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## Finding Our Voices: Employment and Career Development for Women with Disabilities

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Women comprise approximately half of the world's population, yet as a group, they are less likely to be employed and more likely to be living in poverty than men (United Nations 2015). These gender disparities in employment are one of the most persistent gaps identified in a global snapshot identifying gender differences in access to health services, education, the labour market and political participation across 144 countries (World Economic Forum 2016). Although all women face restricted access to the labour market, women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable because of their multilayered identities as individuals who are female and also have disability identities. According to the World Report on Disability, women with disabilities have lower rates of employment, are less likely to participate in education or training and are more likely to live in poverty than *men with disabilities* as well as *women without disabilities* (World Health Organization 2011). When women with

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disabilities are employed, they are more likely to experience unequal hiring and promotion standards, unequal pay for equal work and segregation into occupations with low pay, long hours and little social protections (United Nations 2015; Zero Project 2017). Across low-, middle- and high-income countries, women with disabilities are “doubly disadvantaged when gender interacts with disability as both restrictive gender roles and low expectations based on disability lead to non-work outcomes” (Noonan et al. 2004, p. 69).

In this chapter, we use an intersectionality framework to examine career development and workforce experiences of women with disabilities around the world. In the first section we introduce the concept of intersectionality, which can help us understand the ways that gender intersects with other identities, such as disability, and how these differing sets of identities impact access to opportunities and may contribute to marginalization (Association for Women’s Rights in Development [AWID] 2004). The second section includes an overview of barriers and issues facing girls and women with disabilities across various stages and elements of career development including (1) childhood experiences and aspirations, (2) education and training, (3) workforce experiences and (4) career advancement. In the final section, we provide implications and recommendations for empowering women with disabilities to fully participate in the labour market and obtain economic self-sufficiency, including case examples and additional resources. Prior to delving into the details of career development experiences for women with disabilities, we provide a brief overview of key terms and concepts used in this chapter.

## Defining Disability

Definitions and classifications of disability vary widely across cultures and countries, and for purposes of this chapter, we acknowledge that disability is a complex and evolving concept. In 2001, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defined disability as the interaction between individual capacities and attitudinal and environmental barriers that may limit full and inclusive participation in all aspects of society (World Health Organization 2011). This social model of disability emphasizes the perspective that disability results from an interaction between individual and contextual factors, such as societal attitudes and environments, which act as barriers to an individual’s full, effective and equal participation in society (United Nations 2006).

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term often credited to Crenshaw (1991), who argued for the inextricable link between gender and race in understanding the multifaceted nature of the Black woman's experience. Since then, scholars have utilized intersectionality as a lens through which to view the experiences of groups with two or more markers of marginalized or oppressed identities. Intersectionality is a move away from additive models of oppression that "argue that a person with two or more intersecting identities experiences the distinctive forms of oppression associated with each of his or her subordinate identities summed together" (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008, p. 378). Instead, intersectionality argues that the multiplicity of identities produces a distinct experience.

Intersectionality was chosen as a lens for this chapter because gender and ability-based barriers to employment cannot simply be examined separately and applied to women who experience disability. This group faces distinct barriers due to intersecting identities, and an intersectional analysis can help to reveal the different types of disadvantages that may occur based on the *combination* of these identities. For example, a gender analysis of the status of people with disabilities across Europe and Eurasia found that women with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged, with the intersection of sex and disability status combining to create barriers and unique challenges for this subgroup. Using data from 13 countries and interviews with over 500 key informants, this study found that women with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged in comparison to both *men with disabilities* and *women without disabilities* in three primary areas: (1) rights to sexuality, marriage and motherhood, (2) social integration and (3) access to employment. Taken in combination, these pervasive barriers create greater risk of unemployment, poverty, abuse and isolation for women who experience disability (US Agency for International Development [USAID] 2012).

As a tool, intersectionality can help to illuminate both causes and consequence of existing inequities and perhaps help to "lay bare the full complexity and specificity of women's rights and development issues, including the structural, and dynamic dimensions of the interplay of different policies and institutions" (AWID 2004, p. 3). In regard to employment, an intersectional lens can not only be used to identify barriers to employment but also frame practices to create economic independence and build personal autonomy. Finally, we would like to acknowledge that other markers of difference (e.g. race, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation) intersect with gender and disability to create additional distinct barriers; however, these are beyond the scope of this chapter.

