



WOMEN  
ENABLED  
INTERNATIONAL

# ACTIVISTS FROM STRENGTH

What You Need to Know to Be a  
Disability and Gender-Inclusive Funder

**Interactive Report**

*March 2025*

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## **Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism**

(UAF-FA) provides fast, flexible funding to women, trans, and non-binary activists who take and face enormous risks to challenge oppressive systems and build a more just and equitable world. Its holistic approach enables frontline feminist movements to respond to real-time threats and opportunities, protect and care for themselves and one another, and sustain and propel solutions to the most critical crises and injustices of our time.

Led by feminists with disabilities and allies, **Women Enabled International** (WEI) advances human rights and justice at the intersection of gender and disability to challenge exclusionary, unjust systems and support the leadership and center the voices of women, girls, and gender-diverse people with disabilities globally.

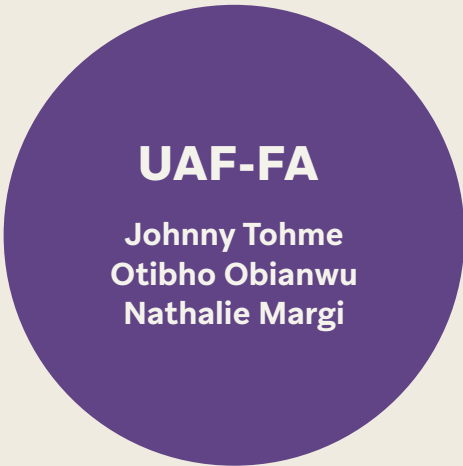


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## Activists from Strength

# Executive Summary

In a diverse range of countries from the Middle East, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe, organizations led by women and gender-diverse people—with and without disabilities— and individual advocates are transforming traditional patterns of activism for disability rights. They actively seek to advance rights at the intersection of gender and disability. However, despite the transformative nature of their work, organizations and activists working at the intersection of gender and disability still struggle to secure the financial resources and other forms of support they need to sustain their work.



Far from asking for charity, these activists and organizations assert their power as **activists from strength**. Leveraging that strength, they are contributing to transforming the funding landscape to ensure it further promotes the sustainability of movements working to advance disability and gender rights and justice in a way that fully recognizes the leadership of women and gender-diverse people.

## Summary of recommendations for funders to improve support for organizations and activists working at the intersection of gender and disability

### Identifying and connecting with Organizations of People with Disabilities (OPDs)

**Use** creative approaches and take advantage of the snowball effect, where key contacts help identify additional organizations.

**Review** civil society reports to the United Nation's treaty bodies to identify organizations and advocates working at the intersection of gender and disability issues and learn about their work.

**Be** flexible and ask potential grantee partners about their preferred way of communication.

### Listening

**Recognize the expertise of movements**, including current and potential grantee partners.

**Have** meaningful conversations with current and potential grantee partners to understand their needs and situations better.

### Making things easier

**Simplify** application and grantmaking processes and make them more flexible.

**Adapt** to changing needs.

**Use** a wide variety of ways to transfer funds. Make sure organizations can receive cash payments.

**Devise** safe payment routes.

**Encourage** other donors to understand the need for and increase flexible and core funding.

### Improving communication

**Incorporate** and/or improve your accessible communication strategies.<sup>1</sup>

**Ensure** linguistic justice and accessibility in application and reporting processes.

**Create** lines of communication between funders and OPDs.

### Setting clear priorities

**Focus** on supporting

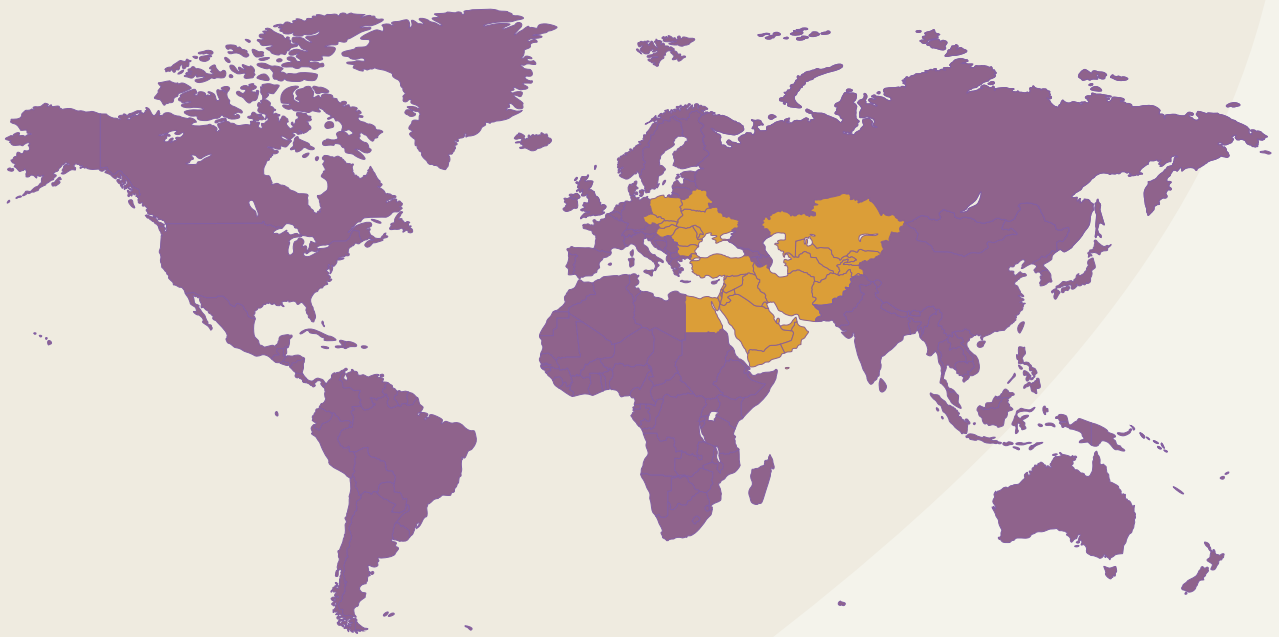
- human rights-focused organizations.
- small organizations
- diverse leadership
- activists and organizations in crisis areas, especially those in conflict zones.

<p><b>Providing support</b></p>	<p><b>Provide</b> grantee partners' staff with the support they need to sustain their work, including core funding.</p> <p><b>Offer</b> support materials to help prospective grantee partners navigate application and implementation processes.</p> <p><b>Create</b> accessible processes for feedback for rejected applications.</p> <p><b>Offer</b> accompaniment for current and prospective grantee partners on project design and management and organizational development.</p>
<p><b>Adjusting criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Revise</b> funding criteria to ensure expansive considerations within what is considered core funding.</p> <p><b>Make sure</b> your criteria do not exclude activists from certain regions of any given country from receiving funding.</p> <p><b>Ensure</b> your grant application criteria reflect disability justice principles<sup>2</sup> without requiring organizations to identify explicitly as disability justice organizations, recognizing that many don't subscribe to global north/funder-specific terminology, and that while disability may not be central to an organization's mission, it is still crucial to foster inclusivity, equity, and accessibility.</p> <p><b>Use</b> a broad definition of "emergencies" as a key criterion for accessing crisis funding.</p>
<p><b>Building bridges</b></p>	<p><b>Build</b> relationships between OPDs and funders.</p> <p><b>Encourage</b> and provide funding for prospective and current grantee partners to engage in cross-movement collaboration at the intersection of gender and disability.</p> <p><b>Share</b> this report with other funders and join us in sparking change</p>

<sup>1</sup> See Women Enabled International, Good Practices: Access - International Meetings Checklist, available at <https://womenenabled.org/reports/good-practices-international-meetings-checklist/>, and Tips for Accessible Social Media, available at <https://womenenabled.org/reports/access-good-practices-social-media/>. See also Inclusive Generation Equality Collective, Feminist Accessibility Protocol, available at <https://womenenabled.org/reports/the-feminist-accessibility-protocol/>.

<sup>2</sup> Sin Invalid, What is Disability Justice?, June 16 2020, <https://www.sininvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/16/what-is-disability-justice>. For resources on disability-inclusive grantmaking, see Disability and Philanthropy Forum, <https://disabilityphilanthropy.org/resources/topic/disability-inclusive-grantmaking-resources>, including its Guidance for Disability-Inclusive Grants Assessments <https://disabilityphilanthropy.org/resource/guidance-for-disability-inclusive-grants-assessments/>, and its Grantmakers' Guide for Disability Inclusion, <https://disabilityphilanthropy.org/resource/grantmakers-guide-for-disability-inclusion/>. See also Ford Foundation, Funder Guidance and Case Studies for Disability-Inclusive Grantmaking, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ff-disabilitygrantmaking-111920.pdf>.

UAF-FA and WEI hope *Activists from Strength* will spark transformative dialogue, reflection, and ideas among activists, organizations, funders, and other stakeholders interested in working together to implement these recommendations and strengthen inclusive, intersectional, and sustainable movements in the Middle East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and beyond.



**We are activists from strength  
not from weakness.**

-  
*Yemeni Activist*



# Introduction

In 2022, Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism (UAF-FA) and Women Enabled International (WEI) teamed up to explore and understand the priority issues, advocacy agendas, strategies, and the opportunities and challenges faced by organizations led by women and gender-diverse people—with and without disabilities—and individual activists who are transforming traditional patterns of activism for disability rights in selected countries from the Middle East, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. As noted by a Yemeni activist who generously contributed to this report and is quoted in its title, these advocates and organizations are activists from strength.

