



IN BRIEF



UN WOMEN'S APPROACH TO DISABILITY INCLUSION AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Photo: UN Women Rwanda

UN Women's strategic approach to Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality

UN Women is fully committed to mainstreaming disability inclusion and intersectionality throughout its work, as laid out in [UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025](#). The goal is to ensure a more systematic approach to ensuring the rights of women and girls with disabilities across UN Women's areas of work.

Disability, gender and discrimination are closely interlinked, with one in five women experiencing a disability-related exclusion.¹ To address this, UN Women developed a [corporate Strategy for The Empowerment of Women and Girls with Disabilities](#) built on a multi-pronged approach that includes providing normative guidance, integrated policy advice, operational support and technical assistance for programme and capacity-development. The approach helps ensure that initiatives are both gender-responsive and inclusive of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Normative guidance and inter-governmental support

Several international, regional and national norms and standards – including human rights treaties and the outcomes of various global inter-governmental conferences, forums and negotiations – directly or implicitly call for the inclusion and empowerment of all women and girls with disabilities across their life cycle. But many national laws and frameworks are not aligned with these standards. As such, UN Women is committed to making normative frameworks more gender-responsive and inclusive of women and girls with disabilities. In 2023, UN Women together with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities issued a [Joint statement on ending sexual harassment against women and girls with disabilities](#), which recognizes and acknowledges “that work remains to be done to ensure that the links between gender and disability feature more routinely in all our work”, and in which the organizations commit to promoting the adoption of relevant measures, effective legislation and policies by national authorities.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). 2022. [World Health Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities](#).

Operational support and technical assistance

UN Women's **Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality Portfolio (DIIP)** supports both entity-level internal knowledge and capacity-development, as well as inter-agency coordination for gender and disability inclusion, including intersectional priorities. During 2021–2022, over 65 UN Women offices reported supporting initiatives in their programming and policy work to specifically empower women and girls with disabilities by providing normative guidance, integrated policy advice, operational support and capacity-development. UN Women's **Global Task Team on Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality (GTDDII)** hosted by the DIIP team coordinates internal knowledge and information exchange within UN Women Focal Points and Business Unit representatives. Country-level programming is supported by the **Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality Facility** at UN Women Headquarters, and its dedicated **Disability Inclusion Helpdesk**, which provides technical expertise to country teams. In addition, DIIP supports capacity-development among country offices. For instance, the **Knowledge-Exchange Forum on Innovation and Inclusion** was launched to share project insights, good practices, and to exchange knowledge between and among UN Women country offices implementing joint programmes, and beyond.

UN inter-agency coordination and multi-stakeholder collaboration

UN Women leads and coordinates the **UN Working Group on Gender and Disability Inclusion (UNWGGDI)** and helps organize the **Global Disability Summit** and its global commitments and is a part of the **Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD)**, a multi-stakeholder forum co-chaired by the International Disability Alliance and rotating Member States. UN Women has also joined forces with other UN agencies and organizations of persons with disabilities through joint programmes pioneering gender-responsive and disability-inclusive programming. The aim is to ensure the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as intersectional and human rights-based approaches to UN development work and, most importantly, to empower and promote the leadership and participation of women and girls with disabilities. With support from the **United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD)**, UN Women together with sister

agencies led the implementation of the **“Joint Programme on disability inclusive Covid-19 response and recovery”**. In addition, UN Women and UNDP implemented a global and cross-regional programme **to strengthen behavioural insights and intersectional approaches to confront stigma and discrimination** in Palestine, Pakistan, Republic of Moldova and Samoa. Throughout 2022, UN Women initiated several new **country-level joint programmes** together with other UN agencies in six UN Women Country Offices: Bangladesh, Colombia, Nepal, Panama, Rwanda and United Republic of Tanzania. Moreover, together with WHO, OHCHR, UNFPA and UNICEF, UN Women has initiated a joint programme in 2023 on **mainstreaming a disability-inclusive humanitarian response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis in its neighbouring countries**.

In addition to joint programming, UN Women has collaborated with UN agencies on policy advocacy and reform initiatives, such as to develop a **joint inter-agency statement on violence against girls with disabilities**, listing the main rights violations they face, along with key advocacy messages targeting States, international organizations, civil society and any other stakeholders, highlighting areas where the implementation of the right of girls with disabilities to be free from violence can be strengthened.

Expanding the knowledge base and strengthening partnerships

To increase attention to the intersection of gender, disability and other status, UN Women continues to collaborate on and produce knowledge products on issues such as gender, disability and age; sexual harassment against women with disabilities in the world of work and on campus; financing for gender equality and disability inclusion; and addressing exclusion through intersectionality in rule of law, peace and security contexts; as well as in its flagship publications, like the **2021 SDG Gender Snapshot**.

Beyond institutional coordination and cooperation with all relevant UN Women business units and UN entities, the DIIP team engages with intergovernmental bodies, normative mechanisms, organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society organizations and multi-stakeholder forums to maximize the entity's collaboration, outreach and partnerships that benefit leadership and the participation of women and girls with disabilities.

Knowledge resources

EXTERNAL:

1. UN Women Strategy for the Empowerment of Women and Girls with Disabilities: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/the-empowerment-of-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>
2. UN Women website on Women and Girls with Disabilities: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/women-and-girls-with-disabilities>
3. UN Women UN System Coordination Division's website on Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality: <https://gendercoordinationandmainstreaming.unwomen.org/disability-and-intersectionality>
4. Newsletter archive: <https://us21.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=5f6807ed7f355b45bd4de52bo&id=bb97c23667>

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INTERNAL (RESOURCES FOR UN WOMEN STAFF AND AFFILIATES ONLY):

1. DIIP page: [https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/Intergovernmental-Support/UNCoordination/SitePages/Welcome-to-the-United-Nations-Systems-Division-\(UNSCD\).aspx](https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/Intergovernmental-Support/UNCoordination/SitePages/Welcome-to-the-United-Nations-Systems-Division-(UNSCD).aspx)
2. Helpdesk: <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/Lists/NewsAndAnnouncements/DispForm.aspx?ID=475>
3. Empowerment of Girls and Women with Disabilities Sharepoint Page: <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/EWGD>
4. Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality Community of Practice (DIICoP), MS Teams space: <https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/teams/DisabilityInclusion>
5. Knowledge Exchange Forum on Innovation and Inclusion, MS Teams channel: <https://teams.microsoft.com/l/channel/19%3abb4e50c7278041fe927ebc28be6c1e49%40thread.tacv2/Project%2520Knowledge%2520Forum%2520-%2520Joint%2520Initiatives?groupId=e0eodf70-eae2-476a-972f-22e392007037&tenantId=2bcd0744-9e18-487d-85c3-c9a325220be8>

Photo: UN Photo/Maura Ajak

