



FACT SHEET WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

INTRODUCTION

15% of any population worldwide are people with disabilities of which half are women and girls.¹ Due to their gender and disability and various identities, women and girls with disabilities often experience multiple and intersecting forms of **discrimination**. Poverty, conflict, fewer opportunities to participate in decision-making processes, and a lack of access to services such as health, education and employment, contribute to the marginalization of women and girls with disabilities in society.

Studies further show that even when services are available, men and boys tend to access services on a more regular basis. This shows that households are more inclined to invest in improving health and living conditions for boys than girls.² Findings show in fact that disability rates among women are higher than men and that 22.1% of women in lower income countries have a disability compared to 14.4% in higher income countries.³ Women and girls are also often discriminated against in health, education and the labour market — with negative repercussions for their freedoms⁴ and their development.

Negative attitudes, marginalization and poverty often expose women and girls with disabilities to a higher risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. Studies show that women with a disability are 2 to 3 times more likely to be physically or sexually abused than women without a disability.⁵ These figures may be even higher in situations of risk and humanitarian crisis, where society, community and institutional protection mechanisms are weakened or destroyed.⁶

HEALTH

- Women with disabilities do not access health care services with the same frequency as men.⁷

¹ World Report on Disability, WHO World Bank, 2011

² Réadaptation genre: enjeux et stratégies, Handicap International, Département des Ressources Techniques, 2016

³ World Health Survey. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002–2004

⁴ Gender Inequality Index: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

⁵ Department for International Development [DFID], Disability, Poverty and Development, 2000

⁶ Building capacity for disability inclusion in gender-based violence programming in humanitarian settings, Women Refugee Commission, 2014

⁷ Health and disability Factsheet 352, WHO, 2015

- Women and girls with disabilities often lack access to education on sexual and reproductive health, including information on sex, relationships, and menstrual hygiene health and are often denied the legal capacity and freedom to make decisions affecting their sexual and reproductive health⁸.
- Women with disabilities are more likely to be infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases.⁹
- One of the most prevalent causes of disability in the world is anemia, which affects approximately 42 per cent of pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries.¹⁰
- Girls and young women with disabilities are more likely to be institutionalised.¹¹

EDUCATION

- An estimated one third of children that are out of school are children with disabilities due to a lack of inclusive education measures, such as inclusive teaching methods and environments, provision of mobility aids, accessible transportation, and more. There are 65 million girls that are missing out on basic education with 31 million girls out of primary school and over 34 million female adolescents out of lower secondary school.¹² Girls with disabilities are even less likely to attend school, making girls with disabilities one of the most discriminated groups regarding access to education.
- A World Health Survey conducted between 2002-2004 revealed that 4.7% of females with disabilities completed primary school compared to 52.9 % without disabilities.¹³
- Boys and girls with disabilities are less likely to complete primary education. The World Health Survey estimates that in 14 of 15 low and middle income countries, people in working age with disabilities are one-third less likely to have completed primary school.¹⁴

EMPLOYMENT

- The World Bank reports that every minute more than 30 women are seriously injured or disabled during labour and that those 15-50 million women generally go unnoticed.¹⁵
- If people with disabilities are employed, they commonly earn less than their counterparts without disabilities; women with disabilities commonly earn less than men with disabilities.¹⁶

⁸ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General Comment 3 on Article 6: Women with disabilities, CRPD/C/GC/3, 2016, paras.38-46.

⁹ Groce, N., HIV/AIDS and people with disability, *The Lancet*, 361, pp. 1401–1402, 2003

¹⁰ The State of the World's Children– Children with Disabilities, UNICEF, 2013

¹¹ UN Enable: Work of the United Nations for Persons with Disabilities.

¹² UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report Fact Sheet, *Girls' Education – The Facts*, <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/girls-factsheet-en.pdf>, 2013

¹³ A World at School, 'Education and discrimination against girls',

<http://www.aworldatschool.org/issues/topics/discrimination>, February 2016

¹⁴ World Health Survey, *ibid*.

¹⁵ World Bank: Reproductive Health and Disability

¹⁶ World Report on Disability, page 239, *ibid*.

- Analysis of the World Health Survey results for 51 countries gives employment rates of 52.8% for men with disability and 19.6% for women with disability, compared with 64.9% for non-disabled men, and 29.9% for non-disabled women.¹⁷

VIOLENCE

- Girls and boys with disabilities are at risk of all forms of violence, but the risk of The risk of violence is particularly high for children with intellectual impairments and communication difficulties. In addition, girls with disabilities were more likely to report emotional and sexual violence than girls without disabilities.¹⁸
- People with intellectual and mental disabilities are at particular risk of sexual abuse, especially girls and women.¹⁹
- Girls and young women with disabilities are at increased risk of forced marriage, forced sterilisations and forced abortions.²⁰
- Women with disabilities are less likely to report cases of violence or abuse. When reporting to the police, women and girls with disabilities are not considered to be a reliable witness or jurors.²¹

PARTICIPATION

- Women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately underrepresented in public decision-making due to the power imbalances of the multiple and intersecting discrimination of both gender and disability.
- Elections were held in June 2016 for the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which monitors the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which resulted in one female member amongst 17 male members. From January 2017, the CRPD Committee will stand as the treaty body with the fewest female members²².

¹⁷ World Health Survey, *ibid*.

¹⁸ Plan International, ICED/LSHTM, *Same: Protect Us! Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Child Protection*, 2016

¹⁹ Rohwerder, B, *Disability inclusion: Topic guide*, Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2015

²⁰ UNICEF, *Violence against Children with disabilities: UN Secretary General's Report on Violence against Children. Thematic Group on Violence against Children with disabilities*, 2006

²¹ *Making It Work Initiative on gender and disability inclusion: advancing equity for women and girls with disabilities*, Handicap International, Technical Resources Department, 2015

²² *Call for Action to Promote Gender Parity within the CRPD Committee and All Treaty Bodies and International and Regional Bodies*, <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/activities/call-action-promote-gender-parity>.