After laying the foundation to engage with disability rights and justice advocacy, the section Addressing human rights abuses against women and gender-diverse people with disabilities uncovers the main issues impacting the lives of women and gender-diverse people with disabilities in the regions where these activists operate. The section Resisting and organizing from strength: strategies to promote rights at the intersection of gender and disability identifies the innovative strategies and good practices they have put in place to promote disability rights and address the challenges their communities experience. The section Staying strong while navigating complex challenges presents an account of obstacles that impact how activists and organizations sustain their work, with a focus on funding challenges. Importantly, this interactive report offers a series of concrete steps funders can take to support activists in their work, outlined in the section Knowing better, doing better.



**UAF-FA and WEI intentionally designed this report in an interactive format to encourage readers to reflect on their practices at the individual and community levels while actively and consciously engaging with its content, which reflects and pays respect to the lived experiences of women and gender-diverse people with disabilities who so generously contributed to it.**

**UAF-FA and WEI hope readers will approach this interactive report with an open mind and open heart, taking the time to go over the proposed exercises in the *warm-up* and *food for thought* boxes, as well as to explore the resources shared.**

# Methodology



Over 50 activists representing 40 organizations led by women and/or gender-diverse people—with and without disabilities—working to advance rights at the intersection of gender and disability contributed to this initiative. They are based and/or work in Belarus, Hungary, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Tajikistan, and Yemen.<sup>3</sup>

The disability justice movement mapping and landscape analysis that informed this interactive report was conducted in two phases. The first phase was implemented in 2022 and involved activists and organizations led by women and/or gender-diverse people—with and without disabilities—working at the intersection of gender and disability based in Hungary, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Poland, and Romania. The second phase was implemented in 2023 and was focused on the same type of activists and organizations based in Belarus, Iraq, Tajikistan, and Yemen.

To understand the different realities of activism in these countries, at the beginning of each phase, UAF-FA and WEI undertook a mapping of key disability and gender justice activists and collectives in each country and conducted desk research on the country contexts in which they operate. Activists were invited to fill out an online survey to express their interest in engaging in this initiative and share preliminary information about their advocacy efforts and activism. The information collected through this survey informed the agenda for the subsequent virtual consultations and individual interviews hosted by UAF-FA and WEI, which served to explore the activists' work more deeply and determine the type of support they need, particularly regarding accessing funding and other key resources to sustain their work.



## A note on language used in the global disability community where there are a few ways to describe the experience of disability, including:

**Person-first language:** *person with a disability*. This term stresses that persons with disabilities are persons before everything else. This is the language that has been adopted by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

**Identity-first language:** *disabled person*. This language stresses that disability is a core part of the person's identity, and that the disability is a result of societal exclusion rather than their conditions.

Other less frequent terms may include "persons with special needs", and "persons living with a disability". These terms are not widely used nor accepted by the disability community.

<sup>3</sup> For their safety, all activists who have contributed to this work will remain anonymous in this report.

Getting started

# What is disability and who is advocating for disability rights

## *Disability models and types of civil society organizations advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities*

Before exploring the experiences and good practices shared by disability and gender activists, we will provide an overview of four main models used by the disability community to conceptualize disability and disabled identity. Knowing these different models and their main characteristics is key to better understanding the work of activists and organizations advocating for rights at the intersection of gender and disability. It also helps funders and other readers reflect on their own perceptions of—and attitudes towards—people with disabilities and their lived experiences.

- 1. Charity Model** | This model reflects how disability and people with disabilities are oftentimes viewed as objects of charity and pity rather than as rights holders.
- 2. Medical Model** | This model considers disability as an impairment and a deviation from “normal” health that needs to be treated, cured, fixed, or at least rehabilitated. In this model, it is the person’s impairment that explains—and justifies—their exclusion in society.<sup>4</sup>
- 3. Social Model** | By conceptualizing disability as a social construct, this model differentiates between the notion of impairment and disability: “while the first relates to a condition of the body or the mind, the second is the result of the way the environment and society respond to that impairment.”<sup>5</sup> Under this model, “exclusion of disabled persons from society is politically analyzed as the result of barriers [created and/or not addressed by societies] and discrimination.”<sup>6</sup>
- 4. Human Rights Model** | The human rights model “is [also] built on the premise that disability is a social construct, but it develops it further,”<sup>7</sup> including by offering “a roadmap for change”<sup>8</sup> to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities, ensure they can fully enjoy these rights on an equal basis with other people, and promote respect for their inherent dignity.<sup>9</sup> This model, which also acknowledges the patterns of intersectional discrimination against persons with disabilities, is enshrined in the CRPD. The CRPD is underpinned by the disability rights movement principle “Nothing About us Without Us,” which posits that persons with disabilities know what is best for them and their communities.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Theresia Degener, Disability in a Human Rights Context, 5 n. 3 Laws (2016) at 2 [Hereinafter: Theresia Degener: Disability in a Human Rights Context].

<sup>5</sup> Id., at 3.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Id., at 19.

<sup>8</sup> Id., at 2.

<sup>9</sup> Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, G.A. Res. 61/106, U.N. Doc. A/RES/61/106 (Dec. 13, 2006) at art 1 [hereinafter CRPD].

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Lockwood, Nothing about us without us: Disability, the SDGs and the UNCRPD, The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine - Future Learn, <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/global-disability/0/steps/37575>.

In 2005, while the drafting of the CRPD was being finalized at the global level, several activists, organizers, and cultural workers in the United States—including activists and artists with Sins Invalid—began discussing a completely different way of conceptualizing disability.<sup>11</sup> While they recognize that the American disability rights movement has decisively contributed to advancing “a philosophy of independent living and opening possibilities for people with disabilities,”<sup>12</sup> these activists noted that the disability rights framework “is based in a single-issue identity, focusing exclusively on disability at the expense of other intersections” and not adequately considering how ableism<sup>13</sup> “is linked to multiple other systems of oppression.”<sup>14</sup> As a way of guiding other activists in building a broad-based popular movement to dismantle ableism alongside other systems of oppression,<sup>15</sup> Sins Invalid articulated ten **Disability Justice Principles**.<sup>16</sup>



**A note on on the role of Disability Justice Principles as a framework to analyze the work of activists and organizations outside the United States:**

While the U.S. disability movement has played a key role in articulating and advancing the Disability Justice Principles, most organizations and activists in the regions covered by UAF-FA and WEI’s research—and beyond—are not familiar with these principles and/or do not explicitly follow them. However, as discussed in this interactive report, many of their priority issues and advocacy agendas and strategies implicitly reflect and/or can be connected to the Disability Justice Principles, including their emphasis on prioritizing intersectionality and cross-movement collaboration. In the following pages, we have included additional guidelines on how to use the Principles as a framework to engage with—and better understand the work of—these activists and organizations and many others from countries other than the United States.

<sup>11</sup> Sin Invalid, What is Disability Justice?, June 16 2020, <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/16/what-is-disability-justice>.

<sup>12</sup> Id.

<sup>13</sup> Ableism has been defined as “a value system that considers certain typical characteristics of body and mind as essential for living a life of value... [and conceives of] the disability experience as a misfortune that leads to suffering and disadvantage.” For more information, see UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, The impact of ableism in medical and scientific practice, A/HRC/43/41 (2020), paragraphs 9 and 10.

<sup>14</sup> Id.

<sup>15</sup> Patty Berne, Disability Justice: A working Draft, Sins Invalid, June 10 2015, <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/disability-justice-a-working-draft-by-patty-berne>.

<sup>16</sup> A more in-depth description of each principle is available at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bed3674f8370ad8c02efd9a/t/5f1f0783916d8a179c46126d/1595869064521/10\\_Principles\\_of\\_DJ-2ndEd.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bed3674f8370ad8c02efd9a/t/5f1f0783916d8a179c46126d/1595869064521/10_Principles_of_DJ-2ndEd.pdf)

**It is also important to note the difference between organizations of persons with disabilities and those that work for them:**

**Organizations of Persons with disabilities**

Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) are “led, directed, and governed by persons with disabilities” with the goal of collectively promoting and/or defending their rights.<sup>17</sup>

**Organizations for Persons with disabilities**

Organizations for persons with disabilities are usually non-profit organizations devoted to providing services and/or advocating on behalf of persons with disabilities.

In many countries, organizations for persons with disabilities tend to have greater access to funding and power than OPDs and are not always aligned with the priorities of local people with disabilities. Therefore, it is important for funding to prioritize OPDs using the above definition.



**Important notes on the models and approaches used by the organizations and activists in this research**

The work of activists and organizations that participated in this research reflects a variety of disability models. Some have embraced the human rights model fully, while others still use a mix of the human rights and medical models, particularly those who are organizations for persons with disabilities. In a few specific cases, it was evident that organizations were relying on the medical model only.

None of them used the term “Disability Justice” though some of them were putting the Disability Justice Principles into practice, as flagged in the box “A note on the role of Disability Justice Principles as a framework to analyze the work of activists and organizations outside the United States.”

Although most of the organizations reported that they had adopted a gender-inclusive approach, they still most frequently adopt the term “gender” in binary terms of Woman/Man rather than on a spectrum.

Most of the organizations that contributed to this report labeled themselves as OPDs.



- Have you come across or supported groups working on disability? If so, write out an example of a group working on these issues and match it to a key model above.
- Now think of a way that their work could move towards a disability justice model.
- What key questions should funders ask (themselves) when supporting disability rights and justice movements? List your questions and discuss with your networks, including with folks with disabilities.

**Interested in learning more?**

- Check out Sins Invalid work [here](#) and explore the Disability Justice Principles in depth [here](#).
- Take a closer look at the CRPD [here](#).

