



Intersection of gender and disability

January 2024

Acknowledgement

This guide has been developed by Sightsavers, the African Disability Forum (ADF) and Youth Business International on behalf of the Futuremakers technical advisory working group on disability and funded by Standard Chartered Foundation.

Purpose, audience and objectives

Purpose	The experience of disability is often different for everyone depending on the barriers they face, just as being a woman or young person in a patriarchal society also comes with barriers. For this reason, the experiences of men and women with disabilities tend to differ due to the additional intersecting barriers that young women with disabilities face by being a young person, a woman and having a disability in a male-dominated economic environment. This guide looks at the various intersecting barriers that young women with disabilities experience when seeking employment opportunities. It provides suggestions on considerations to help address the barriers that women with disabilities during the design of economic empowerment programmes.
Audience	It is one of a series of short guides developed by Sightsavers, within Futuremakers by Standard Chartered , and specifically written with Youth Business International programme partners in mind. While advice included in the document is more targeted towards YBI's youth entrepreneurship programme, we have tried to make these relevant to all Futuremakers projects.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To build greater disability confidence of the reader and how partners can better include youth with disabilities in their Futuremakers projects.2. To give specific examples, advice and simple steps on how to adapt projects to be more inclusive of young women with disabilities.

Intersectionality – gender and disability

The concept of intersectionality recognises that individuals do not experience barriers as members of a homogenous group but, rather, as individuals with multidimensional layers of identities, statuses, and life circumstances. It acknowledges the lived realities and experiences of heightened disadvantage of individuals caused by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. It requires targeted measures to be taken as part of different initiatives to address these barriers.

Women and girls with disabilities are subjected to multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination due to their gender, disability, and other characteristics such as age, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion. For example, they may be discriminated against by men with and without disabilities, on the grounds of their gender – and by women and men without disabilities, on the grounds of their impairments or age, or other factors. This can happen in a range of ways that may affect how they engage in projects and other initiatives. If they are not effectively represented and meaningfully engaged, their voices and opinions, issues and priorities will not be heard. This multi-layered reality can create different experiences for women who must not only contend with the challenges of being women in a

patriarchal society but who must also navigate in a world designed without consideration of their specific needs.

Intersectionality of gender, age and disability makes it more challenging for a woman to achieve her potential, which impacts her ability to become economically empowered. A labour market that discriminates due to gender and disability suppresses participation of women with disabilities. According to a 2020 report by the World Bank, women with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and have lower earnings than men with disabilities and women without disabilities.¹ It is therefore crucial that when working with young people with disabilities, we need to consider the multi-faceted layers of experiences of this group of people and consider their needs in the design and implementation of programmes.

General guidance

Sightsavers' experience shows that many organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) are led by men and women who are a minority in senior leadership structures. Our experience further shows that male OPD members will tend to outnumber women when invited to events and that these OPDs often mirror negative and harmful social, gender and disability stereotypes found in broader society.

For these reasons, it is essential to adopt suitable strategies to promote the meaningful engagement of women with disabilities, such as:

- Ensuring women led OPDs, a national umbrella organisation of women with disabilities or women's wings of mainstream OPDs are partners included in the project from the design stage, through to implementation and monitoring
- Women and girls will face barriers to participation (including risk and safety issues and/or domestic responsibilities). Work with them to identify what these are and address them accordingly. Strategies may include limiting the hours of activities to allow for caregiving or other domestic activities to take place (providing resources to cover caregiving responsibilities may be an option but following good safeguarding practice)
- Collect gender-disaggregated data to track participation and address inequities
- Monitor the way both men and women participate and adjust accordingly. Have strategies planned to ensure their voices are heard and acted upon. This may include single gender group work; or the facilitator taking a proactive role in bringing women into the conversation. Another option is agreeing with the group on a set of workshop rules that will include strengthening gender balance in its ways of working
- Address any structural barriers and practices in the workplace that may be leading to gender inequality by engaging inclusive approaches that remove the barriers that limit young women with disabilities from realising their rights

¹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099407312052226699/pdf/IDU0eb65b1db03a82042710aaa905ee2dc24b2d7.pdf>

- Support staff and leadership of the organisation to examine their unconscious biases, and how this influences their engagement of women with disabilities
- Employ a twin-track approach in all initiatives. That is, ensure the mainstreaming of gender and disability throughout the project, and work on specific activities that take into consideration the multiple characteristics and experiences of women and girls with disabilities
- Remember that women and girls with disabilities have different social identities and these identities intersect and interact in unique ways
- Engage young women with disabilities in identification of the barriers they face and in the design of interventions to address these specific barriers
- Provide reasonable accommodation for young women and mothers with disabilities in employment spaces
- Consider carrying out a Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion analysis to identify enablers and disablers to access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for men and women with disabilities

Now that I know, what do I need to do?

- Data: am I disaggregating participants data by sex? Am I using that data to better understand and remove barriers for women with disabilities to equally participate?
- Meaningful participation: am I intentionally including women with disabilities in our programme design, implementation, and monitoring? Are the experiences, expertise and aspirations of women and girls with disabilities reflected in the programme design, implementation, and monitoring?
- Have we collaborated with organisations that specialise in working with women with disabilities to ensure that our work is informed by their expertise?
- Addressing unconscious bias: is our programme supporting employers in addressing different forms of discrimination, including sexism and ableism?
- Safeguarding: does our organisation have a safeguarding policy that explicitly mentions and recognises the vulnerabilities of people with disabilities? Are activities held in physical and digital spaces that are safe? Are activities that are aimed at shifting social and cultural norms designed to address potential increased safeguarding risks to women and girls with disabilities?
- Accessibility: are our physical and digital events accessible and inclusive of women with diverse disabilities, including those with mobility, sensory or communication impairments?

Resource links

<https://asksource.info/resources/annotated-bibliography-disability-and-gender-low-and-middle-income-countries-lmics>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/01/intersectionality-resource-guide-and-toolkit>

<https://www.makingitwork-crpd.org/miw-how-guide-intersectionality-practice>

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and middle-income countries to
eliminate avoidable blindness
and promote equal opportunities
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Registered charity numbers 207544 and SC038110