



CanWaCH
Canadian Partnership for
Women and Children's Health

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A call to action for disability-inclusive global health

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As we approach the 2025 Global Disability Summit, Humanity & Inclusion (HI) Canada and the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH) stand ready to work in partnership with the Government of Canada to achieve stronger inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in global health programming. Recognizing that doing so requires all stakeholders to take action, we are eager to explore ways and means that will also enable Canadian organizations to mobilize the resources and funding essential to carry this priority forward.

Although 1 in 5 women worldwide have disabilities — with even higher rates in low- and middle-income countries — they remain largely invisible, particularly in the global health sector.ⁱ When addressing the needs and rights of people with disabilities, the specific challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities, and the ways in which gender shapes their experiences, are often overlooked.ⁱⁱ It is therefore not surprising to learn that women with disabilities are twice as likely as women without disabilities to experience gender-based violence,ⁱⁱⁱ or that in numerous countries, over 50 per cent of women with disabilities do not have their family planning needs satisfied and do not have control over their own reproductive health.^{iv}

Canada has committed to empower women and girls with disabilities by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010. In 2021, Canada also “adopted a ‘twin-track approach’ that includes mainstreaming disability with an intersectional, cross-cutting approach to programming based on Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy”.^v At the 2022 Global Disability Summit, Canada committed to provide greater assistance to people with disabilities and to advance disability inclusion in the care agenda.^{vi}

However, to more fully realize this commitment, we need to scale up our funding to meet existing and emerging challenges and opportunities. Currently, Canada’s funding directed towards people with disabilities across all sectors is only 3 per cent.^{vii} More specifically, there is little Canadian funding targeting women and girls with disabilities’ access to health care, including access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.^{viii}

In the 2023 report *International Assistance in Support of Gender Equality*, Canada’s Auditor General pointed out that “the department’s gender equality assessment process for projects did not consistently include analysis of intersecting identify factors, apart from age.”^{ix} Similar to gender equality decades ago, significant work remains for Canada and the global community to ensure that disability rights are systematically integrated into development and humanitarian programming.

To improve access to health care for women and girls with disabilities, **we recommend that the Government of Canada:**

1. Increase funding allocation for initiatives with a disability focus in health programming;
2. Support programs that target disability-inclusive sexual and reproductive health and rights;
3. Provide mandatory training to Global Affairs Canada staff on disability-inclusive programming. Similar to the GBA+ training for staff to better understand gender equality, training on disability inclusion will help ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind;
4. Initiate systematic data collection on disability to design appropriate strategies that improve access to health and other essential services;
5. Uphold its 2022 Global Disability Summit commitment to all people with disabilities in the context of paid and unpaid care work.



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- ⁱ UN Women, *Issue Brief: Making the SDGs count for women and girls with disabilities*, (New York: UN Women Headquarters Office, 2017), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/6/issue-brief-making-the-sdgs-count-for-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>
- ⁱⁱ UN Women, *The empowerment of women and girls with disabilities: Towards full and effective participation and gender equality* (New York: UN Women Headquarters Office, 2018), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/the-empowerment-of-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>
- ⁱⁱⁱ DAWN Canada, EDID-GHDI, Humanity & Inclusion, *Women and girls with disabilities: a briefing paper on ODA at the crossroads of disabilities and gender* (Montreal: Humanity & Inclusion Canada, 2023), https://www.hi-canada.org/sn_uploads/Women-and-girls-with-disabilities.pdf
- ^{iv} United Nations, *Disability and Development Report 2024*, Advanced Unedited Version (New York: UN, June 2024), <https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2024-06/Final-UN-DDR-2024-Executive%20Summary.pdf>
- ^v Ruvimbo Chidziva, *Canada's approach to disability-inclusive development programming*, (Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, July 2023), page 2, https://www.hi-canada.org/sn_uploads/Disability-inclusive-development.pdf
- ^{vi} Global Affairs Canada, *Canada participates in second Global Disability Summit* (Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, February 2022), <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/02/canada-participates-in-second-global-disability-summit.html>
- ^{vii} Development Initiatives, *Disability-Inclusive ODA: Aid Data on Donors, Channels, Recipients*, (Bristol: Development Initiatives, July 2020), https://devinit-prod-static.ams3.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/media/documents/Disability-inclusive-ODA_IF.pdf
- ^{viii} DAWN Canada, EDID-GHDI, Humanity & Inclusion, *Women and girls with disabilities: a briefing paper on ODA at the crossroads of disabilities and gender* (Montreal: Humanity & Inclusion Canada, 2023), https://www.hi-canada.org/sn_uploads/Women-and-girls-with-disabilities.pdf
- ^{ix} Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), *Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada: International Assistance in Support of Gender Equality—Global Affairs Canada* (Ottawa: OAG, 2023), page 4, https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/parl_oag_202303_04_e.pdf