## Career Development for Women with Disabilities

Across cultures and communities, women with disabilities face multiple complex barriers to career development and economic stability (USAID 2012; Quinn et al. 2016; Wehbi and Lakkis 2010). Women with disabilities are often excluded from the workforce, and “disability for women creates amplified deprivations across all areas of the socioeconomic spectrum” (Quinn et al. 2016, p. 131). Using intersectionality as a framework, we summarize previous research describing career development and workforce experiences for girls and women with disabilities worldwide. The information in this section is organized around phases and elements of career development, acknowledging that access to employment is influenced by a lifetime of experiences and opportunities. For women with disabilities, workforce experiences may be constrained by gender role stereotypes and disability barriers that begin during childhood leading to restricted access to basic education and vocational training (Rouso 2003). Due to a variety of social, family and systemic barriers, women with disabilities have limited opportunities to learn fundamental workplace skills, and these constrained employment experiences influence future opportunities for career advancement and living wage employment. Career development unfolds over time and is influenced by family and childhood experiences as well as labour market constraints, social systems and policies (Lindstrom et al. 2018b). We utilize this life span approach to organize this chapter, beginning with childhood experiences and aspirations, followed by education and training, workforce experiences and concluding with career advancement.

### Childhood Experiences and Aspirations

As a group, young girls with disabilities are often invisible (Rouso 2003). In the United States, there are very few programmes or services focused on the unique needs of girls with disabilities. Although policies are in place to promote and ensure gender equity in education, these have largely overlooked the unique needs of girls with disabilities. Conversely, while family advocacy and federal legislation have strengthened education opportunities for all children with disabilities, few policies or programmes have been gender specific or designed to eliminate barriers for girls with disabilities. Since disability manifests differently for males and females, girls with disabilities may also be under-identified, and thus not receiving needed education supports or services (Mertens et al. 2007).

Cultural or social biases around both gender and disability can create barriers that restrict early opportunities and relegate girls to a lower status within

their families. In some Middle Eastern cultures, male children are given preferential treatment, including greater access to basic necessities such as food and water, while daughters with disabilities are often seen as a drain on family resources (Turmusani 2003). Having a daughter with a disability may also be seen as a liability which can devalue the entire family. In a study describing intersections of gender and disability in Lebanon, Wehbi and Lakkis noted, “the stigma of having a daughter with a disability in the family is so great within Arab societies that parents may go so far as to deny her existence ...” (2010, p. 58). Thus, girls who experience disability can grow up unwanted and perceived as a burden leading to low sense of self-worth.

This double liability of being female and experiencing disability also influences early career trajectories. From an early age, the development of a vocational identity may be impacted by both socially prescribed gender roles and disability-based stereotypes and discrimination (Mertens et al. 2007; Rousso 2003). A US survey reporting parent expectations for adolescents with disabilities found parents were more likely to expect males to get a job and live on their own than females (Hogansen et al. 2008). In addition, parents of females were more likely to discourage their child from doing something due to concerns regarding safety than were parents of males. Perhaps in response to both familial and societal expectations, girls with disabilities in this study acknowledged lower expectations and attributed this to their gender (Hogansen et al. 2008). Gottfredson and Lapan (1997) suggest that through a process of ‘circumscription’, beginning in early childhood through adolescence, children eliminate their most preferred occupational aspirations for less favourable ones they perceive they are more likely to achieve. Eliminations are based on cultural messages and may be difficult to reverse, as people rarely consider career options they eliminate unless a new experience or persistent change in the social environment occurs (Gottfredson and Lapan 1997). Young girls with disabilities receive cultural messages regarding gender, ability and simultaneously gender/ability that uniquely influence this process of circumscription. These powerful cultural beliefs and messages influence social systems and occupational options and choices, which in turn impact long-term earning potential for women with disabilities (United Nations 2015).

## Education and Training

Education can provide a vital pathway to employment and economic self-sufficiency; however, access to educational opportunities can also be constricted by both gender norms and disability barriers (USAID 2012; World

Health Organization 2011). Although access to formal primary education has increased over time, females are less likely than their male peers to attend and complete secondary school in many developing countries (Lloyd and Young 2009). The secondary school completion rate for girls is above 15 per cent in only 8 of 37 sub-Saharan African countries (Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa and Togo); whereas in 19 countries the completion rate is below 5 per cent (Lloyd and Young 2009). Youth with disabilities are also less likely to start school and have lower rates of staying in school and being promoted than non-disabled peers (World Health Organization 2011).

