



POLICY FORUM SUMMARY REPORT 2022



Table of Contents

<u>About More than a Footnote</u>	1
<u>About DAWN Canada</u>	2
<u>Our Partners</u>	3
<u>More than a Footnote Policy Forum</u>	4
<u>Day 1 Programme at a Glance</u>	5
<u>The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, MP</u>	6
<u>Hummingbird Award recipient: Laverne Jacobs</u>	7
<u>Panel 1: Livelihoods, Housing and Childcare</u>	8
<u>Day 2 Programme at a Glance</u>	13
<u>Panel 2: Gender-Based Violence</u>	14
<u>Panel 3: Canada's International Assistance</u>	18
<u>Reflections: Bonnie Brayton</u>	22
<u>Reflections: Deborah Stienstra</u>	23
<u>Reflections: Ruvimbo Chidziva</u>	24
<u>Wrap-up Questions</u>	25
<u>Acknowledgments</u>	26

About *More than a Footnote*

From 2015 to 2018, DAWN Canada was funded through the Status of Women Canada for this project with a long name and a big question attached to it. Where is the response to women with disabilities? A review of policies in our three most populous provinces, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia, and Federal policies did not just reveal gaps, but an abyss.

References to the higher rates of violence against women with disabilities were relatively easy to find in policy statements and pre-ambls, as it is something that has been known about and well-documented for at least two decades. So what's the problem? Over and over again, women with disabilities were footnoted or 'ungendered', being referred to as 'people' instead of as women; a policy-makers conundrum, too complex, not our area of responsibility, left for someone else to address at some later date.

Not a single front-line service, transition house, shelter or program focused on the women who experience violence at the highest rates and represent almost one quarter of all women in Canada. This is not because women-serving and disability-focused organizations are failing, but that they remain under-resourced due to policy failures.

Since the above project was completed, DAWN Canada has built a body of evidence and initiatives using MORE THAN A FOOTNOTE as our banner, leading up to this biennial Policy Forum. It speaks to the problem, but it also speaks to the depth and breadth of who we are. Women with disabilities represent more than one quarter of all women in Canada, so we are indeed more than a footnote in the terms of representation.

Federal, provincial, territorial and local governments and their policies, programs and funding approaches are where this begins. Neither academic institutions, their curricula nor their schools are the experts. They need to become our partners in research and education.

This policy forum, hosted by DAWN with our incredible partners from the University of Guelph's Live Work Well Research Centre and Global Affairs Canada, stands as an example of the power of doing things differently – of taking off our hats and tipping them in one direction to the women and gender-diverse people with disabilities and Deaf women who will continue to lead the change.

Seizing our place at the centre of important social and economic policy reform began with this very special two days we shared in Ottawa, and will continue.

Read *More Than A Footnote: A Research Report on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Canada*

[View the More Than A Footnote infographic](#)

About DAWN Canada

The **DisAbled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN)**

is an intersectional human rights organization established in 1985 whose mission is to end the poverty, isolation, discrimination and violence experienced by women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities and those that are Deaf.

Our 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 our key issues. Research is the foundational pillar of our mission as it informs our education, policy and advocacy pillars.

Staying true to our grassroots, we keep women with disabilities at the centre of our work. We amplify their voices by ensuring that they are represented at decision-making tables.



Head Office – Montréal

469, rue Jean Talon O.
Suite 215
Montréal, QC
H3N 1R4
(514) 396-0009
1-866-396-0074

Ottawa Office

130 Albert St.
Suite 1103
Ottawa, ON
K1P 1B1

www.dawncanada.net

DAWN Canada's offices are located on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka territory (Montréal) and unceded Algonquin Anishinabe territory (Ottawa).

The *More Than A Footnote* Policy Forum took place on unceded Algonquin Anishinabe territory at the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel and the Shaw Centre Ottawa.

Our partners

EDID-GHDI

The EDID-GHDI partnership brings together research partners from four country studies in Haiti, South Africa, Canada and Vietnam, as well as one transnational study. The goal of the project is to uncover, co-create and mobilize knowledge about diverse women and girls with disabilities, and to influence the development of policies that are critical to removing barriers and creating the conditions necessary for inclusion and participation.



Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

Global Affairs Canada defines, shapes and advances Canada's interests and values in a complex global environment. It manages diplomatic relations, promotes international trade and provides consular assistance. The organization leads international development, humanitarian and peace and security assistance efforts.

