Gender Equality

Boys and girls with disabilities encounter different forms of exclusion and are affected by them to varying degrees, depending on factors such as the type of disability they have, where they live and the culture or class to which they belong. Gender is a significant factor that shapes their distinct experiences.

Multiple discrimination

For example, girls, including adolescent girls confront not only the prejudice and inequities encountered by many persons with disabilities, but are also constrained by traditional gender roles and barriers. This multiple discrimination places them at higher risk of gender-based violence, sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation. Girls with disabilities are also less likely to get an education, receive vocational training or find employment than are boys with disabilities or girls without disabilities.

Boys also face distinct risks, for example they are more likely than girls to come across mines or explosive remnants of war because they are more involved in outdoor activities such as herding livestock, gathering wood and food, or collecting scrap metal. This places them at increased risk of injury.

Links between disability, poverty and gender

Studies across countries show a strong link between poverty and disability – one that is in turn linked to gender issues. Children with disabilities are often caught in a cycle of poverty and exclusion that can be exacerbated for girls. As girls grow into adults, these discrepancies become manifest. For example, women with disabilities face significantly more difficulties in attaining access to adequate housing, health, education, vocational training and employment.\(^1\) They also experience inequality in hiring, promotion rates and pay for equal work, access to training, credit and other productive resources, and they rarely participate in economic decision-making.\(^2\) The global literacy rate for women with disabilities is reported to be as low as one per cent.\(^3\)

Need for gender- and age-sensitive response

While progress on addressing gender inequalities varies across countries, there is a long way to go. Many programmes for persons with disabilities remain age- and gender-blind, failing to take the distinct needs and priorities of girls and boys, including adolescent girls and boys, into account and often exacerbating discrimination and exclusion as a result.

Integrating age, gender and diversity awareness, including paying special attention to the multiple discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities is critical for disability-inclusive programming.

A question of human rights

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), non-discrimination including on the basis of sex is a foundational principle. The CRPD specifically calls on States Parties to recognize that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and to take measures

\(^{1}\) Direct quote from source: UN Enable: Women and girls with disabilities - Using both - the gender and disability lens: http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1514
\(^{2}\) Ibid.
\(^{3}\) Ibid.
to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The CRPD also recognizes that women and girls with disabilities are often at greater risk, both within and outside the home, of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation. It also calls on States to ensure access by persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls with disabilities and older persons with disabilities, to social protection and poverty reduction programmes.

**A call to action**

Adopting a gender- and age-sensitive approach to disability-inclusive programming that is grounded in respect for the rights, aspirations and potential of all girls and boys can ensure that they are afforded opportunities to fulfill their potential as full and active members of society. Fundamental elements and actions to ensure gender-sensitive disability-inclusive programming include:

- Ratify and implement the Conventions (CRPD CEDAW and CRC).
- Fight discrimination against children with disabilities.
- Dismantle socio-economic and other barriers to inclusion.
- End residential institutionalization.
- Provide families with social welfare, health and other services to meet their needs.
- Ensure that relevant national standards are aligned with international standards and support their implementation.
- Coordinate services among sectors to support the child.
- Involve children with disabilities – both girls and boys - in making decisions.
- Collect reliable and objective data on disabilities to inform planning and assess impact.


This thematic note presents excerpts from the report related to Gender Equality. All references and original sources can be found in the full report.

**For the full report or more information:**

Visit our Website: [www.unicef.org/SOWC2013](http://www.unicef.org/SOWC2013)

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