



THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

Towards Full and Effective Participation
and Gender Equality



This Strategy is designed to guide the work of UN Women in support of Member States, civil society actors including organizations of women and girls with disabilities, and other partners to implement commitments, including 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 Person with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, through gender-responsive and disability inclusive initiatives. UN Women will adopt an inclusive and intersectional approach to support intergovernmental, operational and internal processes to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities in all their diversity across the humanitarian-development continuum. To effectively implement the strategy, UN Women will utilize a multi-pronged approach to 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. The overarching objective of this strategy is to support UN Women personnel and key stakeholders to facilitate the full inclusion and meaningful participation of women and girls with disabilities. This would be done across all UN Women's priority areas through our intergovernmental processes, coordination, operational responses and management to achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls with disabilities.

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Manufactured in the United States

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STRATEGY

THE EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH
DISABILITIES

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Participation and Gender Equality



UN WOMEN

New York, December 2018

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
FGE	The Fund for Gender Equality
FPI	Flagship Programme Initiatives
GLAD Network	Global Action on Disability Network
GTTDI	UN Women's Global Task Team on Disability and Inclusion
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HQ	Headquarters
IANGWE	Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IASG-CRPD	Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
IASMN	Inter-Agency Security Management Network
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics
UNCT	United Nations Country Teams
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	The United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
UNPRPD	United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNTF to ERAW	The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
UN WOMEN	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN Women's Strategy: The 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 the realization of their rights.

It is estimated that more than one 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,¹ 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 and sensory conditions, that may or may not come with functional limitations. The diversity of women and girls with disabilities also includes those with multiple and intersecting identities, such as being from a particular social class or ethnic, religious and racial background; refugee, migrant, asylum-seeking and internally displaced women; LGBTQI+ persons; women living with and affected by HIV; young and older women; and widowed women, across all contexts.

The systemic marginalization, attitudinal and environmental barriers they face lead to lower economic and social status; increased risk of violence and abuse including sexual violence; discrimination as well as harmful gender-based discriminatory practices; and barriers to access education, health care including sexual and reproductive health, information and services, and justice as well as civic and political participation. This hinders their participation 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 have 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 humanitarian-development continuum.

UN Women's Strategy: The 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 the realization of their rights. The Strategy aligns with UN Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and commitments made in the common chapter to the Strategic Plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women, and further builds upon UN Women's work in the area of empowerment of women and girls with disabilities.

To effectively implement this Strategy, UN Women will continue to leverage its triple mandate: its expertise in the area of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, its operational presence and its longstanding relationship with civil society actors. UN Women will carry out its mandate and support Member States and other partners to accelerate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment and full and effective 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 (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). It will also contribute to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning

of the United Nations Development System, and Decision 2018/20, The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, of the Secretary-General of United Nations.²

The overarching objective 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 in line with UN Women's guiding principles. An intersectional approach takes into consideration all conditions that create the substantively distinct life experience of an individual based on factors such as sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, and class.³ 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 humanitarian–development 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 a gender perspective and

- **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 organizations and networks of women and girls with disabilities, their representative organizations, other women's organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, foundations, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), Member States, 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 including through promoting reasonable accommodation and universal design in all areas of its work, and through enhancing its internal capacities for

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