



International Alliance of Women (IAW) CSW67 parallel event : Improving the rights of women with disabilities and older women in time of crises (March, 14,2023)

Respecting the rights of women with disabilities in time of crises : challenges and opportunities

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Introduction

Since 2020 and due to the various crises, technology is present in almost all aspects of our lives. It affects how we work, learn, communicate and participate in the public sphere. Yet women are four times less likely than men to have advanced ICT skills and hold less than 20% of jobs in the sector (UNESCO).

Growing inequalities are becoming increasingly evident in digital skills and access to technology, with women being left behind due to this digital gender divide. The need for inclusive and transformative technologies and digital education is therefore crucial for a sustainable future.

Recent crises have shown in fact the lack of preparation in terms of taking disability into account in crisis and emergency situations.

Digital exclusion

The measures taken by States to respond to the pandemic resulted in a sudden shift to internet-based living, including healthcare provision, education, employment, access to goods and services, as well as more general socialisation.

'digital divide' existed for persons with disabilities during the pandemic. This was attributed to a number of factors, including 'digital poverty, low digital literacy, co-ordination difficulties in using phones and laptops/tablets and living in areas with low internet connectivity'.



The participation of women and other marginalized groups in the technology sector results in more creative solutions and offers greater potential for innovations that meet the needs of women and promote gender equality. But lack of legally binding regulations, lack of funds, insufficient awareness of the ICTs accessible services that do exist and the need to develop more and better ones remain the principal challenges further excluding disadvantaged groups of society such as – persons with disabilities,. This exclusion hinders their ability to participate actively in social, economic and cultural life on equal footing.

Digital technologies have proven to be practical and tangible tools for women and girls to improve their living conditions. ICTs can facilitate women to gain employment (for example through telework or newly created information jobs), obtain cost-effective health services and education (such as through online courses or software-based literacy programs) and to increase their income (such as through e-business channels and online transactions). This would imply a virtuous circle, whereas women and girls could fight their current disadvantages in society by exploiting new digital opportunities.

It therefore stresses the need to close the gender digital divide by investing in the digital literacy and skills of older women and by providing them with universal and affordable access to and use of information and communications technologies, including new technologies, and the use of digitally enabled services.

Inclusion that leaves no one behind : ICTs should be developed in such a way as to accommodate the diversity of users with emphasis on quality, accessibility and affordability. The interest of women and girls with disabilities, elderly women must be integrated into the design and implementation of ICTs programmes so that all benefit equally and participate in all the sectors of the economy and the social and political life. Bearing in mind that the United Nations identifies access to information, including digital information and the Internet, as a basic human right that should be extended to all citizens of the world, a prime goal of digital inclusion must be full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).The Convention designates ICTs as an integral component of accessibility rights, on par with



transportation and the physical environment. Implementation of CRPD also reflects and impacts on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the global commitment “that no one will be left behind” . However, leaving no one behind will be possible only if quality ICTs are available, accessible and affordable to all, and in particular to the disadvantaged groups of society – persons with disabilities, persons with specific needs, including indigenous peoples and people living in rural areas, women and girls, youth and children, as well as older persons.

Let me recall the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as its normative framework and focuses on States Parties’ obligations towards those individuals with regard to accessibility,

State obligations towards persons with disabilities the requirements of the CRPD The CRPD is a treaty based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It had ground-breaking levels of involvement by the rights-holders and this drafting dynamic is reflected in its requirement that States Parties ‘closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities’ in decision-making processes concerning them through their representative organizations’.

Article 9 of the CRPD requires States to identify and eliminate obstacles and carriers to accessibility in all aspects of life. This obligation not only includes access to physical spaces, but also the right to access information, as well as personal assistance for the facilitation of accessibility and the utilisation of technology.

Article 6 – Women with disabilities

1. States Parties recognize that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and in this regard shall take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the present Convention.



Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé

Call on member states, UN entities, UN Women, and civil society to include women with disabilities and older women in the center of all policies, ensuring gender equality.

We recommend : accessible assistive technology, as well as safe and affordable access to the Internet, to give women and girls, with disabilities the opportunity to be actively involved, and on an equal basis with all others, in all aspects of public, political, economic, cultural, and social life.

Awareness Studies indicate that the elderly respond slowly to change and shun the use of modern technologies, and therefore the need for responsive and customized digital tools that leave no one behind.