Taken together, the impact of being female and experiencing disability creates multiple barriers in gaining access to public school and obtaining an equitable education (Rousso 2003; Wehbi and Lakkis 2010). A Canadian study found that 48 per cent of women with disabilities ages 15 and over had not completed high school, compared to 28 per cent of their female peers without disabilities (Disabled Women's Network of Canada [DAWN] 2012). In a study of barriers and facilitators to socioeconomic inclusion for women with spinal cord injuries or amputations in Bangladesh, Quinn and colleagues found that exclusion from formal education was a major barrier limiting access to future economic opportunities (Quinn et al. 2016). Specific barriers to education identified by the women in this study included (1) poor environmental accessibility, (2) familial dependence, (3) teacher and student discrimination, (4) lack of inclusion policies, and (5) misconceptions regarding the capacity of women with disabilities. Women who participated in this study also experienced prejudice and oppression regarding traditional gender roles and the "common perception that educating a woman with a disability is futile" (Quinn et al. 2016).

A lack of early, ongoing educational opportunities has long-term consequences for women with disabilities. Whereas education contributes to the development of human capital, restricted access can limit future career pathways and earnings potential. In a report describing the power of educating adolescent girls, the authors conclude that formal education provides both immediate and long-term benefits: "During this phase of life, an education that heightens a girl's social status, minimizes her social risks, delays her assumption of adult roles and cultivates a capacity for critical thinking and independent decision making can reshape her future pathways radically and profoundly with cascading benefits over her lifetime" (Lloyd and Young 2009, p. 36).

## Workforce Experiences

Women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than women *without* disabilities and *men with* disabilities (DAWN 2012; USAID 2012; US Department of Labor 2015). A report from the Disabled Women's Network of Canada found that about one-third of Canadian women with disabilities live below the poverty line with unemployment rates of up to 75 per cent (DAWN 2012). A US study using data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey also documented pervasive gender gaps in employment, reporting that only 24 per cent of women and 27.8 per cent of men with severe disabilities were employed (Smith 2007). This study also found that the combination of disability and gender was the strongest predictors of unemployment for women with disabilities and that rates of unemployment for women with disabilities remained constant from 1995 to 2002 despite changes in legislation promoting access and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the United States (Smith 2007). A 2015 report from the US Department of Labor documented similar trends. This report describing the characteristics of working women with disabilities in the United States found that 27.8 per cent of women with disabilities and 32.7 per cent of men with disabilities were employed as compared to 70.4 per cent of *women without disabilities* and 82.3 per cent of *men without disabilities* (US Department of Labor 2015).

When women with disabilities are employed, they are often segregated in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs and are more likely to be in short-term or part-time employment, increasing their risk of low earnings (DAWN 2012; USAID 2012). Throughout Europe and Eurasia, women with disabilities' participation in the labour market is heavily influenced by gender norms. For example, in the Republic of Georgia women with disabilities are expected to work in locations and occupations that are acceptable for women, such as government offices, factories, post-offices or workshops producing crafts (USAID 2012). Women with disabilities may also experience wage discrimination, harassment and intimidation at work (DAWN 2012; Randolph 2005; US Department of Labor 2015; Wehbi and Lakkis 2010).

Disability and gender status discrimination have a disproportionate impact on women with disabilities who "may face perceptions of inability and weakness aimed at their disability status and gender" (US Department of Labor 2015, p. 3). Over time, these barriers may result in lower self-esteem, restricted career aspirations and feelings of isolation. Even social and vocational programmes designed to support employment for individuals with disabilities

may lead to more favourable outcomes for male participants. For example, the ‘Social Taxi’ programme was developed in Azerbaijan to provide employment and accessible transportation for individuals with disabilities. Veterans with disabilities from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict who received cars as a disability benefit from the government were later hired to work as taxi drivers in this new programme. Since the veterans were primarily men, the Social Taxi programme inadvertently created employment and mobility for men with disabilities while “reinforcing physical and social isolation for women with disabilities” (USAID 2012, p. 14).