<sup>17</sup> Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee), General comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, CRPD/C/GC/7 (2018), para. 12.

Activists from strength

# Addressing serious human rights abuses against women and gender-diverse people with disabilities

*Brief overview of the main issues impacting the lives of women and gender-diverse people with disabilities in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East*



We are not only disabled; we are also each coming from a specific experience of race, class, sexuality, age, religious background, geographical location, immigration status, and more. Depending on context, we all have areas where we experience privilege, as well as areas of oppression.<sup>18</sup>

## ***Disability Justice Principles - Principle 1. Intersectionality***



Before reading this section, think about what challenges people with disabilities are/might be facing in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East regarding the full enjoyment of their rights.

The advocates and organizations that contributed to this report operate in societies where people with disabilities—particularly those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities—experience persisting patterns of intersectional discrimination that prevent them from fully exercising their rights and expose them to widespread marginalization and exclusion. Women and gender-diverse people with disabilities in particular are discriminated against on the basis of their gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and/or sex characteristics and experience significant restrictions on their autonomy and self-determination.

***In the words of an activist from Tajikistan who engaged with UAF-FA and WEI as part of this initiative:***



***In our society, boys... men with disabilities have certain prospects. They're being promoted...they can access jobs. They can access employment or be self-employed. But young women and girls with disabilities remain isolated .... Basically, these girls will live in the family [home], within the four walls of their room. They don't go out anywhere.***

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<sup>18</sup> Sins Invalid, 10 Principles of Disability Justice, Principle 1: Intersectionality, <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/blog/10-principles-of-disability-justice>.

Within this context, across the regions covered by our research, women and gender-diverse people with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing education and employment opportunities. For example, the 2024 Gender Index revealed that “in Hungary and Romania there was not a single case of a 15- to 24-year-old woman with disabilities who was engaged in education, training or employment.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in Lebanon, women “often find themselves facing unemployment, food insecurity, and poverty,”<sup>20</sup> as do gender-diverse people with disabilities.

Women and gender-diverse people with disabilities also face significant barriers to the full enjoyment of their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and their rights to political participation and to be free from gender-based violence, among other fundamental rights. As emphasized by activists from Belarus, Hungary, Romania, and Tajikistan, these patterns are compounded for women and gender-diverse people with disabilities subjected to forced institutionalization,<sup>21</sup> who face higher rates of gender-based violence and severe restrictions to their sexual and reproductive health and rights—including forced contraception and forced abortion—and their parental responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> People with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities are also particularly exposed to forced institutionalizations.

### Institutionalization of—and sanctioned violence against—women and gender-diverse people with disabilities in Belarus

In Belarus, institutionalization has been historically used as a “tool to frighten political opponents,” including those who advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. In this regard, in September 2024, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) condemned “the high rates of... forced hospitalizations encountered by women with disabilities, in particular, those who are human rights defenders or political activists.” The Committee also expressed its concern for “reports of incidents of violence and intimidation against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex communities, including persons with disabilities, and the lack of adequate investigation and accountability measures in such cases.”

<sup>19</sup> Equal Measures 2030, Findings from the 2024 SDG Gender Index, A gender equal future in crisis? 27 (2024), [https://equalmeasures2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/EM2030\\_2024\\_SDG\\_Gender\\_Index\\_EN\\_digital.pdf](https://equalmeasures2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/EM2030_2024_SDG_Gender_Index_EN_digital.pdf) [hereinafter Equal Measures 2030, Findings from the 2024 SDG Gender Index].

<sup>20</sup> UN Women Lebanon, At the community kitchen, women with disabilities affected by the Beirut Explosion regain a sense of self-worth and help others, September 5, 2022, <https://lebanon.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2022/09/at-the-community-kitchen-women-with-disabilities-affected-by-the-beirut-explosion-regain-a-sense-of-self-worth-and-help-others>.

<sup>21</sup> “Institutionalization of persons with disabilities refers to any detention based on disability alone or in conjunction with other grounds such as ‘care’ or ‘treatment.’” CRPD Committee, Guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies, CRPD/C/5 (2022), para. 15. As described by the CRPD Committee, “There are certain defining elements of an institution, such as obligatory sharing of assistants with others and no or limited influence as to who provides the assistance; isolation and segregation from independent life in the community; lack of control over day-to-day decisions; lack of choice for the individuals concerned over with whom they live; rigidity of routine irrespective of personal will and preferences; identical activities in the same place for a group of individuals under a certain authority; a paternalistic approach in service provision; supervision of living arrangements; and a disproportionate number of persons with disabilities in the same environment.” Id., para. 14.

<sup>22</sup> CRPD Committee, Inquiry concerning Hungary under article 6 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Report of the Committee. CRPD/C/HUN/IR/1 (2020), para. 103 g).

<sup>23</sup> European Parliament Directorate-General for External Policies, Psychiatry as a Tool for Coercion in Post-Soviet Countries 21 (2013). See also Freedom House, Freedom in the World Report: Belarus (2023), <https://freedomhouse.org/country/belarus/freedom-world/2023>, and Amnesty International, Belarus: Outspoken psychiatrist forcibly detained: Igor Postnov, August 28, 2013, <https://www.amnesty.org/es/documents/eur49/016/2013/en/>.

<sup>24</sup> CCRPD Committee, Concluding observations on the initial report of Belarus, CRPD/C/BLR/CO/1 (2024), para. 29 b).

<sup>25</sup> Id., at para. 29 c).

Women with disabilities living in Palestine have been “largely underprivileged in terms of rights, opportunities, and resources, in comparison with other members of society without disabilities.” In particular, “girls are deprived of education and denied the opportunity to make decisions, participate in society, find employment or enjoy their right to inheritance. This situation is aggravated by the failure to enforce the disability law and the absence of different forms of protection and care.” In a context where disability is highly stigmatized, Palestinians with disabilities also experience a disproportionate impact under occupation and apartheid. Human Rights Watch found that “sweeping Israeli restrictions on the movement of people and goods, at times exacerbated by restrictive policies by Palestinian authorities, curb access to assistive devices, health care, and electricity essential to many people with disabilities.”

The human rights situation in Palestine and parts of Lebanon has worsened since October 2023 due to the ongoing genocide. Palestinians have no safe place to shelter and exercise their basic rights, and this has put women and gender-diverse persons with disabilities in extreme and strenuous living conditions. As stressed by the CRPD Committee in May 2024, women and girls with disabilities have lost access to appropriate sanitation facilities—which impacts their menstrual health—as well as their access to sexual and reproductive health services, safe and accessible shelter, and, crucially, food and water to survive. Within these extremely dire conditions, women and girls with disabilities face heightened vulnerability to sexual abuse and gender-based violence—even when accessing food distribution—in a context where there are no safe spaces providing support for gender-based violence survivors. This also holds true for gender-diverse people with disabilities, who face a disproportionate risk of violence. AlQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in the Palestinian Society highlights that even while homophobia and transphobia are increasing, “we have the responsibility to find ways to engage with society and understand the relationship between sexual [and] gender violence and the violence of colonialism against us.”

#### Further resources

- For a more detailed account about people with disabilities in Palestine, visit [Breaking the Silence on Gaza here](#).
- To find out more about the intersection of Disability Justice and Palestinian liberation, check out the [PalestineXDisability Justice Syllabus by Disability Visibility here](#).
- To explore more about Palestinian liberation and its intersection with sexual and gender diversity, read [AlQaws’ Beyond Propaganda: pinkwashing as colonial violence here](#).

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<sup>26</sup> UNFPA, Women and girls with disabilities: Needs of survivors of gender-based violence and services offered to them, 23 (2019), <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/women-and-girls-with-disabilities-needs-of-survivors-of-gender-based-violence-and-services-offered-to-them-unfpa-report/>.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch (2023), Palestine: Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: 17th Pre-Sessional Working Group, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/13/palestine-submission-un-committee-rights-persons-disabilities>. See also UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, Israel’s 55-year occupation of Palestinian Territory is apartheid – UN human rights expert (2022), March 25 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/israels-55-year-occupation-palestinian-territory-apartheid-un-human-rights>.

<sup>29</sup> UN Women, Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza (2024), [https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/gender-alert-the-\\_gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza.pdf](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/gender-alert-the-_gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, Reflecting on Queerness in Times of Genocide, June 6 2024, [https://alqaws.org/news/Reflecting-on-Queerness-in-Times-of-Genocide?category\\_id=0](https://alqaws.org/news/Reflecting-on-Queerness-in-Times-of-Genocide?category_id=0).



It is important to note that these human rights abuses against women and gender-diverse people with disabilities occur in contexts marked by the deterioration of the rule of law across all the regions analyzed in this research, which results in further restrictions to their fundamental rights. For example, in Poland, a country that has historically been reluctant to fully recognize SRHR, governmental efforts “to further curb reproductive freedom”<sup>31</sup> in recent years—including the targeting of healthcare professionals providing safe abortions<sup>32</sup>— have heightened the barriers women with disabilities face to accessing SRHR education, information, and services, particularly on contraception and safe abortion.<sup>33</sup>The deterioration of the rule of law in Poland has also been reflected in the rise in hate speech and hate crimes against LGBTQ+ persons.<sup>34</sup>

In Belarus, a country where “any criticism of the State actions and/or activities [is] a punishable crime,”<sup>35</sup> people with disabilities face extreme “legal and practical restrictions on [their] freedom of expression,”<sup>36</sup> such as “administrative detention and the excessive use of force against them”<sup>37</sup> for expressing their views on public affairs, including on matters regarding their rights. In the case of “persons with psychosocial disabilities and/or intellectual disabilities, [they] are [even] sometimes... included in the State party’s list of people involved in extremist or terrorist activities.”<sup>38</sup> An anonymous source who identifies as a person with a disability shared their own experience of detention in the country. Together with a colleague, they were interrogated for several hours, during which they were humiliated, threatened, insulted, deprived of the possibility of proper movement, and then held incommunicado.

