



Women Enabled International's *accountABILITY* Toolkit: An Overview

Human rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible. Yet, in the twenty-first century, women across the globe continue to experience gender-based discrimination that impedes the full realization of their human rights. Specifically, women constitute 70 percent of the world's poor, two-thirds of the world's illiterate and are continually denied access to basic healthcare, housing, education, work and social security. Women and girls with disabilities in particular encounter multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of both gender and ability. High rates of gender-based violence, lack of access to justice, and denial of sexual and reproductive health information, goods, and services are particularly pernicious manifestations of the discrimination to which women and girls with disabilities are subjected.

International human rights law calls on governments to dismantle legal, structural, social, economic, and other barriers that women face in achieving equality and realizing their human rights. Human rights advocacy can be an effective tool for holding governments to account for their obligations under international human rights law and pushing for effective implementation of human rights and gender equality to improve the situation on the ground for women and girls with disabilities. The United Nations (U.N.) in particular has several different mechanisms for promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

Historically, people with disabilities, and women with disabilities in particular, have made scarce use of international human rights mechanisms to advance their rights. This is because information on the mechanisms—and the mechanisms themselves—have not been fully accessible for people with disabilities. There are very few members of the U.N. human rights system who identify as people with disabilities, and until the passing of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2006, the rights of people with disabilities were not formally a part of the international human rights agenda.

Women Enabled International's toolkit seeks to empower women with disabilities and organizations working on their behalf to make use of the available U.N. human rights mechanisms to ensure that the human rights violations women with disabilities experience receive redress and to make sure that statements, recommendations, observations, and guidance from the U.N. incorporate an intersectional gender and disability rights perspective. Increased attention to and guidance on how international human rights standards apply to the specific human rights issues facing women and girls with disabilities will help advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities worldwide.

accountABILITY:

Using U.N. Human Rights Mechanisms to Advance the Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities

- I. **Introduction to U.N. Human Rights Mechanisms:** this section of the advocacy guide provides an introduction to the practice and procedures of the three main U.N. human rights mechanisms: **treaty bodies**, **Special Procedures**, and the **Universal Periodic Review**. Through their comments, observations, reports, and recommendations, these bodies interpret—and strengthen our collective understanding of—what it means to have human rights and provide guidance to States on how to protect those rights.
- II. **Opportunities for Civil Society Engagement:** this section identifies the ways in which civil society can engage with the U.N. human rights system. In order to ensure that the guidance coming out of these bodies speaks to the human rights situations of all individuals, treaty bodies depend on information they receive from States and civil society alike about the realities on the ground. This

section provides an overview of when and how civil society can provide necessary information to the U.N. human rights bodies and the advantages and challenges of different types of engagement.

- III. **Advocacy Strategies:** this section provides guidance on developing advocacy strategies for successful U.N. engagement, looking in greater detail at the type of information that civil society should be providing to the U.N. through both written and in-person advocacy. This section also discusses collaboration with other organizations and strategies for implementing U.N. standards at the national level.
- IV. **Glossary:** the advocacy guide's glossary includes both common acronyms and terminology and an overview of terminology relevant to U.N. advocacy and advocacy on behalf of women and girls with disabilities.
- V. **Additional Resources:** the final section of the advocacy guide includes links to additional resources, including official U.N. websites, additional advocacy guides, online research tools, websites for relevant international human rights organizations, and templates/models for written submissions to U.N. mechanisms.

In addition to the advocacy guide, the *accountABILITY Toolkit* includes three thematic briefing papers that each include: 1) an introduction to using the briefing paper to support U.N. advocacy; 2) an overview of key topics related to the thematic issue; 3) a summary analysis of existing standards from seven major U.N. human rights treaty bodies, and an analysis of the gaps in the standards as they apply to women and girls with disabilities; and 4) an overview of key Special Procedure thematic reports. The thematic briefing papers are as follows:

accountABILITY:

U.N. Standards on Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities

This briefing paper addresses key issues and human rights standards around gender-based violence, including forms and manifestations of such violence; mechanisms for prevention and protection from such violence; access to justice; and cross-cutting topics, such as violence against women in institutional or conflict settings and violence based on intersectional identities.

accountABILITY:

U.N. Standards on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities

This briefing paper addresses key issues and human rights standards around sexual and reproductive health and rights. Specifically, this briefing paper addresses voluntary access to a range of information, goods, and services, including contraceptives, abortion, maternal health care, and sexuality education and information, as well as discrimination and coercion in the provision of reproductive health care, including forced and coerced sterilization and abortion.

accountABILITY:

U.N. Standards on Stereotyping and Discrimination against Women and Girls with Disabilities

This briefing paper addresses key issues and human rights standards around stereotyping and discrimination on the basis of gender and disability, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and harmful practices against women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities.

[Visit the accountABILITY Toolkit project page on the Women Enabled International website](#)