## Career Advancement

The final phases of career development include job maintenance, employment stability and career advancement over time. It is not enough to simply have a job: women with disabilities need opportunities to grow on the job and advance into higher-wage, higher-skill employment opportunities (Lindstrom and Kahn 2014). However, many women face both gender and ability-based discrimination in the workplace throughout their careers (Quinn et al. 2016; Smith 2007; USAID 2012; Wehbi and Lakkis 2010). Randolph (2005) conducted a qualitative study exploring how women with disabilities in the United States define and experience discrimination. This study found that major barriers to career advancement include (1) assumptions about their skills as employees; (2) negative perceptions that included mistrust, cruelty, overprotection and patronizing attitudes; (3) lack of or resentment of accommodations; (4) lack of environmental access to physical, social and/or political environments; (5) exploitation in positions of low value for unequal pay in comparison to men and (6) being treated as the ‘token’ disabled employee. Some of these barriers to advancement may result in part from the ‘glass ceiling’ effect, a term used to describe the invisible barrier that serves to prevent all women from rising to the highest ranks in a corporation. Although some of the barriers are experienced by all women and others are also experienced by all individuals with a disability, these are non-summative and with an intersectional lens can be viewed as unique to women with disabilities as they experience these discriminations simultaneously.

Finally, women with disabilities are often underrepresented in higher-paid management and professional positions and have fewer opportunities for upward career mobility (USAID 2012; Wilson-Kovacs et al. 2008). On-the-job supervisors and experienced mentors can offer an entrée to key skills needed for advancement and continued growth. Yet, women with disabilities



may not have access to the organizational or peer supports needed in the workplace (Magill-Evans et al. 2008). In a qualitative study of professional women with sensory and physical disabilities, Noonan et al. (2004) confirmed that all participants faced discrimination based on both gender and disability, describing these experiences as “some of the most influential events on the career development of the women in this sample and included restricted educational opportunities, discrimination in hiring, biased performance evaluations, job tracking, pay inequities, lack of support and mentoring, negative attitudes and chilly workplace climates, lack of accommodations, and general discouragement” (p. 74). This same study also described the importance of social support from other disabled and non-disabled colleagues and the importance of role models and mentors in supporting career advancement and professional development over time (Noonan et al. 2004).

## Implications and Recommendations

Women with disabilities encounter multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage as a consequence of both gender and disability identities producing substantively distinct experiences that limit access to employment and restrict career opportunities. Across the world, women with disabilities have not realized the full benefit of access to high-wage careers, opportunities for personal growth and economic independence. Career trajectories have been limited by social and cultural expectations, restricted access to education and training, gender and disability barriers in the workplace, and stereotypes and bias that limit career advancement and access to higher-wage occupations. In order to address these pervasive inequities and increase opportunities for independence and productive careers for women with disabilities, we offer the following recommendations.

First, girls and women with disabilities need equal access to education and training opportunities to build skills for employment and independence. At the most basic level, girls with disabilities need access to primary and secondary education along with their male peers (Lloyd and Young 2009; Rousso 2003). Access to basic academic skills such as reading and writing provide opportunities for independent access to critical knowledge and promote life-long learning and independence. Secondly, to increase vocational skills and work readiness, educational institutions should also provide opportunities for work experience, internships, apprenticeships or job training to increase the pipeline of young women with disabilities who are prepared to enter the labour force (Quinn et al. 2016; US Department of Labor 2015). Structured

career exploration activities along with work experiences help to build skills and increase exposure to a variety of future employment options. Finally, young women need opportunities to learn self-advocacy and communication skills and explore a wide range of careers beyond traditional low-wage female-dominated occupations (Lindstrom et al. 2012; USAID 2012). The following case study provides an example of a school-based career development programme designed to combat gender and disability barriers for adolescent girls with disabilities in the United States (Lindstrom et al. 2018a).

### Case Study: Paths 2 the Future Career Development Curriculum

*Paths 2 the Future* (P2F) is a fully developed and pilot-tested curriculum designed to address the unique needs of high school girls with disabilities including topics such as disability and gender awareness, empowerment and self-awareness.

*Problem:* While all women face restricted career options, women with disabilities in the United States experience additional barriers based on dual exposure to gender stereotypes and disability discrimination.

