



Empowering Young Women and Girls: *Unlocking capabilities through coordinated action*

**9th Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) June 15,
3:00 pm – 4:30 pm
UN Headquarters Conference Room 12, New York, NY 10017**

Young women and girls with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination and are often exposed to increased vulnerabilities. Addressing the specific needs of young women and girls with disabilities and eliminating barriers that prevent them from realizing their full potential will require a targeted and holistic response.

The Permanent Missions of the United Arab Emirates and the United States to the United Nations in partnership with UN Women and the Pineda Foundation / World Enabled will convene an expert discussion to share good practices, discuss main challenges and propose actionable measures to promote the development, advancement and empowerment of young women and girls with disabilities.

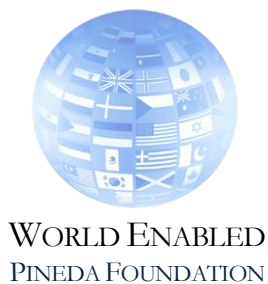
The discussion will focus on individual agency and leadership of young women and girls with disabilities, and will illustrate how member states to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), civil society and other UN entities can coordinate their efforts to achieve meaningful results, with a particular focus on the interconnected areas of education, work and employment, as well as full inclusion and participation in communities. The discussion will highlight important linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the CRPD, recognizing that the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities will be key to ensuring the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Background

In Article 6 of the CRPD Member States recognize that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination and commit to take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, a decade after the adoption of the CRPD, much remains to be done to guarantee the exercise and enjoyment of the rights and freedoms by young women and girls with disabilities, as set out in the Convention.

Article 19 of the Convention recognizes the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others.

The Convention calls on states not only to take action to ensure that young women with disabilities can live in the community, but also to provide the support and structures that enable them to engage in community life outside the confines of their home. The term “community living” describes the right of people with disabilities to live in the



community and receive the support that they need to participate in society as equal citizens. This will encompass a range of services and supports such as housing (including supported housing), care in the family home, social work support, and supported employment, as well as access to mainstream services such as health care.

Too few young women and girls with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance, necessary to support living and inclusion in the community. These services also prevent isolation, segregation, dependency and abuse. Provisions should also be put in place to ensure the adequacy of support services, and the well-being and safety of the individual when exploring options in the community.

Article 27 of the CRPD highlights the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

In many countries, young women with disabilities do not have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training. This is often a result of negative perceptions and limiting beliefs. In addition, many vocational and continuing training programs have not set up proper programs to ensure accessibility of educational or training facilities, and may not have a point person to help with recruitment or accommodating a young woman who may have difficulty seeing, hearing or moving around without assistance. There is further a need to promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programmes that cater and target girls and young women with disabilities.

Such efforts are important to promote employment opportunities and career advancement for young women with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment.

Many women with disabilities have benefited from micro-credits, and other types of supports for home based work. Opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship have to be promoted, including for young women with disabilities. Young girls and women with disabilities can be paired with peer-mentors and could be engaged in generating income if given adequate support and training. Such programs hold great promise for eradicating the high level of extreme poverty among young women with disabilities.

Objectives and guiding questions

The discussion will convene stakeholders working at the intersection of gender, youth, disability and development to take stock of progress made in the implementation of the CRPD, with particular focus on Articles 6, 19 and 27.

The discussion aims to identify actionable practices and formulate policy recommendations to promote the full and active participation of young women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of public life.

By bringing together experts representing different stakeholders, this dialogue aims to build a foundation for meaningful partnerships, stimulate concrete actions and identify a set of concrete policy recommendations.



The following questions will guide the discussion:

- *Focusing on young women and girls - what are the main gaps and challenges to the implementation of the Convention?*
- *What can we learn from past initiatives and actions? What has worked in the past and why? What are potential future opportunities?*
- *What are the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders? How can efforts of governments, UN Agencies and Civil Society be better coordinated?*
- *How can links between experts working on the intersection of youth, gender, and disability issues be strengthened? How can collaboration be promoted on the national and international level?*
- *What are main elements of a way forward? What are possible next steps?*

Format and speakers

A panel of distinguished Member State and UN representatives will engage with leading international experts in a moderated discussion.

Moderator:

- Dr. Victor Pineda, President of Pineda Foundation / World ENABLED

Welcome remarks by:

- Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the UN
- Lakshmi Puri, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women

Panelists:

- Judith Heumann, Senior Advisor, U.S. Department of State
- Rosangela Berman Bieler, Senior Advisor for Disability, UNICEF
- Charlotte McClain- Nhlapo, Disability Advisor, World Bank
- Stephanie Ortoleva, President, Women Enabled
- Sara Minkara, Chief Executive Officer, Empowerment through Integration
- Casar Jacobson, Entrepreneur