Concept Note

Launch of: Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for Women and Young Persons with Disabilities

Background

Nearly one billion people – or 15 per cent of the world’s population – will experience some form of disability during their lifetime; in developing countries, this number rises to 20 per cent. Globally, over 180 million persons 10 to 24 years of age live with a disability – mental, intellectual, physical or sensorial – and around 80 per cent of them lives in low income countries. Despite all the progress made, prejudice and systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities continues, while they can often face extreme violations of their rights. The vulnerability of adolescents and young persons with disabilities increases as they often experience exclusion from sexual and reproductive health services, education and information. Young persons and adolescents with disabilities face significant barriers to access information, education and services in sexual and reproductive health that are adequate, comprehensive and free of prejudice. At the same time, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS, harassment and sexual violence, to which many young persons with disabilities are exposed, are a major threat to their personal development, health and life quality. Twenty per cent of women with disabilities report a history of unwanted sex compared to 8.2 per cent of women without disabilities. Practices such as forced or coerced sterilization, or/and forced limited or denied contraception, menstrual control and sexual repression, pregnancy and childbirth without assistance, forced or coerced abortion, the inability to exercise child custody, and other forms of torture are examples of strong violations of the rights of girls and women living with disabilities. At the same time, legislation, policies and programmes do not adequately address their social inclusion including as it relates to employment and livelihood opportunities.

UNFPA and the WE DECIDE programme

UNFPA’s programmes center on ensuring that women, adolescents, young people and other vulnerable and excluded groups, including persons with disabilities, are empowered to make decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and life options. Building on existing efforts to address the needs and rights of persons with disabilities within UNFPA’s country programmes globally, UNFPA, with support from Spain, initiated a programme to promote the human rights and social inclusion of adolescents and young persons living with disabilities, entitled “WE DECIDE: Young Persons with Disabilities. A Programme for Equal Opportunities and a Life Free of Violence”. Access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education for young persons living with disabilities, including to prevent and address sexual and gender based violence, are at the center of the programme. It has a strong gender component through its focus on girls and women living with disabilities, and it seeks to include young persons living with disabilities in its design and implementation. Further, the programme has been constructed in accordance with the international human rights and development frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action from (ICPD PoA).
Launch event – *Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for Women and Young Persons with Disabilities*

Occasion: International Day for Elimination of EVAW  
Date: Wednesday, 28 November  
Time: 13:15-14:30pm  
Location: United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 12  
Hosts: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Women Enabled International (WEI), and the Permanent Missions of Spain, the United Kingdom, and Ecuador

Main objectives of the launch:

1. Raise awareness about the importance of ensuring that young persons and women with disabilities live free of gender-based violence, and can realize their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

2. Launch and introduce the UNFPA and WEI *Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for Women and Young Persons with Disabilities*. The Guidelines provide practical and concrete guidance on the provision of inclusive and accessible services for GBV and SRHR for women and young persons with disabilities. While the primary audience of the Guidelines is GBV and SRHR related service providers, the Guidelines are a valuable resource for all stakeholders—including those in government, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations—involved in designing, developing, implementing or advocating for GBV or SRHR services for women and young persons with disabilities. The recommendations in the Guidelines are aimed at all settings, including low, middle, and high resource, and humanitarian emergency settings.

Speakers

- Her Excellency, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative María Bassolls, Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations
- His Excellency, Permanent Representative Ambassador Luis Gallegos, Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations
- His Excellency Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative Jonathan Allen, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations
- Anneka Ternald Knutsson, Chief, Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch, Technical Division, UNFPA
- Stephanie Ortoleva, President, Women Enabled International (Moderator)
- Anastasia Holoboff, Legal Advisor, Women Enabled International
- Maryangel García-Ramos Guadiana, Mexican Women with Disabilities Movement, Mexico
- Boram Lee, Disability Advisor, Women’s Refugee Commission
### Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Schedule</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time Allotted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:15 – 1:22PM</td>
<td>Stephanie Ortoleva (moderator) starts session and gives brief introduction to session and panel</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
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<td>1:22 – 1:29PM</td>
<td>H.E. Ms. María Bassolls (Spain) delivers welcome remarks</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
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<td>1:29 – 1:36PM</td>
<td>Anneka Ternald Knutsson (UNFPA) delivers keynote remarks</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
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<td>1:36 - 2:06PM</td>
<td>Stephanie Ortoleva (moderator) thanks Spain and UNFPA. They take their seats in the front row. Moderator invites the 3 speakers for interactive session to join at the podium. She introduces them and proceeds to ask them 3 questions each (rotating): • Anastasia Holoboff • Maryangel García-Ramos Guadiana • Boram Lee</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
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<td>2:06-2:13PM</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Jonathan Allen (United Kingdom) delivers statement</td>
<td>7 min</td>
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<td>2:13-2:20PM</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Luis Gallegos (Ecuador) delivers statement</td>
<td>7 min</td>
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<td>2:20 – 2:29PM</td>
<td>Stephanie Ortoleva (moderator) opens the floor for discussion and Q&amp;A</td>
<td>9 min</td>
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<td>2:29 – 2:30PM</td>
<td>Stephanie Ortoleva (moderator) thanks all participants and audience and closes the session</td>
<td>1 min</td>
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