*Importance:* To address these gender and disability barriers and improve education and career opportunities for young women with disabilities, a career development curriculum was developed called Paths 2 the Future. P2F is a gender-specific curriculum that has been tested and found to be effective in 26 high schools in Oregon, the United States. One of the major goals of P2F is to promote self-efficacy and break down socially constructed barriers associated with gender and disability.

*Curriculum/lessons:* The P2F curriculum includes 75 lessons divided into four modules: (1) self-awareness, (2) disability, (3) gender identity and (4) career and college readiness. The modules are designed to be taught within a group/classroom setting in the course of the school day. The P2F curriculum is interactive: teachers are responsible for presenting information, leading activities and engaging students in small group discussions. In addition, girls make field trips to visit various employers and vocational training programmes. At the completion of the programme, students have skills and knowledge needed to transition from high school to a satisfying career in their community.

*Outcomes:* Participating in P2F has a measurable impact on *knowledge, beliefs and skills* that are linked to future career success. This project prepares young women for careers by helping them learn about their strengths and then matching up their skills and interests to potential employment opportunities. Participants also learn how to successfully search and apply for jobs in their community. Initial studies of the programme found that providing young women with a safe space to explore their strengths and develop their skills was a very powerful and affirming experience.

Young women with disabilities reported the power of participating in P2F:

*"I learned that my disability can't stop me."*

*"This class has taught me what my strengths are and how to be positive about myself."*

*"I found my voice even more and being able to understand how many doors are actually open to me. Not just the few doors that I had seen, but now more doors have opened."*

Source: Lindstrom et al. (2018a).

The Paths 2 the Future case study suggests that targeted learning experiences designed to focus on strengths and build skills can influence self-efficacy beliefs for young women with disabilities. Young women who participated in Paths 2 the Future demonstrated changes in self-awareness, self-confidence and ability to articulate personal strengths, and also increased confidence in specific career development knowledge and skills. Self-awareness seemed to bolster a sense of personal empowerment and voice for young women with disabilities who completed the class, with newfound self-confidence and a stronger sense of voice participants were able to more clearly articulate and envision future career opportunities (Lindstrom et al. 2018a).

In addition to education and training programmes, women with disabilities need services and support to facilitate entry into the workforce including opportunities to access higher-wage employment. For example, in Lebanon, a consortium of non-governmental organizations created an “employment opportunities project” that provided services including awareness raising about the employment rights of individuals with disabilities, workshops on literacy and skills training, and transportation for women to their places of employment or learning (Wehbi and Lakkis 2010). Other organizations have focused on providing information and training to employers regarding workplace accommodations including access to assistive technology (Randolph 2005). These services should take into account the unique needs of women with disabilities, attending to both gender and disability. The following case study provides an example of a specialized programme focused on providing living wage employment for women with disabilities. Given the dearth of programmes worldwide designed to address barriers and build capacity for women with disabilities, this example utilizes a strength-based approach to prepare women for specialized careers in the health industry.

### Case Study: Discovering hands®

*Discovering hands®:* This program describes itself as a ‘social’ enterprise that entwines new avenues of disability employment for women with cancer prevention efforts. Discovering hands® utilizes the skills of blind and visually impaired women to detect early breast cancer. Blind and visually impaired women are trained with a standardized diagnostic method and then go on to work at physicians’ offices. Their job entails examining women for irregularities in the breast, aiming to identify any potential cancerous nodes as early as possible.

*Problem:* In Germany, breast cancer is the most common cause of death for women between 40 and 44 years of age. About 71,000 women are newly diagnosed with breast cancer every year and about 18,000 of these cases are fatal. Early detection and treatment significantly increases women’s chance of survival. Blind and visually impaired women in Germany are marginalized and face very limited employment opportunities. Furthermore, access to appropriate training facilities is rare because individuals who are blind must compete with sighted people, who are often favoured by employers for open positions.

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*Importance:* This approach makes a difference in the early detection of breast cancer. Additionally, Discovering hands® provides a meaningful and important employment opportunity for blind and visually impaired women while also addressing a public health need.

*Outcomes:* The programme includes a nine-month training period where blind and visually impaired women learn how to use a standardized diagnostic method for examining the female breast. Additionally, women are all trained in palpation, anatomy and communication skills followed by a three-month internship. In addition to the jobs this programme creates, early breast cancer detection is improved and systems are relieved due to reduced treatment and social security costs.