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<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch, “The Breath of the Government on My Back”: Attacks on Women’s Rights in Poland, February 6 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/02/06/breath-government-my-back/attacks-womens-rights-poland>.

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Watch, Poland: Abortion Witch Hunt Targets Women, Doctors: Criminalization, Pursuit of Alleged Offenders Violates Rights, September 14 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/09/14/poland-abortion-witch-hunt-targets-women-doctors>.

<sup>33</sup> CRPD Committee, Concluding observations on the initial report of Poland, CRPD/C/POL/CO/1 (2018), paras. 9 c) and 43 e).

<sup>34</sup> CSee European Commission, European Semester 2020-2021 country fiche on disability: Poland 22 (2021). It has been argued that this situation “may intersectionally influence... persons with disabilities who belong to these communities... [and] may lead to the strengthening of prejudice also against disabled people [more broadly].” *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> CRPD Committee, Concluding observations on the initial report of Belarus, *supra* note 19, para. 41(c).

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*, para. 41(a).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*, para. 25(c).

In Yemen, the cumulative impact of the armed conflict,<sup>39</sup> economic collapse, and repeated climate disasters<sup>40</sup> have exacerbated historical patterns of exclusion and discrimination against women<sup>41</sup> and gender-diverse people, including those with disabilities who “face a heightened threat of violence, abuse and discrimination, even as essential health and protection services are either non-existent or not equipped to accommodate their needs.”<sup>42</sup> One of the activists who contributed to this research also shared the concern that girls with disabilities are oftentimes married at an early age because their families consider them—in the words of the activist— a “burden to get rid of.” This human rights violation also impacts the lives of girls and children without disabilities, and its prevalence has been on the rise since the beginning of the armed conflict.<sup>43</sup>

Partners of UAF-FA in Yemen have also shared that due to class and economic disparities, women and gender-diverse persons with disabilities have extremely limited access to clean and safe environments. This, in turn, heightens the risk of experiencing gender-based violence and isolation.

### From the local to the global: patterns of human rights abuses against women and gender-diverse people with disabilities

This interactive report highlights activists resisting genocide, occupation, wars, the deterioration of the rule of law, and natural disasters. While these stories are from specific contexts, we know that the struggle for gender and disability rights and justice has global patterns, including the fact that, globally, women and gender-diverse persons with disabilities:

- are at a heightened risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse compared to those without disabilities, particularly in institutional settings and/or in the context of humanitarian emergencies and situations of risk;<sup>44</sup>
- are disproportionately subjected to forced or coerced sterilization, contraception, and abortion, among other serious violations of their SRHR that are frequently based on false and discriminatory assumptions about their sexuality, capacity to make autonomous decisions about their lives, or ability to parent;

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<sup>39</sup> Humanity and Inclusion, *Unshielded, Unseen: The Implementation of UNSC Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict in Yemen* (2022),

[https://www.hi.org/sn\\_uploads/document/HI-Case-study-Resolution-2475-YEMEN-2022.pdf](https://www.hi.org/sn_uploads/document/HI-Case-study-Resolution-2475-YEMEN-2022.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> UNFPA, *Inclusive safe spaces give Yemeni women with disabilities a chance to be their own breadwinners*, August 3 2023, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/inclusive-safe-spaces-give-yemeni-women-disabilities-chance-be-their-own-breadwinners>.[https://www.hi.org/sn\\_uploads/document/HI-Case-study-Resolution-2475-YEMEN-2022.pdf](https://www.hi.org/sn_uploads/document/HI-Case-study-Resolution-2475-YEMEN-2022.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> UOHCHR, *Yemen: Realising the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2022), [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/OHCHR\\_PWD\\_Yemen\\_EN\\_4Dec2022.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/OHCHR_PWD_Yemen_EN_4Dec2022.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> UNFPA, *Inclusive safe spaces give Yemeni women with disabilities a chance to be their own breadwinners*, supra note 35.

<sup>43</sup> *Girls Not Brides, Child Marriage Atlas: Yemen*, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/regions-and-countries/yemen>.

<sup>44</sup> CRPD Committee, *General Comment No. 3 (2016) Article 6: Women and Girls with Disabilities*, U.N. Doc. CRPD/C/GC/3 (2016), paras. 29, 49 and 53.

- are disproportionately subjected to forced or coerced sterilization, contraception, and abortion, among other serious violations of their SRHR that are frequently based on false and discriminatory assumptions about their sexuality, capacity to make autonomous decisions about their lives, or ability to parent;<sup>45</sup>
- “face an intersection of gender- and disability-related barriers in attitudes, circumstances and work itself, including the compounded effects of multiple discrimination that limit opportunities to work, affect their right to equal pay and increase the risk of violence and harassment in the workplace;”<sup>46</sup>
- have historically been prevented from participating in public decision-making, including by establishing or joining organizations that can represent their needs and demands.<sup>47</sup>



- **Can you identify any similarities between the lived experiences of women and gender-diverse individuals with disabilities described above and those of the groups and communities you support in your work?**
- **Looking at the trends above, consider how different layers of oppression and identity intersect and impact the lives of women and gender-diverse people with disabilities.**

<sup>45</sup> Rashida Manjoo, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, U.N. Doc. A/67/227 (2012), paras. 28 and 36.

<sup>46</sup> CRPD Committee, General Comment No. 8 (2022) on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment, U.N. Doc. CRPD/C/GC/8 (2022), para. 23.

<sup>47</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Report on Participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/31/62 (2016), para. 58.

Resisting and organizing from strength

## Strategies to promote rights at the intersection of gender and disability

*An overview of the innovative strategies and good practices that activists and organizations have put in place to promote disability rights and address the serious human rights abuses experienced by their communities*



When we talk about ableism, racism, sexism & transmisogyny, colonization, police violence, etc., we are not looking to academics and experts to tell us what's what — we are lifting up, listening to, reading, following, and highlighting the perspectives of those who are most impacted by the systems we fight against. By centering the leadership of those most impacted, we keep ourselves grounded in real-world problems and find creative strategies for resistance."<sup>48</sup>

To navigate and address the serious human rights abuses experienced by their communities, the activists and organizations with whom UAF-FA and WEI engaged implement a variety of strategies that encompass key approaches which have been organized into four categories, namely, 1) Challenging stereotypes, learning together; 2) Building communities of care; 3) Working for intersectional movements; and 4) Fighting for disability and gender-inclusive frameworks.




- What comes to your mind when you read the titles of each category of good practice? That is, what do you expect to find in each sub-section?
- What do the terms "communities of care" and "intersectional movements" mean to you?

### Challenging stereotypes, learning together

As an Iraqi activist for the rights of people with disability explains—with words that would resonate with those working on gender and disability issues across the globe—"Stereotypes exist, and that's a fact", with intensity varying according to local contexts. He further describes: "Some might be prejudiced towards those of us with disabilities and believe that... the best thing for us is to stay home...We have to change this perception – it hurts us because those people do not know our strengths and what we can achieve. We are the ones who can bring about this change, as we have proven numerous times."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Sins Invalid, 10 Principles of Disability Justice, supra note 13, Principle 2: Leadership of the most impacted.

<sup>49</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM), Othman al-Kinani Lost his Eyesight, and Gained a New Sense of Clarity, <https://weblog.iom.int/othman-al-kinani-lost-his-eyesight-and-gained-new-sense-clarity>.



*Stereotypes against people with disabilities are rooted in ableism, "a value system that considers certain typical characteristics of body and mind as essential for living a life of value... [and conceives of] the disability experience as a misfortune that leads to suffering and disadvantage,"<sup>50</sup> resulting in their oppression.<sup>51</sup>*

Dismantling ableism and debunking these stereotypes about people with disabilities, especially in regions with a history of colonization, apartheid systems, slavery, and systemic war, is a key priority issue within the awareness-raising initiatives led by many of the activists and organizations in this research. These initiatives are oftentimes accompanied by capacity-strengthening efforts aimed at equipping people with disabilities with tools to navigate and transform the status quo and foster their autonomy.

**Some of these initiatives are highlighted below. They are examples of how activists and organizations are tackling systemic problems in their communities.**



We highlight these examples to demonstrate the powerful work advocates are doing with minimal to no support; these good practices are not lifted up in an attempt to inspire in an ableist way (what the disability advocate Stella Young termed "inspiration porn"<sup>52</sup>).

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<sup>50</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, The impact of ableism in medical and scientific practice, A/HRC/43/41 (2020), paras. 9 and 10.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> TEDx Talks, Stella Young, I'm Not Your Inspiration, [https://www.ted.com/speakers/stella\\_young](https://www.ted.com/speakers/stella_young).

## Awareness raising on the rights of people with disabilities: **How societies can dismantle discriminatory attitudes and practices towards them**

” **We wanted society to recognize that we exist, basically, and that the quality of our lives is being systematically made into a horror show.**

-  
*Polish Activist*

In **Lebanon**, an OPD is actively working to share information about and “raise awareness of the rights of women with disabilities” in a society that “does not see [them] as human beings with equal rights” and infantilizes them, as stated by one activist. According to the leader of this organization, these stereotypes also permeate the attitudes of women without disabilities, including women’s rights advocates, many of whom “are surprised whenever they find out a woman with a disability has graduated from university and has a decent job... as if they have accomplished something extraordinary.” Another organization in Lebanon shared that they have conducted awareness-raising activities at schools for children to “learn about disability at a very young age so that they can grow up to be far more inclusive and not discriminate” against people with disabilities.

