and policies and negative attitudes and prejudice can deny us our economic, social, cultural and civil and political rights, and can cause barriers to our equal participation. This occurs with education, which is recognised as one of the main routes out of poverty. Women and girls with disabilities are recognised as having less access to education and also lower outcomes from education. This is not only happening in low middle income countries but also countries with high income. It also occurs with employment and financial stability. As women with disabilities, we have lower employment rates than men with disabilities and women without disabilities. Gaining access to credit is also a difficulty for many of us.

Healthcare including sexual and reproductive health care is crucial for all women, yet many of us have less access to healthcare due to lack of inaccessible equipment for women's healthcare such as mammograms. Many women with disabilities also report negative attitudes by healthcare staff when it comes to sexual and reproductive health care and also during child-birth. As women with disabilities we also face negative attitudes in our own family situation, where we can be perceived as less able and where we are denied equal participation in decision making in the family the same as our male and female peers.

I had a dream to be a nurse, I completed both my primary and secondary level education and I tried for the nursing course. Unfortunately, my dream could not come into reality since the former government didn't have a policy for women with disabilities to study and to be a nurse.

Rama Dhakal, Nepal

Due to the culture of my country but also the lack of policy will and resources, the families of women and girls with disabilities take care of them. Normally the care figures are also women from the family, so they invest their time on taking care of their disabled relatives for no salary and with no support from the Government.

Alba Gonzalez, Spain





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Universally, women with disabilities have lower participation in politics and leadership opportunities in both the disability movement and women's movement and we are rarely seen at decision making tables. Finally, depending on the country context and culture, we have less control over our lives, who to live with and when to start a family if this is our wish.

Multiple Discrimination limits our positive contribution to society

As women and girls with disabilities, we face discrimination and exclusion on a number of grounds. Disability discrimination due to having a disability. Discrimination on the grounds of being a woman or girl and in many countries discrimination because of living in poverty. These are not the only factors causing discrimination for us as women and girls with disabilities but they are significant contributors. Separating out what are the factors which contribute to the discrimination and exclusion experienced by millions of women and girls with disabilities is not easily done.

On a societal level, the multiple discrimination and the resulting barriers that women with disabilities experience can manifest in all areas of life. Very often the intersection of gender and disability can mean increased barriers for us as women and girls with disabilities as we face negative attitudes, systemic and structural discrimination on the basis of being female and disabled.

It is widely recognised that discrimination and inequality costs societies. The prevalence of discrimination against women and girls with disabilities has a direct negative impact on the contribution that we can make to our community and society. It limits our potential and as a result our community and society overall loses out from benefiting from the wealth of experience that we can bring.

The Political

Women with disabilities are gaining voices

Women with disabilities are now beginning to gain more prominence in both the disability movement and the women's movement. Building on successes from Beijing in 1995, and the inclusion of gender equality in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a result of an effective lobby by disabled women, our voices have become louder. We are now asking governments and policy makers to ensure that measures taken to promote disability inclusive societies do not create gender inequalities between women and men, and girls and boys with disabilities. We believe that recognising the diversity among the disability community is key to a fully inclusive society that respects diversity and upholds the rights of all of its peoples. In addition to governments, women with disabilities are also challenging the disability movement to be more inclusive of us and to promote gender equality between women and men and girls and boys with disabilities.

Equally, we are asking governments who promote gender equality laws and policies to include women with disabilities in their implementation. We believe putting women with disabilities into a disability silo in law and policies will not achieve equality for women with disabilities. As women with disabilities we must be included in international and national plans for action on gender equality. This equally holds true for the women's movements. We are also challenging the women's movement to embrace diversity and include women with disabilities. Inclusion is the first step, sustainable collaboration between the disabled women's movement and the women's movement is needed urgently.

Many of the issues facing women with disabilities have been faced or remain part of the struggle for gender equality, the fight for gender equality becomes stronger when diverse voices are represented. One example is how the women's movement for many years has fought for equal representation of women and men in government, private sector and civil society. A big challenge currently facing women with disabilities is our underrepresentation in all of these areas. A recent stark example of this is the election outcome of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

It is urgent that a bigger group of women with disabilities - who agree on how a gender perspective influences our lives - unite forces. It is necessary that we develop this gender perspective and that we organise together in order to be able to participate proactively in social and political space, especially in the women's movement where we are still quite invisible.

Madezha Cepeda, Peru

When you consider the general movement of women in my country, they won't reject you directly. You need to shake them to remind them that we are women we with disabilities, we are here. When they organise things, you need to remind them. When they see you are there, they can do something.

Razaka Ralphine,
Madagascar



The women's movement must be intersectional otherwise they're excluding an important group. We are women too, we have the skills, potential and we want to become more visible. Let's work together, let's unite, let's partner. We want to be given a seat at the table where decisions are being made. I want to see women with disabilities in leadership positions even in the mainstream women's movement globally, regionally and locally.

Irene Ojiugo Patrick,
Ogbogu, Nigeria

It is difficult to get space for women with disabilities in the disability movement or in the gender movement, in both movements, women with disabilities were completely excluded.

Abia Akram, Pakistan

committee 2016 elections. The membership of the 2017 Committee will have just one woman out of a total of 18 places, one woman to 17 men, this means that women with disabilities will have little representation on the committee. This is not just a disability issue, it is also about gender equality.

