GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo



Prevalence

- Globally, 19% of women live with a disability relative to 12% of men
- Among children, prevalence is estimated between 93 and 150 million worldwide

Related to violence against women and girls with disabilities

- women with disabilities **are two to four times** more likely to experience intimate partner violence than women without disabilities
- boy and girls with disabilities are **nearly 4 time more** likely to become victims of violence **and 3 times more likely** to experience sexual violence, with girls at a higher risk, than children without disabilities.

Commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs and ***leave no one behind*** agenda cannot be achieved without ending violence against women and girls with disabilities, and without sufficiently including women and girls with disabilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes that impact their lives

Intersectionality

- The intersection between disability and gender-based violence is of particular concern: some forms of violence against women with disabilities have remained invisible and not been recognized as gender-based violence.
- Violence against women with disabilities is not just a subset of either gender-based or disability-based violence but a complex confluence of both risk factors.
- Where additional marginalizing identities (ethnicity, sexuality, location, religion) intersect with disability and gender, the risk of violence further increases.

What are the Key Challenges ?

False Presumption of Homogeneity

- There is a persistent tendency to speak of *people* with disabilities and *children* with disabilities as a group, without differentiating between different impairment groups, and between men and women, girls and boys, or other gender identities.
- The generalization fails to acknowledge gender-specific unique experiences

Insufficient Data Disaggregation

- At national and international levels, data is not or inadequately disaggregated by age, gender, and disability.
- Statistics on the number of girls with disabilities relative to boys with disabilities remains insufficient.
- The scarcity of data contributes to the invisibility of children, especially girls, with disabilities

Cumulative Violence along the Life Cycle

- Research from around the world highlights the progressive types of violence that children with disabilities face along their life cycle: throughout childhood into adolescence, adulthood and old age.

- Importantly, children with disabilities, and especially girls, tend to experience multiple forms of violence by multiple perpetrators within the (extended) family and wider community

- There are usually extremely limited opportunities for survivors of violence with disabilities to turn to for help


Infancy
Female babies with disabilities killed or abandoned after birth
Neglect in basic/life supporting care (feeding, clothing, medical care)
May never be legally registered , therefore less access to services and more risk of experiencing abuse and violence
Childhood
High risk of violence during journeys for household chores, school, and when left alone & unprotected at home
Risk of labor exploitation. incl. sold into prostitution
Early marriage to transfer burden of care
Adolescence
Myths around sexuality; curing AIDS, bringing fortunes through sex with virgin girl with disabilities
Forced contraception, sterilization, hysterectomy to avoid menstruation management; perceived protection from rape
Forced marriage to 'normalize' or 'cure' disability
School-related gender-based violence
Reproductive Adulthood
Sexual preroductive health and parenting rights violation incl forced abortion, sterilization, forced loss of children intoc are/adoption
High risk of domestic violence from multiple family members, all forms of violence incl. withholding care, social contacts,assistive devices, medication etc
Sexual violence and harrassment in community and at work place
Old Age
Violence with increasing age and care dependency
Disability a risk factor for violence when women acquire age-related disability
Cumulative harm (physical and psychological) through cumulative exoerience of various forms of violence from multiple perpetrators through the life cycle

Areas of concern across age groups

Conflict, Displacement, Disaster & Emergency

- increase the vulnerability of persons with disabilities of all ages and gender
- disproportionally amplify the various issues that women and girls with disabilities face in peace time when compared to men with disabilities and women without disabilities.
- Within GBV programmes in humanitarian settings, there are only limited examples of where women with disabilities are integrated into wider protection and GBV assessments,

Institutionalisation

- Refers to orphanages/residential child care institutions, residential schools; psychiatric institutions, prisons, and care homes for persons with disabilities and /or elderly people.

- Women and girls with disabilities face high risk of losing legal capacity, after which guardians and medical professionals are making life decision without consent.

- Girls and women of all ages are at high risk of especially sexual, physical and psychological violence in prisons and residential facilities

Access to Justice

- Violence against women and girls with disabilities is rarely reported and even more rarely brought to justice because of attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers based on intersection of gender and disability

- Barriers increase when other additional identities come into play such as women and girls from **Indigenous or Rural Communities**, or from **sexual and gender minorities.**

What are the Key Areas for Action for Governments and Development Actors?

Apply twin-track approach:

- mainstreaming women and girls with disabilities into all laws, policies, and programmes relating to GBV
- developing, where appropriate, targeted programmes addressing the risks that women and girls with disabilities face in terms of violence and eradicating barriers to services.

Consider the compounding nature of discrimination:

- on the basis of their gender, disability, age and other identities,
- context-specific factors including poverty, conflict, humanitarian emergencies, geographic location and institutionalisation that can increase inequality

Policy Level

- Data disaggregation: by minimum of gender, age, impairment
- Policies and appropriate measures to promote gender equality and challenge discriminatory norms and stereotypes against men and women, boys and girls with disabilities
- Revise and strengthen existing laws against violence and discrimination to ensure that they are inclusive of women and girls with disabilities
- Repeal of any laws or policies that discriminate against women and girls with disabilities, including restrictions on the legal capacity of women and girls with disabilities

Institutional Level

- Ministries and local authorities to ensure all children are registered at birth so that children with disabilities are not hidden away and unable to access health services, social services or schools
- Support research into amending data sets that currently align with Demographic Health Surveys and Reproductive Health Surveys so that girls under 15 and women over 50 are included
- Develop mandatory disability awareness and disability inclusion trainings for all policymakers, programme implementers, and service providers, including health care personnel, teachers, social workers, law enforcement, judicial personnel, and court staff that are involved in preventing and responding to GBV

Community Level

- Involve communities – including families, caregivers, service providers, traditional and religious leaders – in efforts to stimulate change in the social norms that perpetuate harmful myths, abuse and discrimination against women and girls with disabilities
- Support CSOs to become more responsive to women and adolescent girls with disabilities and support disabled persons' organisations to become more gender responsive.
- Women's rights organisations to offer equal access to participation and leadership positions for women and girls with disabilities
- Educate women and girls with disabilities about their rights; support them to develop the skills for decision-making processes and claiming rights related to GBV prevention and response

Thank you!

Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo
Global Disability Advisor
The World Bank

Twitter @McNhlapo