In **Yemen**, one organization designed and launched an awareness-raising campaign focused on the rights of Deaf people in the country, as well as the challenges they face. The initiative included several short films featuring Deaf women with disabilities who share their lived experiences.

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### Capacity-strengthening: **Equipping people with disabilities with tools to advocate for their rights and foster their autonomy**

In **Tajikistan**, one organization has hosted inclusive moot court trainings for young people with disabilities. Through these trainings, participants gain vital skills, including preparing submissions of legal cases and appeals, speaking in court, and asserting their rights. The leader of the organization shared that this initiative helped raise legal awareness among participants and equipped them with the knowledge they need to resolve issues impacting their own lives and claim their rights.

Another organization in Tajikistan facilitates workshops for people with disabilities so they can enter the workforce in a specific trade such as baking, seamstressing, and digital device maintenance. The leader of the organization shared that this initiative has been successful in helping people with disabilities generate income.



- How has ableism showed up in the work you do? What are concrete practices you can adopt to unlearn ableist approaches? How will you actively shift your work to be more conscious in action?
- What strategies adopted by folks with disabilities similar to the ones presented in this section have you come across? How many of them are inclusive of gender and disability? How can you support efforts in awareness raising, capacity building, and more to break ableist structures?

## **Building communities of care**

While leading these initiatives to dismantle stereotypes and strengthen the capacity of people with disabilities to assert their rights and autonomy, activists and organizations pay particular attention to supporting and taking care of each other.

Even though the term itself has been problematized and critiqued in many circles as fostering a narrative of dependency, collective care as a broad practice has naturally been at the center of movements working on disability.<sup>53</sup> Our conversations with people with disabilities and allies show that there is a growing collective care approach built on support and mutual aid.



**Let's dive in and learn about the ways they are embracing care!**

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<sup>53</sup> See Loree Erickson's Cultivating Collective Care, <https://www.cultivatingcollectivecare.com/post/welcome-to-cultivating-collective-care-website>.

## Taking care of each other while navigating situations of risk, humanitarian emergencies and other challenges

During the COVID-19 pandemic, several organizations in **Iraq** launched campaigns and trainings on protection from the virus aimed at people with disabilities. Some of them also advocated with the Iraqi government to provide vaccine doses and protective equipment specifically for people with disabilities. During a consultation, representatives of one organization shared that, at the onset of the pandemic, they provided mental health support for the disability community and have continued this practice since then. Their approach to the pandemic is holistic and includes both physical as well as psycho-social approaches specific to communities with disabilities who are particularly at risk if exposed to COVID-19.

In **Poland**, activists shared that they have been supporting people with disabilities in the context of the war in Ukraine. In 2022, when activists began receiving reports from colleagues in Ukraine that well-established humanitarian organizations did not have expertise on accessible evacuation and would not support the evacuation of persons with disabilities, they decided to create an informal network of humanitarian assistance and use all the resources they had to help Ukrainians with disabilities to be evacuated, thus establishing what one activist termed a “do-it-yourself humanitarian system.”

” **None of [those involved in this network] have had experience in humanitarian work. We are amateurs. We were learning by doing (...) We’ve managed to support a lot of Ukrainians with disabilities.**

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*Polish Activist*

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In **Tajikistan**, an organization for persons with disabilities is supporting women in need, including those with disabilities and those whose husbands are in prison, assisting them with food and coal to heat their houses. The leader of the organization shared that they also work with women who are in prison—sometimes with their children—and distribute winter clothes, organize warm meals for them, and provide diapers and toys for the kids.

They also shared that the organization receives support from Tajikistanis living abroad: “They send money, and we are able to access these funds...and we create safe spaces for the disabled.” They added that, at times, activists use their own funds to support the work of the organization. As an example, they shared that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they went to rural areas to distribute food and clothing and pointed out that this was funded with their own money.



In **Yemen**, many of the activists who engaged with UAF-FA and WEI support each other by discussing the challenges they are facing, helping each other when submitting requests for funding, or collaborating in advocacy efforts. Some activists added that they provide mental health support to people with disabilities, and others said they would like to prioritize this type of support in the future.

#### **Further resources:**

For a more detailed account of the role of OPDs and individual advocates with disabilities in supporting Ukrainians with disabilities during the war, check out the report *The capacity of Polish and Romanian stakeholders to provide support to Ukrainian refugees with disabilities in the metropolitan areas of Warsaw and Bucharest* here.



- What is your and your community's definition of collective care? After responding to this question, read UAF-FA's Guiding Principles of Collective Care available here. How do these principles align with your definition?
- Choose one example of a community you are part of or have supported and write a small paragraph about them and how they have put care into practice. What does collective care look like in that community?

#### **Now think of the following questions:**

- If you have resources to support communities to care for each other, how would you approach supporting their access to those resources?
- In times of crisis/danger/grief, how can you take part in buffering crisis, going beyond the humanitarian/charity model?

## Working for intersectional movements

### Cross-movement collaboration



Disability justice can only grow into its potential as a movement by aligning itself with racial justice, reproductive justice, queer and trans liberation, prison abolition, environmental justice, anti-police terror, Deaf activism, fat liberation, and other movements working for justice and liberation. This means challenging white disability communities around racism and challenging other movements to confront ableism. Through cross-movement solidarity, we create a united front.<sup>54</sup>

#### ***Disability Justice Principle 4. Commitment to cross-movement organizing***

The activists and organizations UAF-FA and WEI engaged with as part of this initiative generally agreed that collaboration across movements is challenging in their societies, particularly given stereotypes around gender and disability and persisting prejudice against the organizations working on these issues. In particular, as one of the activists highlighted, a key challenge that prevents cross-movement collaboration is the fact that “[issues] around LGBTQ and disability are highly taboo for mainstream advocacy groups and organizations and even the government.” Similarly, another activist noted that:



**Even if they work for women, the attitude [of many civil society organizations] was like ‘oh, but they have a disability. Like if you have a disability, you're not a woman, you're not a man. You are a disability.’ It took us some time to change this attitude, but then, things started to change a little bit.**

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***Activist from Lebanon***

While this still fits under the challenge of stereotypes and ableist approaches, it also highlights one of the biggest obstacles to finding intersections with other movements: the fact that single-issue movements are still the mainstream. This is in part due to societal framings, but it is important to note that siloed funding approaches are not without their impact. For instance, as one of the activists noted:



**[Trans people and people with disabilities] are [frequently] coupled together under the label of ‘marginalized groups’ within the funding context... [However, at the same time,] these identities are usually treated as separate (‘you are disabled, or you are trans’). People don’t perceive that they can come together... This pattern hinders or does not promote collaboration between these groups.**

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<sup>54</sup> Sins Invalid, 10 Principles of Disability Justice, supra note 13, Principle 4: Commitment to cross-movement organizing.



Given the impact of siloed funding patterns, it is key for funders to change their approaches towards who and how they fund. While identity has become a leading factor that often dictates where financial support goes, funders have tremendous power to foster cross-movement solidarity by centering intersectionality in their funding practices for disability and gender rights and justice and beyond.

Despite these challenges, the organizations and activists involved in this initiative believe that greater solidarity and intersectional movements are the best way to respond to a global context in which “stress, competition over scarce funding, security concerns, and constantly being under attack can all lead to exhaustion, self-censorship and polarization”<sup>55</sup> among movements. In this regard, in Palestine, one of the activists interviewed emphasized that “establishing coalitions is ‘a must.’” They highlighted the need for activists and organizations to work together, not separately, to better navigate the increasing challenges to accessing funding. In a context in which the occupation, local authorities, and social structures deepen compartmentalization, cross-movement-building strategies must be prioritized.

Relatedly, a Polish activist described that:



**The war in Ukraine completely changed the activist landscape in Poland in general, but also when it comes to disability activism. Not only the priorities changed, but also our capacity in terms of our energy and financial resources... we had to partner with other civil society organizations to ‘patch the gaps’ in the Polish State response to the humanitarian crisis, particularly regarding the provision of economic, medical, and other forms of humanitarian assistance.**

The quote above illustrates how activists and organizations have coalesced to support one another in the face of shortages in funding and a need for care and sustainability in times of crisis.

However, in some countries, the social and political context in which activists operate restricts opportunities for such collaboration. For instance, in Belarus, collaboration between the disability and women’s rights movements was frequent prior to the government’s crackdown on civil society that was unleashed following peaceful protests in 2020.<sup>56</sup> Since then, the scenario has evolved in its complexity, an activist shared, with many organizations having closed, several activists living in exile, and communication among them becoming more difficult.

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<sup>55</sup> The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, Hope and resistance go together. The state of women human rights defenders 34 (2023), <https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The-Kvinna-till-Kvinna-Foundation-The-state-of-women-human-rights-defenders-2023.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch, Belarus: Civil Society ‘Purge’: Authorities Target Independent Journalists, Activists, Rights Defenders, Lawyers, January 13 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/13/belarus-civil-society-purge>.



- With the example of Belarus in mind, what are ways in which you could support diasporic activists living in exile, as well as those who have faced long term crises that affect their ability to keep their work going?
- Consider this question with an anti-ableist way of thinking about movements, which includes a wide spectrum of ages, disabilities, geographies, identities, and thematic focuses.