Source: Zero Project Innovative Practices (2017) <https://zeroproject.org>

Our final set of recommendations focuses on empowerment, advocacy and policy changes. In addition to promoting individual skill development and creating access to employment, we believe that breaking down barriers to employment for women with disabilities must include systemic efforts that contribute to broader social change. As noted by Wehbi and Lakkis (2010), “any discussions of initiatives to address the marginalization of women with disabilities should be based on acknowledgement of the agency of women with disabilities in a move away from seeing them as helpless victims of oppression” (p. 64). Thus, gender awareness trainings, raising awareness of rights and empowerment programmes are important components to be developed along with public awareness campaigns to educate the general public regarding challenges faced by women with disabilities (USAID 2012). Finally, legislation and policy initiatives must attend specifically to the rights and unique needs of women with disabilities. The following national and international organizations all offer support and resources to empower women with disabilities and promote advancement of girls and women with disabilities.

### 1. **DisAbleD Women’s Network Canada**

DisAbleD Women’s Network Canada (2012) is a national, feminist, cross-disability organization whose mission is to end poverty, isolation, discrimination and violence experienced by Canadian women with disabilities and deaf women. DAWN is an organization that works towards the advancement and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities and deaf women in Canada. Their overarching strategic theme is one of leadership, partnership and networking to engage all levels of government and the wider disability and women’s sectors and other stakeholders in addressing key issues.

## 2. **The International Network of Women with Disabilities**

The International Network of Women with Disabilities (INWWD) (2017) is a group of international, regional, national and local organizations, groups or networks of women with disabilities, as well as individual women with disabilities and allied women. The mission of the INWWD is to “enable women with disabilities to share knowledge and experience, enhance the capacity to speak up for our rights, empower ourselves to bring about positive change and inclusion in our communities and to promote our involvement in relevant politics at all levels, towards creating a more just and fair world that acknowledges disability and gender, justice, and human rights”.

## 3. **US Agency for International Development: Advancing Women and Girls with Disabilities**

USAID (2017) is committed to empowering and including women and girls with disabilities. Here are some examples of programmes they support:

- *Mobility International USA*: Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability, supported by the USAID Leadership, Management and Governance Project, brings together emerging women leaders with disabilities from Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Latin America and the Middle East to strengthen leadership skills, create new visions and build international networks of support for inclusive international development programming.
- *Vietnam*: In Vietnam, women with disabilities are gaining employment in the Information and Technology field. Since 2007, USAID and Catholic Relief Services have collaborated with the Hanoi College of Information Technology and Van Lang University to provide training in advanced computer skills, such as graphic design, 3D modelling and web development for youth with disabilities from all over Vietnam. To date, the programme has trained more than 700 students with disabilities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and over 80 per cent of graduates have since found jobs.

## 4. **Women Enabled International Inc.**

Women Enabled International (WEI) (2017) works at the intersection of women’s rights and disability rights to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities around the world. WEI works to increase international attention and strengthen international human rights standards on issues including violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, access to justice, education and humanitarian emergencies. Working in collaboration with women and disability rights organizations, WEI fosters cooperation across movements to improve understanding and develop advocacy strategies to realize the rights of all women and girls.

## 5. Women with Disabilities Australia

Women with Disabilities Australia (2017) is run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. Their work is grounded in a human rights-based framework which links gender and disability issues to a full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. This rights-based approach recognizes that equal treatment, equal opportunity and non-discrimination provide for inclusive opportunities for women and girls with disabilities in society. It also seeks to create greater awareness among governments and other relevant institutions of their obligations to fulfil, respect, protect and promote human rights and to support and empower women with disabilities, both individually and collectively, to claim their rights.

## Conclusion

Women with disabilities around the world have limited opportunities for employment and often live in poverty. To address these barriers and empower women to achieve economic self-sufficiency and independence requires a multi-pronged approach including increasing access to education and training, providing supports for entry and advancement in the labour market, and addressing systemic barriers through broad awareness and policy changes. In addition, future research regarding disability and employment must attend to the unique needs of girls and women with disabilities by identifying and exploring gender differences in school experiences, career preparation and employment outcomes for women with disabilities. In addition, researchers should focus on developing and testing strategies and programmes that utilize an intersectional lens to promote successful education and career outcomes for women with disabilities worldwide.

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