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3. Gender and Disabilities: Good Practices and Lessons Learned

Centre the voice and leadership of women with disabilities and their organizations

The Global Forum on the Leadership of Women with Disabilities (GFLWD) is a diverse collective of women leaders with disabilities and a multi-stakeholder forum to advance practical solutions in global priority development. Dedicated to real inclusion and results at the global, regional, national, and local levels, the Global Forum ensures self-advocates, especially in the Global South, are involved in decision-making, and the international community supports their action on the ground.

In 2023, the Global Forum began building a network of women experts with disabilities, with representation from 15 countries and various intersecting identities. In its first year, the GFLWD provided a platform for targeted conversations, like supporting women with disabilities displaced by floods in Pakistan. The GFLWD also developed accessible communication protocols to ensure equal and meaningful participation between experts despite uneven technological access. In 2024, the GFLWD will move forward as a united front of women leaders with disabilities and allies in human rights and development as it launches its flagship activities in line with this new accelerated phase of action toward the SDGs.

Currently DAWN Canada and STEP (Pakistan) are acting as the co-leads of this collective. Working closely with UNDESA and UNWomen, the GFLWD represents a paradigm shift in international feminist organizing and

leadership. Based on Canada's FIAP and broader commitments to the realization of the SDGs and to policies and programs that embrace GBA+ and more recently the DIAP (Disability Inclusion Action Plan), the GFLWD is an ideal platform from which to begin a renewed and deepened commitment to centering the leadership of women and their organizations, particularly those in the global south.

Another example is Humanity & Inclusion's Making It Work initiative, which supports local women with disability organizations and networks that are working to promote women's rights and advance women's empowerment and gender equality in multiple countries in Africa. As local women-led disability organizations are severely under-resourced, the initiative strengthens the institutional capacity and sustainability of local organizations, and it contributes to increasing the effectiveness of front line programming and advocacy, particularly on GBV and advancing the rights of women with disabilities.

As a regional initiative, HI also organizes spaces for exchange and collaborative work for effective joint national and international advocacy by women with disabilities leaders and access to international forums. At the Women Deliver conference in Kigali in 2023, HI supported the participation of Adelaide Niyigina, Director of the Association Burundaise pour la Promotion des Droits des Femmes Handicapées. She noted that she was often the only woman with disabilities at the table, as they are too often excluded from these global forums.