The following section highlights examples of additional good practices implemented by activists to strengthen the collaboration among the disability, gender, and climate justice movements in their own context. As we explore these collaborations together, it is important to remember that most of the activists and organizations in this research viewed gender as a male/female binary, rather than on a spectrum.

## Cross-movement collaboration at the intersection of disability and gender

In **Palestine**, one of the activists interviewed is part of both a coalition of seventeen feminist organizations working to eradicate gender-based violence and the Women’s Civil Coalition for the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Coalition). The activist shared that the role of their organization is to “[mainstream] a disability inclusion approach across all the issues addressed by [these coalitions].” These efforts are needed as “[they] cannot wait for the feminist organizations to mainstream disability [issues across their advocacy efforts].”

In **Lebanon**, a feminist collective is working on menstrual product distribution as a way of ensuring people have access to affordable quality options. According to one of the members of the collective, they conceive of period poverty “not just as the lack of access to menstrual products, but also the lack of access to [products and options] that are adapted to [different] people’s needs.” In their view, by working on period poverty, they “can be working at the intersection of many causes,” such as disability rights. To this end, they have partnered with a disability rights organization to offer accessible menstrual products to people with physical disabilities.

Activists working on disability and those working on gender issues also shared that they do their best to collaborate and support each other. In the case of activists in **Lebanon**, it is important to note that some of them have a broader approach to gender, one that is inclusive of the queer and trans communities. During consultations conducted by UAF-FA and WEI, one activist working on gender issues discussed their interest in exploring the common experiences of transgender people and people with psychosocial disabilities in terms of the barriers—particularly the attitudinal barriers—they face to fully enjoying their bodily rights.

In an insightful piece titled *Learning from Transness and Disability: Toward a Framework of Bodily Autonomy*,<sup>57</sup> two disability and gender rights advocates in Lebanon argue in favor of a shift from identity-based politics towards a framework of bodily autonomy that centers bodily issues and cuts across fixed categorizations and understandings of identity. This innovative essay offers a clear example of cross-movement collaboration that defies preconceived ideas of what is feasible to attain as movements when activists are working together.

## Cross-movement collaboration around disability and climate issues



We see the liberation of all living systems and the land as integral to the liberation of our own communities, as we all share one planet.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Disability Justice Principle 8. Interdependence***

Activists in **Iraq** and **Yemen** shared that, although incipient, there are initiatives in their countries to build a stronger relation between the disability and the climate justice movement. In Iraq, one of the organizations that contributed to this research is an active part of a wider network working for sustainable development. In **Yemen**, collaboration between the movements so far has included awareness-raising and capacity-strengthening initiatives, such as workshops. Activists also shared that the launch of digital platforms and social media spaces focusing on climate has helped to reach and include people with disabilities.

Also, in **Yemen**, UAF-FA is supporting an organization working from a gender and disability perspective to shed light on and address the impact of high seawater levels, unusual temperatures, and weather changes on the lives of women and gender-diverse people with and without disabilities living in coastal areas. A particular issue of concern for this organization is the water crisis in Al-Dhalea caused by droughts, water mismanagement, and persisting gender disparities. The crisis has led to violent conflicts among communities and forced them to resort to deep wells where they can only access high-fluoride level water, which has resulted in an increased disability prevalence among children and serious health consequences among adults as well as negative impacts on communities' livelihoods. Key priorities for the UAF-FA grantee partner are to explore evidence-based and community-guided solutions to reduce the high fluoride levels in the water and to document and provide platforms to amplify the voices and experiences of those most impacted by climate change and poor environmental management.

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<sup>57</sup> Monica Basbous, Zakaria Nasser, and Amal Charif, *Learning from transness and Disability: Toward a Framework of Bodily Autonomy*, <https://jeem.me/en/bodies/1279>.

<sup>58</sup> Sins Invalid, *10 Principles of Disability Justice*, supra note 13, Principle 8: Interdependence.



- The intersections of disability, climate and sexual and reproductive justice are examples we uplifted above. Now it is your turn to consider other forms of cross-movement and cross-thematic solidarity building. How do you think disability might intersect with some of the thematic areas you work on? Write them down along with examples of activism at those intersections!
- Taking your own context into account—the resources you have and the place you are in—think about what concrete steps you can take to help build bridges among movements. How would you make sure to center disability in those efforts given how engrained ableism is in most structures of oppression?

## Fighting for disability and gender-inclusive normative and policy frameworks



People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Disability Justice Principle 5. Recognizing wholeness***

Data scarcity is another key barrier for activists working at the intersection of gender and disability. Both in the regions covered by our research and across the globe, women and gender-diverse people with disabilities “remain [mostly] invisible in gender and disability policies, in policymaking, data collection, and research, and generally in legislation and policies,”<sup>60</sup> The lack of accurate, disaggregated data on disability and gender, in particular, affects the visibility of critical issues impacting the rights of women and gender-diverse people with disabilities, hindering their meaningful inclusion in government agendas, stakeholder discussions, and public conversations more broadly.

To break this pattern and inform their advocacy efforts for the development of better normative and policy frameworks, many activists and organizations are actively engaged in research and data collection.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, some are doing advocacy before local, regional, and international bodies to hold their governments accountable for the human rights violations experienced by their communities.

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<sup>59</sup> *Id.*, Principle 5: Recognizing wholeness.

<sup>60</sup> CRPD Committee, Concluding observations on the initial report of Poland, *supra* note 28, para.9(d).

<sup>61</sup> This strategy is similar to many feminists across the globe who are calling for “data feminism” as a strategy to address the lack of data and evidence on some of the most important gender equality issues in a way that “[recognizes] the power imbalances and colonial legacies baked into statistical systems, practices, and institutions.” See Equal Measures 2030, Findings from the 2024 SDG Gender Index, *supra* note 14, at 7.

## Research and data collection

One organization in **Hungary** shared that they prioritize research and data collection initiatives as a key component of the advocacy agenda. They work to “map the reality that surrounds us as thoroughly as possible, formulate the problems that arise in this way, and provide system-level solution proposals for them.”

In **Palestine**, one of the organizations in this mapping shared that their advocacy agenda is focused on “highlighting the needs of [women and girls with disabilities and most pressing] issues at the intersection of gender and disability.” One of their strategies to do it is by conducting research on the disability sector in the country. This way, they aim to address the lack of accurate data about women and girls with disabilities and persons with disabilities more broadly.

## Advocacy with national and international bodies

One of the organizations in **Tajikistan** shared that –given their focus on advancing the rights of people with disabilities– one of their priorities is to advocate for the country’s ratification of the CRPD.

**“ We want to implement these international norms and regulations so we will have them working in Tajikistan... so that people with disabilities can be employed and have no issues in terms of their legal perspectives... And, of course, human rights have to be respected, so all people [with] disabilities can have equal rights with any other in an environment that has no barriers so that they can study and work together.**

-  
*Disability advocate from Tajikistan*

In **Iraq**, one of the organizations that participated in this mapping has been advocating for access to work for persons with disabilities and the incorporation of international standards on labor rights into the national normative framework. The organization has held meetings with the country’s Ministry of Labor to ensure policy frameworks and State measures on labor rights incorporate a disability-inclusion approach. Another organization in Iraq has experience engaging with the CRPD Committee, having submitted shadow reports for the review of the country, in which they highlighted the main challenges facing people with disabilities.

Similarly, an activist in **Poland** shared that their organization engaged with the CRPD Committee to urge the Polish State to address human rights abuses against women with disabilities, including intersectional discrimination, exclusion from public participation, high rates of gender-based violence, and violations of their sexual and reproductive rights, such as

forced sterilization and abortion, as well as lack of access to respectful sexual and reproductive health services. The activist describes it as “a success in the sense that such a high human rights authority as the CRPD Committee called on the State to prioritize addressing the situation of women with disabilities, in line with what we’d suggested.”

” **The whole issue of the situation of disabled women in Poland had to go to the United Nations system and then back to Poland for us to be recognized as rights holders and one of the most discriminated groups.**

-  
*Polish Activist*



- Are you familiar with other initiatives activists are taking to reduce the data gaps both in the gender and disability movements and beyond?
- Are you familiar with any advocacy initiative with regional and international bodies that have brought about change in the disability and gender movements?

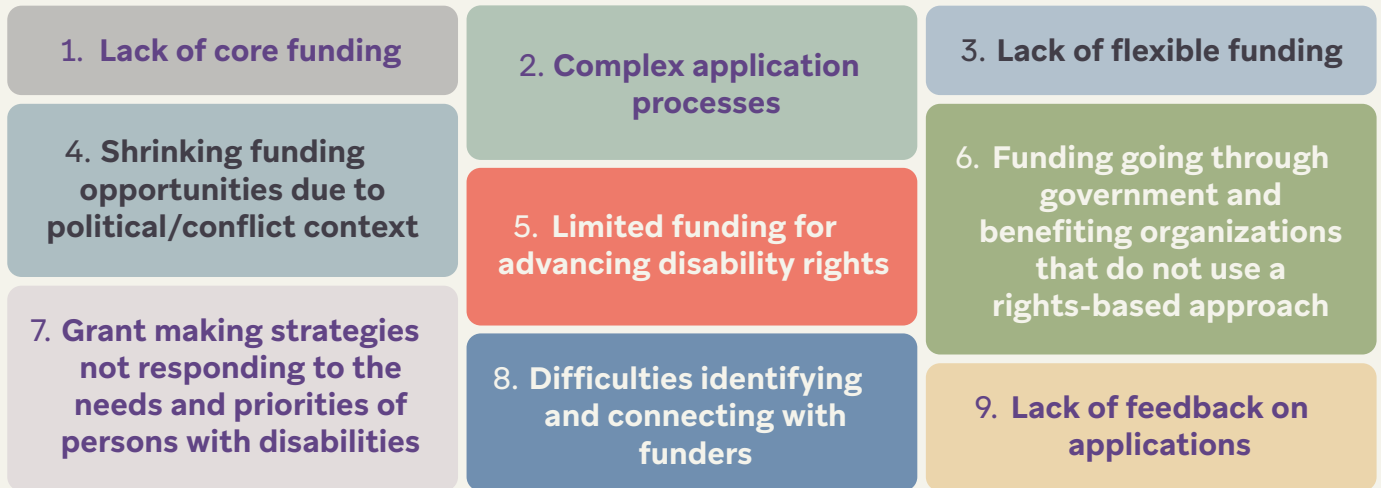
Interested in learning more?