We have shared some successes

Understanding how disability and gender intersect is key to identifying and dismantling root causes of discrimination for women, men, girls and boys with disabilities. In fighting for gender equality and disability equality, both movements have faced and continue to face many of the same obstacles, as well as sharing similar successes. Both the women's and the disability movement over the years have changed how we frame and analyse the factors which cause exclusion for women, and for persons with disabilities by highlighting how factors beyond the individual (e.g. being a woman, or being a person with disability) create exclusion and inequality. Simply put, for women, men, girls and boys with disabilities, the disability movement argues that an inaccessible society caused by physical, communication and attitudinal barriers creates exclusion and inequality for persons with disabilities. Similarly, for women, the women's movements and the wider call for gender equality argues that without a comprehensive understanding of the social structures and power relations that frame not only laws and policies, but also the economy, social dynamics, family and community life, and cultural beliefs that society's values, women's full equality will not be achieved. This holds equally true for women, men, girls and boys with disabilities.

A second shared success is that diversity is now recognised by both the women's movement and the disability movement as key to effective inclusion. At different times during the life time of both movements there has been criticism that they are not inclusive of the diversity that exists within them. The women's movement over the years has been criticised for representing a viewpoint that does not fully reflect the reality of many women, including women with disabilities. Similarly, the disability movement has been recognised as not being fully representative of all persons with disabilities. It is criticised by many as being led mainly by men with disabilities and that is also lacks recognition of the diversity of persons with disabilities. For example, people with psychosocial disabilities, intellectual disabilities, deaf, deafblind and



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hard of hearing people have for many years highlighted how the disability movement is not fully representative of them. In addition, women and girls with disabilities also make these claims and so also do indigenous women, men, girls and boys with disabilities.

However, this is all beginning to change and both the disability and gender equality movement now openly acknowledge the need for each movement to represent diverse lives and the voices of those who live them.



The Policy

Disability and Gender Equality matter for inclusive development

Gender equality for persons with disabilities is now beginning to emerge on the disability inclusive development agenda and donors and policy makers are beginning to realise that international development policy and programme work on disability inclusive development needs to address the intersection of gender and disability. By doing this, measures can be put in place so that women, men, girls and boys with disabilities can benefit on an equal basis with others and that differences in outcomes for women, men, girls and boys with disabilities due to gender differences/ disparities can be addressed.

As the momentum for disability inclusive development continues to build over the coming years, driven by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other frameworks such as Sendai Framework, the need for disability and gender equality from the outset is important. The SDGs and particularly Goal 5, which focuses on Gender Equality and the empowerment of women and girls, has a key role in creating opportunities for women and girls with disabilities to fulfill their full potential. Box highlights how SDG 5 is relevant to us as women with disabilities.



End discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

This is particularly relevant to women and girls with disabilities. In comparison to men with disabilities and women without disabilities, women and girls with disabilities have lower education completion rates, are less likely to be employed and are more at risk of living in poverty. National policies and frameworks that are developed as a result of the SDGs must include women and girls with disabilities if discrimination against all women and girls is to be achieved.

Eliminate all forms of violence and harmful practices against all women

Women with disabilities are at heightened risk of violence, exploitation and abuse compared to women without disabilities. Measures taken to implement this target must be inclusive of women with disabilities.

Recognise and value unpaid care work

This is an important point for both women and men with disabilities who require personal assistance/care assistance and needs to be adequately resourced by governments. Women who make up the majority of the caring/personal assistance workforce providing this support should be paid fairly for their work. We must also be careful to include sign languages interpretations as a required resource. Sign language interpreters are not officially identified as personal assistants but equally important for D/deaf and hard of hearing people to be part of the workforce. We also need to make sure that personal assistance is not limited to women and girls with mobility disabilities as women and girls with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities benefit from personal assistance.

Reform legislative and policy blocks that prevent women having equal rights to economic resources

Linked with the above statement about women with disabilities at risk of living in poverty, some of the factors that contribute to this include; laws and policies that prevent women with disabilities having control over their resources. For example, outdated legal capacity laws and prejudicial attitudes which deny women with disabilities the opportunities to have their own bank accounts or prevents them from getting access to micro-credit for livelihood opportunities. Measures taken to reform laws to enable equal rights to resources must also include women with disabilities.

Enhance the use of enabling technology

Technology and assistive devices are key enablers for women and men with disabilities. Access to assistive aids and devices can make a difference in the lives of women and men with disabilities, technology also has a key role to play in creating inclusion.

Ensure participation and leadership in decision-making

Women with disabilities typically have not been in leadership positions within the government and public sector, the private sector, disability or gender movements.

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Women and girls with disabilities face negative attitudes by society related to the intersection of disability and gender and these impact on the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the right to found a family.

Call for Action under the 3P's Personal, Political and Policy for inclusion of women and girls with disabilities

Personal: Support efforts to develop leadership for women with disabilities. Women with disabilities have generally had less access to leadership opportunities and only a small number of women with disabilities currently have leadership positions in development organisations and NGOs

Political: Create a strong global voice of women with disabilities inclusive of all women with disabilities. The voices of women with disabilities are beginning to be heard through initiatives such as 'Making it Work' and 'Women Enabled', but more needs to be done. Develop joint disability and gender advocacy alliances. The gender and disability movement have a number of key issues common to both, combined advocacy on areas such as government support to independent living and care would be beneficial to both movements.

Policy: Ensure mainstream, gender specific and disability specific development policies and programmes are inclusive of women, men, girls and boys with disabilities. It is a two-way street, disability policies and programmes should not ignore gender equality and equally gender policies and programmes should be inclusive of disability rights.







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