



## **Overview/Executive Summary**

### **UN Women's Strategy: Empowerment of Women and Girls with Disabilities - Towards Full and Effective Participation and Gender Equality<sup>1</sup>**

It is estimated that more than a billion people in the world experience some form of disability. The average prevalence rate in the female population 18 years and older is 19.2 per cent, compared to 12 per cent for males,<sup>2</sup> representing about 1 in 5 women.

Women with disabilities are not a homogenous group. They experience a range and variety of impairments, including physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory conditions that may or may not come with functional limitations. The diversity of women and girls with disabilities also includes multiple and intersecting identities, such as ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds, refugee, migrant, asylum-seeking and internally displaced women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, women living with and affected by HIV, young and older women, widowed women, across all contexts.

The systemic marginalization, attitudinal and environmental barriers that women and girls with disabilities face leads to lower economic and social status, increased risk to violence and abuse including sexual violence, discrimination as well as harmful gender-based discriminatory practices, barriers to access to education, health care including sexual and reproductive health, information and services, justice as well as civic and political participation. This hinders participation of women and girls with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

International and national laws and policies on the rights of persons with disabilities have historically neglected aspects of gender equality. Similarly, laws and policies addressing gender equality have traditionally ignored the rights of women and girls with disabilities. Systemic barriers coupled with the failure to prioritize the collection of data on the situation of women and girls with disabilities has perpetuated the invisibility and situation of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that excludes them from various aspects of life as well as across the development-humanitarian continuum.

*UN Women's Strategy: Empowerment of Women and Girls with Disabilities - Towards Full and Effective Participation and Gender Equality* was developed to ensure a more systematic approach to strengthen the inclusion of the rights of women and girls with disabilities in UN Women's efforts to achieve gender equality, empowerment of all women and girls, and realization of their rights. The Strategy aligns with UN Women's Strategic Plan for 2018-2021, commitments made in the common chapter to the Strategic Plans of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women and further builds upon UN Women's work in the area of empowerment of women and girls with disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Women's strategy is pending internal approval.

<sup>2</sup> UN World Health Organization (WHO), World Report on Disability, 2011, available at: [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/en/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/)

To effectively implement this Strategy, **UN Women will continue to leverage its triple mandate, expertise in the area of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, operational presence as well as its longstanding relationship with civil society.** UN Women will carry out its mandate and support Member States and other partners to accelerate progress towards gender equality, the empowerment and full and effective and participation of women and girls with disabilities, in line with commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. This Strategy will also contribute to the implementation of the Secretary-General of United Nations Executive Committee decision 2018/20, The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, and of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning the United Nations Development System.

**The overarching objective of the Strategy is to support the full inclusion and meaningful participation of women and girls with disabilities across all UN Women’s priority areas** through the implementation of its mandate, as well as through reviewing its accessibility as an organization. To this end, UN Women will invest and engage in **three complementary areas**: (a) normative frameworks, policies, and programmes; (b) strategic partnerships, and (c) inclusive management to enhance accessibility and operational responses.

To ensure that no one is left behind, it is essential that an **inclusive and intersectional approach** is adopted to support the implementation of its mandate and internal processes. This will require **a paradigm shift**, where all women and girls with disabilities, in all their diversity and across their life course are included as equal partners across the development-humanitarian continuum, and their rights and agency are fully realized.

Consistent with the gender mainstreaming approach, **UN Women proposes the use of a multi-pronged approach** in all areas of its work within UN Women and through our coordination, normative and operational responses, including in collaboration with and support to partners. The approach consists of (a) mainstreaming gender perspective and the rights of persons with disabilities of all ages, (b) initiatives targeting women and girls with disabilities, and (c) inclusion of women and girls with disabilities.

Leveraging this approach, through the implementation of this Strategy, UN Women will **provide normative guidance, integrated policy advice, operational support and technical assistance** for programme development and capacity development **to contribute to ensuring that all initiatives are gender responsive and disability inclusive.**

- UN Women will **strengthen normative frameworks, policies and programmes to become gender responsive and inclusive of women and girls with disabilities.** In this regard, UN Women will contribute to (i) the collection, analysis and dissemination of reliable data and statistics on women and girls with disabilities to inform policies, programmes and other initiatives, (ii) the design and implementation of innovative and accessible solutions and initiatives to address structural barriers, and (iii) addressing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by women and girls with disabilities, recognizing that the lived realities and experiences of heightened disadvantage of individuals caused by structural barriers.
- **UN Women will also build synergies through collaboration and partnerships, to enhance the capacities, knowledge and networks that each partner brings.** The leadership of partners—including Member States, organizations of women and girls with disabilities, their representative

organizations, other women’s organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, of older persons, foundations, INGOs, the private sector, and research and academic institutions—can strategically contribute to the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities.

- To more effectively work with and support partners, **UN Women will take specific steps to review its approach, services and facilities to become more accessible and inclusive** to persons with disabilities, particularly all women and girls with disabilities, and promote inclusive attitudes at the workplace. This will be done, among other things, through promoting reasonable accommodation and universal design, in all areas of our work and enhancing of internal capacities for inclusion and diversity.

UN Women’s Global Task Team on Disability and Inclusion (GTTD), with representation of focal points from different business units representing HQ, Regional and Country Offices will continue to provide a space to consult, guide, and support the implementation of the Strategy.