- Check out the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights website to explore the shadow reports that activists and organizations have submitted to the CRPD Committee for the reviews of their countries. This is a great way to identify Organizations of People with Disabilities!



# Challenges accessing funding to advance rights at the intersection of gender and disability

All the activists and organizations in this research agreed on one key issue: one of the main challenges they face in advancing their work at the intersection of gender and disability is the lack of sustained and trust-based access to funding. This section presents those challenges and breaks them into 9 categories:



## 1. Lack of core funding

Activists and organizations across the countries and regions we mapped all agree that organizations of people with disabilities lack access to core funding,<sup>62</sup> which hampers their long-term sustainability and the mandate to represent their community.



We depend on project-based funding, which is really exhausting... and poses challenges to the organization's sustainability... We don't want all the time to [fear losing] the capacities that we build among employees. It is really very difficult to keep overlapping from project to project and not to have gap periods... so core funding might bring a little bit of stability to the organization.

- *Activist from Palestine*



### Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #3**: Making things easier, **Recommendation box #7**: Adjusting criteria, and **Recommendation box #8**: Building bridges.

<sup>62</sup> "Core funding is usually defined as financial support that covers basic 'core' organizational and administrative costs of an NGO, including salaries of non-project staff, rent, equipment, utilities, and communications." See Funds for NGOs, What Is Core Funding and How to Get It? <https://www2.fundsforngos.org/featured/what-is-core-funding-and-how-to-get-it/>.

## 2. Complex application processes

Organizations and activists from **Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Romania, Tajikistan, and Yemen** agreed that donors frequently have complex application processes. This, coupled with the fact that OPDs often do not have trained fundraising staff, prevents them from accessing funding from international sources.

Activists in **Tajikistan** brought linguistic justice to the table, and shared that English is almost always the working language for funders—but not for grantee partners—and this can discourage organizations from applying for funding. They added that access to the internet and digital skills also play a role in limiting access to funding.



Lack of internet access and digital skills make it almost impossible to gain access to financing/financial resources of organizations of persons with disabilities and their networks.

- *Activist from Tajikistan*



**Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?**

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #3:** Making things easier, **Recommendation box #4:** Improving communication **Recommendation box #6:** Providing support.

### 3. Lack of flexible funding and unreasonable expectations

Organizations from **Belarus, Jordan, and Lebanon** agree that funders do not give them the flexibility they need to respond to specific—and oftentimes unexpected—needs and demands from their communities, many of which cannot easily “fit” into existing projects, particularly when funders do not allow for any diversions to implementation plans.

” Funders need to be more flexible and allow us to spend the money how we know is best because people are struggling ... We know the ground; we know the problem.

- **Activist from Lebanon**

Activists in **Romania** emphasize that funders’ expectations of what grantee partners can achieve do not consider the limited capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities and the contexts in which they operate.

” Funders usually look for ‘big numbers’, they want measurable, quantifiable results. They're looking [for projects that lead to] big level [changes in society].

- **Activist from Romania**



**Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?**

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #3:** Making things easier, and **Recommendation box #7:** Adjusting criteria.

<sup>55</sup> The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, Hope and resistance go together. The state of women human rights defenders 34 (2023), <https://kvinna-till-kvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The-Kvinna-till-Kvinna-Foundation-The-state-of-women-human-rights-defenders-2023.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Human Rights Watch, Belarus: Civil Society ‘Purge’: Authorities Target Independent Journalists, Activists, Rights Defenders, Lawyers, January 13 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/13/belarus-civil-society-purge>.

## 4. Shrinking funding opportunities due to conflict or political crises

In **Belarus**, following the crackdown on civil society in 2020 and a series of presidential directives adopted in 2021, most of the NGOs, including OPDs, were either forced to close or decided to self-close due to intimidation. For the organizations and advocates that remained, accessing funding became a challenge. According to the normative framework on public associations, only registered NGOs may legally accept foreign grants and technical aid from foreign organizations, upon the previous approval of government authorities. Use of these funds is constrained to a limited set of government-approved activities.<sup>63</sup>

” If an organization in Belarus gets foreign funding, you must register it with the government, who gets to approve it. Belarus seeks foreign donations through government-organized or government-controlled organizations. Foreign donations to those organizations help legitimize the government, so it's not beneficial.

- **Anonymous source**

In **Yemen**, an activist shared that the armed conflict has led to a sharp increase in the number of people with disabilities. They added that donors are differentiating between those wounded in the conflict and those who had disabilities prior to it.

” One activist stressed that their identity as activists and commitment to disability rights was not contingent on the situation in the country and that they needed support to continue their work from an empowered position. Their words are the inspiration for the title of this interactive report.

- **Anonymous source**



**Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?**

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #3: Making things easier**, **Recommendation box #5: Setting Clear Priorities**, **Recommendation box #6: Providing support** and **Recommendation box #7: Adjusting criteria**.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Embassy in Belarus, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Belarus (2022), section on freedom of association, <https://by.usembassy.gov/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices-belarus/>.

## 5. Limited funding for advancing the rights of people with disabilities, including women and gender-diverse people

In **Tajikistan**, activists agreed that accessing funding to promote disability rights is hard. One activist added that this is as much a structural issue as it is an attitudinal one, as the lack of access to funds is related to the low expectations societies have of people with disabilities, which not only affects persons with disabilities, but also impacts organizations advancing their rights.

Activists in **Yemen** shared that organizations working to advance the rights of women, including women with disabilities, face particular challenges in accessing funding due to customs and traditions that fuel stigma around gender, with some advocates stating that these organizations receive no support at all.



### Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #5:** Setting clear priorities, **Recommendation box #7:** Adjusting criteria, and **Recommendation box #8:** Building bridges.

## 6. Funding going through government and benefitting organizations that do not use a rights-based approach

Activists in **Lebanon** shared that many donors fund advocacy efforts on the rights of people with disabilities through grants to governments that then channel the funds to institutions allegedly working for this group, but that “are very far from the right-based approach to disability.”



### Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #3:** Making things easier, **Recommendation box #5:** Setting clear priorities, and **Recommendation box #7:** Adjusting criteria.

## 7. Grant making strategies not aligned with the needs of people with disabilities identified by their representative organizations

Activists in **Romania** and **Lebanon** shared that funders often invite them to submit proposals for projects that are not aligned with the needs of people with disabilities.

” The funder sets the agenda and priorities without considering the needs of [the community].

- *Activist from Lebanon*



**Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?**

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #2: Listening**

## 8. Difficulties identifying and connecting with funders

Organizations in **Iraq** shared that they do not know how to identify funders and communicate with them, and that this poses a challenge for the OPDs in the country to secure the funding they need. They added that there should be a direct link and relationship between international organizations providing funding and activists with disabilities themselves since they are the ones who have the lived experience of disability and are experts on the matter. Other activists shared that only a few OPDs have access to international organizations providing the only funding available for disability-related work. Activists in the country also highlighted the need that persons with disabilities be in leadership roles in funding organizations.

” There are some local organizations that are dominant when dealing with international organizations.

- *Activist from Iraq*



**Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?**

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #1: Identifying and connecting with OPDs,** **Recommendation box #4: Improving communication,** and **Recommendation box #8: Building bridges.**

## 9. Lack of feedback on applications

Activists from **Tajikistan** and **Yemen** shared that the lack of feedback on unsuccessful applications poses a challenge to them not only because they are left wondering what went wrong—which can be a source of stress—but also because they feel they are deprived of the opportunity to learn how to improve their applications for the future.



**Do you want to know what you can do to help surmount this challenge?**

- *Continue reading* to get to the full list of recommendations, or
- *fast forward* to **Recommendation box #6**: Providing support.

## From the Regional to the Global: **Funding Trends**

Although this report focuses on countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, many of the trends identified in these regions are also visible at a global scale. As stressed by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities “donors’ preferences for funding activities rather than core institutional functions, as well as their sometimes yes narrow agendas... prevent representative organizations of persons with disabilities from establishing a viable organizational structure. Such trends have an impact on organizations’ long-term planning and engagement in a given area.

This situation is compounded for women and gender-diverse people with disabilities. In this regard, it has been reported that “funding for persons with disabilities who have other marginalized identities—whether based on gender, age, or Indigenous status—is incredibly limited. **For example, just 1% of human rights funding for women and girls or Indigenous peoples references persons with disabilities.”<sup>64</sup>**

Similarly to their colleagues featured in this interactive report, the work of activists and organizations from Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, and other countries outside UAF-FA’s purview was highlighted in a report published by Mama Cash. In it, the organization stressed that “sufficient and good quality financial and other resources are crucial for sustained activism... [It] is core funding that allows them to get their work done and to make change happen.”<sup>65</sup>



- 1 penny of every 10 grantmaking dollars from U.S.-based foundations is directed toward disability rights and justice, according to the Disability & Philanthropy Forum? Find out more [here](#).
- According to the Human Rights Funders Network, grants for persons with disabilities constitute just 2% of all human rights funding? Find out more [here](#).

