



## **Statement of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) to the CSW 64 on the topic of women and girls with disabilities.**

On the occasion of CSW 64, women and girls with disabilities across the world are calling on all governments, UN agencies and multilateral institutions to ensure an inclusive, people centred and intersectional approach which guarantees the promotion and realisation of the human rights of all women and girls with disabilities in all legislation and policies implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. We must ensure that no girl or woman with disabilities is left behind in the next review and implementation period.

There are an estimated one billion persons with disabilities around the world. Prevalence of disability is higher amongst marginalized groups and in rural areas, and up to eighty percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. According to WHO and UN agency sources persons over 60 years currently comprise over half of all persons with disabilities worldwide, with more than 250 million older women and men experiencing moderate to severe disability. Disability in older age groups particularly affects women, who live longer than men by an average of 5-8 years.

Looking ahead, the global trends in ageing populations and the higher prevalence of disability as people age is likely to lead to further increases in the population affected by disability.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and its optional protocol, are instrumental in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Commitments have been made to women and girls with disabilities through General Recommendation 18 of the CEDAW and General Comment 3 of the CRPD.

However too many women and girls are subject to violation of their rights on a daily basis, facing multiple barriers to inclusion and the realisation of their rights. These barriers are particularly prevalent for women, who are more likely than men to become disabled throughout the course of their lives. Around one in five women



have disabilities, and in low and middle-income countries, three quarters of persons with disabilities are women.

Some of the major obstacles experienced by women and girls with disabilities are negative attitudes, stigma, and discrimination from their families, communities, and wider society; based not only on their disability but also on their gender. Women and girls with disabilities are at risk of poverty, violence, and exploitation, along with inequality in provision and access to services and facilities.

Furthermore, in many countries women and girls with disabilities are uncounted and invisible in national statistics, demonstrating the need to promote the use of data disaggregated by disability and disability-inclusive data collection, through use of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics question sets.

The Global Call for Action Against Poverty (GCAP) and its partners have undertaken studies at national, regional and global level on the situation of women and girls with disabilities. Findings from interviews, focus groups and country studies in urban and rural settings are that discrimination is severe, multiple and intersectional in its manifestations and effects.

Chronic poverty, stigma, lack of opportunities and denial of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights stemming from cultural, legal and institutional barriers make women and girls with disabilities the victims of multiple and intersectional discrimination. Women and girls with disabilities are deprived of their legal capacity, face the denial of their sexual and reproductive rights and health, and are subject to forced sterilisation and coerced abortion. They are at risk of gender-based violence, stigmatisation, marginalisation from education and work opportunities and sexual violence in both peace time and in conflict. Few countries take account of the unique support needs and perspectives of women and girls with disabilities in terms of sanitation and hygiene (including menstrual hygiene), education, training, infrastructure, rehabilitation, assistive devices and technologies, and environmental factors, and how these issues hinder access to social protection, essential health services and the participation of women and girls with disabilities in social and development activities, political decision making and in community life.



Furthermore persons with disabilities are largely excluded from political, development and peacebuilding processes, and even when they are included, the voices and needs of women and girls with disabilities are rarely heard and acknowledged, rendering them invisible.

Because of the prevalence of disability – now and in the future – and the violation of rights of women and girls with disability, it is an urgent and pressing topic for the Beijing plus 25 review. Each of the 12 areas of action of the Beijing Platform for Action should have specific reference to and policy provision across the life course for women and girls with disabilities. However, many national reports fail to reference persons with disabilities and women and girls with disabilities in particular.

For gender equality and empowerment to become a reality for all women and girls, it is essential that the specific concerns and rights of women and girls with disabilities are placed centre stage for the implementation of the Beijing commitments and the SDGs. Achievement of the SDGs will not be possible unless and until women and girls with disabilities are included in policy actions across all goals and targets explicitly and meaningfully. The international community must do better to implement the rights of women and girls with disabilities as laid out in the CPRD and the optional protocol.

**Specific recommendations to national governments, UN agencies and civil society are as follows:**

All measurement, indicators, targets and reports for Beijing plus 25 and the SDGS should address issues of women and girls with disabilities, including its overlaps with other markers of identity, including age, location and social identity, making use of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics question sets.

Ensure that social protection floors reach persons with disabilities and that woman and girls with disabilities have full access to health, education, sexual reproductive and social protection programmes.

Women and girls with disabilities and their representative organisations to be fully involved in developing and implementing policies on gender equality and women's rights.

Women and girls with disabilities and their representative organisations to be fully involved in programmes and research on issues of climate change and environmental sustainability.



# Global Call to Action Against Poverty

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Humanitarian assistance and development programmes should specifically include and be responsive to the needs and rights of women and girls with disabilities.

Women and girls with disabilities should participate in the planning and designing of national, regional and global level policies and programmes.

Meaningful representation of women with disabilities in national, regional and international political processes and within organisations of the United Nations and multilateral bodies.

Governments to redouble their efforts to uphold the commitments set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), including the optional protocol and general comment 3 on women and girls with disabilities.