**#ICYMI:** In the face of the funding challenges presented above, the Sisterhood Feminist Principles of Philanthropy are a key resource to guide your funding work from a feminist perspective. Click [here](#) to access them.

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<sup>64</sup> Lorraine Wapling, Arlene Wilson-Grant, and Aapurv Jain, Reversing the trend: The time is now to fund disability rights, Human Rights Funders Network, November 16 2021, <https://www.hrfn.org/resources/reversing-the-trend-the-time-is-now-to-fund-disability-rights/>.

<sup>65</sup> MamaCash, ‘If you stay quiet, you stay invisible’, Feminist disability rights activists share their stories of working for justice 47 (2022).



# Knowing better, doing better

**Recommendations: How funders can better support advocates and organizations to expand their access to the resources they need to sustain their work**



How do we change the way that we see this work at the intersection of disability and gender? I think part of what we need is a stronger analysis of the way that ableism connects with patriarchy and [recognizing] that we are not actually talking about two separate things.... [O]ften the communities might be organized differently and so another part of that is... bridging the communities.

- **Catherine Hyde Townsend - Ford Foundation.**



- After reading the quote above, think of ways in which ableism and patriarchy are connected. What are some ways we could build bridges between the feminist and disability movements?
- What stories, challenges, good practices, and statistics shared so far resonated with you the most? Why?
- Of the good practices shared so far, are there any you could (help to) replicate in your community and/or your work?
- Considering the challenges shared in this report, think of concrete steps you can take to help activists surmount them.

As outlined in this report, activists and organizations working at the intersection of gender and disability face numerous funding barriers. These include a lack of core funding, complex and bureaucratic application processes, inflexible funding models, and challenges in connecting with funders. Many of these organizations also operate in politically unstable environments, where access to resources is restricted or contingent upon government approval. Moreover, the limited understanding of disability rights and justice among some funders further exacerbates these difficulties, as grantmaking strategies often fail to align with the needs of disability movements.

To address these significant funding challenges, funders must adopt more inclusive, flexible, and context-sensitive approaches to grantmaking. The following recommendations, organized into 8 different categories, are designed to help funders better meet the needs of disability rights activists by simplifying processes, increasing access to core and flexible funding, and fostering long-term relationships with organizations. By implementing these strategies, funders can strengthen the capacity of grassroots movements at the intersection of gender and disability and support their sustainability in the face of complex challenges.

**1. Read**      **2. Implement**      **3. Share!**

## **Recommendation box #1: Identifying and connecting with OPDs**



By actively seeking folks who are normally on the margin of the funding ecosystem, we have been able to realize that the gap in funding disability justice groups is not the lack of them, but often our non-intentionality in finding and resourcing them as funders. Once we started visibly funding disability justice groups, many collectives working on disability justice have made themselves visible to us and have been generous in being a resource to us even more than we are to them.

- ***Elsa Saade, Senior Program Officer, UAF-FA***

- **Use** creative approaches and take advantage of the snowball effect, where key contacts help identify additional organizations.
- **Review** civil society reports to the United Nation's treaty bodies, including the CRPD, to identify organizations and advocates working at the intersection of gender and disability issues and learn about their work. These reports may even include their contact information.
- **Prioritize** WhatsApp and other real-time channels over email for initial and ongoing contact and communication in local languages.
- **Be** flexible and ask potential grantee partners about their preferred way of communication.



**Go back to funding challenge "Difficulties identifying and connecting with funders" to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

### **Recommendation box #2: Listening**



Please listen to us. If you really want to help organizations of persons with disabilities, stop everything and listen to us.

- **Activist from Lebanon**

- **Treat** current and potential grantee partners as experts who know what their communities need and what kind of funding is necessary to address these needs.
- **Have** meaningful conversations with current and potential grantee partners to understand their needs and situations better. This includes visiting their countries to have in-depth conversations and focusing on working with marginalized groups within the disability community.



**Go back to funding challenge "Grant making strategies not responding to the needs and priorities of people with disabilities" to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

### **Recommendation box #3: Making things easier**

- **Simplify** the application process and make it flexible to meet the needs of all organizations, especially the smaller ones.
- **Adapt** to changing needs and ensure implementation plans and requirements are flexible so grantee partners can set priorities and respond to new situations and unexpected needs.
- **Use** a wide variety of ways to transfer funds. Make sure organizations can receive cash payments, as some might not be part of the banking system or may face restrictions on international transfers.
- **Devise** safe payment routes. In countries with political conflicts, create safe ways to send money, including through other countries and/or third parties, so organizations and activists can get funds without risking their safety.
- **Make** the grant process flexible to help organizations respond to changing circumstances, especially where people are fleeing political persecution.
- **Encourage**—or continue to encourage—donors to understand the need for flexible and core funding.



**Go back to funding challenge "Lack of core funding," "Complex application processes," "Lack of flexible funding," "Shrinking funding opportunities due to conflict or political crises," and "Funding going through government, and benefitting organizations that do not use a rights-based approach" to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

#### **Recommendation box #4: Improving communication**

- **Incorporate** and/or improve your accessible communication<sup>66</sup> strategies to ensure activists and organizations are aware of the funding you offer.
- **Ensure** linguistic justice and accessibility in application processes. This means offering application materials in a variety of languages, including sign languages, and a variety of formats, including using plain language, Easy Read versions, and video applications.
- **Create** lines of communication between funders and OPDs. Make sure that communications and funding practices are equitable and transparent.



**Go back to funding challenge “Complex application processes” and “Difficulties identifying and connecting with funders” to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

#### **Recommendation box #5: Setting clear priorities**

- **Focus** on giving support to human-rights focused organizations, as they are often the most underfunded. If you are funding organizations that still use the medical model of disability, ensure the funds help them strengthen their work related to human rights, the CRPD, and the disability justice model.
- **Prioritize** supporting small organizations, especially those that do not receive government support.
- **Support** diverse leadership and give priority to organizations led by women, gender-diverse, and trans people, as well as other marginalized groups.
- **Prioritize** funding support for activists and organizations in crisis areas, especially those in conflict zones.



**Go back to funding challenge “Shrinking funding opportunities due to conflict or political crises,” “Difficulties identifying and connecting with funders,” “Limited funding for advancing the rights of people with disabilities, including women and gender-diverse people,” and “Funding going through government and benefitting organizations that do not use a rights-based approach” to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

<sup>66</sup> See Women Enabled International, Good Practices: Access - International Meetings Checklist, <https://womenenabled.org/reports/good-practices-international-meetings-checklist/>, and Good Practices: Access - Social Media, <https://womenenabled.org/reports/access-good-practices-social-media/>. See also Inclusive Generation Equality Collective, Feminist Accessibility Protocol, available at <https://womenenabled.org/reports/the-feminist-accessibility-protocol/>.

### **Recommendation box #6: Providing support**

- **Provide** grantee partners' staff with the support they need to sustain their work, including core funding.
- **Give** support materials, such as guidelines or manuals in a variety of formats, to guide organizations through the application process.
- **Create an accessible** process for organizations to get feedback if their application is rejected.
- **Offer** accompaniment for current and prospective grantee partners on project design and management and organizational development.



**Go back to funding challenges "Complex application processes," "Shrinking funding opportunities due to conflict or political crises," and "Lack of feedback on applications" to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

### **Recommendation box #7: Adjusting criteria**

- **Revise** funding criteria to ensure expansive considerations within what is considered core funding.
- **Make sure** your criteria do not exclude activists from certain regions of any given country from receiving funding.
- **Ensure** your grant application criteria reflect disability justice principles without requiring organizations to identify explicitly as disability justice organizations, recognizing that many don't subscribe to global north/funder-specific terminology, and that while disability may not be central to an organization's mission, it is still crucial to foster inclusivity, equity, and accessibility.
- **Use** a broad definition of "emergencies" as a key criterion for accessing crisis funding.



**Go back to funding challenges "Lack of core funding," "Lack of flexible funding and unreasonable expectations," "Shrinking funding opportunities due to conflict or political crises," "Limited funding for advancing the rights of people with disabilities, including women and gender-diverse people," and "Funding going through government and benefitting organizations that do not use a rights-based approach" to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

### **Recommendation box #8: Building bridges**

- **Build** relationships between organizations of persons with disabilities and funders and help them connect, so they are better able to sustain their work in the long term.
- **Encourage** and provide funding for prospective and current grantee partners to engage in cross-movement collaboration at the intersection of gender and disability. This includes raising awareness to reduce stigma against persons with disabilities in feminist groups, encouraging disability groups to consider gender perspectives in their work, and supporting cross-movement solidarity.
- **Share** this report with other funders and join us in leading the change!



**Go back to funding challenges “Lack of core funding,” “Limited funding for advancing the rights of people with disabilities, including women and gender-diverse people,” and “Difficulties identifying and connecting with funders” to revisit the experiences that inspired these recommendations.**

# Carrying the work forward

**Congratulations! You have reached the end of this interactive report.**

**You are now familiar with:**



**Most importantly, you now have learned about a set of steps you can take to better support disability rights activists and organizations to address these obstacles. These were shared by activists themselves, and we thank them once more for their generosity and invaluable expertise.**

**UAF-FA and WEI hope you have enjoyed these pages, and that you will refer to them, particularly to the recommendations and the questions in the food for thought boxes, as a way to reflect on and improve your practices and those around you.**

**Please share this interactive report far and wide.**