Additionally, Global Affairs Canada contributes to national security and the development of international law.



More than a Footnote Policy Forum

The *More than a Footnote* Policy Forum took place on December 1 and 2, 2022. The event brought together more than 100 participants both in-person and online, fostering a multilingual environment with support for English, French, ASL, LSQ and captioning.

Hosted by DAWN Canada, the forum marked an important milestone as the inaugural biennial event and served as a platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange and the collective pursuit of inclusive policies to empower marginalized communities.

The forum was comprised of three panels that delved into critical topics:

1. **Livelihoods, Housing and Childcare:** This panel explored the intersections of livelihoods, housing and poverty, shedding light on the challenges faced by marginalized communities.
2. **Gender-Based Violence:** Participants engaged in discussions surrounding gender-based violence, addressing its widespread impact and potential avenues for change.
3. **Canada's International Assistance:** This panel dissected international assistance policies, examining their effectiveness and proposing innovative approaches for improvement.

The panelists and attendees were a diverse group of individuals and experts that included civil society representatives, government officials and researchers. The event also welcomed high-level policy makers, notably the Minister of Disability Inclusion and the Director-General of Economic Development from GAC.

Discussions yielded valuable insights, identifying significant policy gaps and offering thoughtful recommendations for addressing them.

A highlight of the forum was the recognition of Laverne Jacobs, a member of the CRPD committee. Laverne was presented with DAWN Canada's prestigious Hummingbird Award for her exceptional contributions by the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, who was a Hummingbird Award recipient in 2020.

Day 1 Programme at a Glance

December 1, 2022

Sheraton Ottawa Hotel

Opening ceremony & welcome

Greetings from The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, MP

Presentation of the 2022 Hummingbird Award

Panel 1: Livelihoods, Housing and Childcare

Moderator: Vicky Smallman, Canadian Labour Congress

Panelists:

1. Morna Ballantyne, Childcare Now
2. Sarah Jama, Disability Justice Network of Ontario
3. Natasha Pateman, Homelessness Policy Directorate
4. Kathryn Reinders, University of Guelph
5. Katherine Scott, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, MP

Minister of Employment

Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion

Minister Qualtrough joined the *More Than a Footnote* Policy Forum remotely and gave introductory greetings. With so many important discussions taking place, her presence and participation was important.



The Honourable Carla Qualtrough was first elected as the Member of Parliament for Delta in 2015.

A successful lawyer, dedicated volunteer, and Paralympic swimmer, Minister Qualtrough has practised human rights law at the federal and provincial levels. She chaired the Minister's Council on Employment and Accessibility in British Columbia, and was an adjudicator with the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal.

Minister Qualtrough has been visually impaired since birth.

As an athlete, Minister Qualtrough won three Paralympic and four World Championship medals.

Minister Qualtrough has degrees in political science from the University of Ottawa and in law from the University of Victoria. Among many awards for her work, she has been named one of Canada's Most Influential Women in Sport numerous times, and received a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

Minister Qualtrough was a recipient of the DAWN Canada Hummingbird Award in 2020.



Laverne Jacobs

Law Professor, University of Windsor

Hummingbird Award recipient



”

“I am extremely honoured and very touched to be the recipient of this year’s hummingbird award.”

I am extremely honoured and very touched to be the recipient of this year’s hummingbird award. To even be considered for this award is a great honour and a privilege. I thank DAWN Canada for recognizing my work in this way.



DAWN Canada has been advocating for the rights of women and girls with disabilities, gender diverse individuals with disabilities and deaf women for over 35 years. They’re on the ground advocacy work is something that I have admired and appreciated. Over the years I’ve used and referred to, and often referred my students to a variety of reports and materials produced by DAWN. I’ve also referred to materials myself and in many different contexts.

I’ve also been inspired by their leadership and their leaders. We’re always seeking to find ways to improve both gender and disability equality. I’m grateful to receive an award from an organization that I hold in such high esteem. So how can we pursue and promote equality for women and girls with disabilities, deaf women and individuals with disabilities who are gender diverse. There are a multitude of avenues to pursue partly generated, unfortunately, by the numerous discriminatory barriers that exist for these populations.

And as an academic I’ve critiqued case law worked to further law and policy development through research and teaching. I’ve also supervised graduate students who have focused their research on barriers to healthcare for women with disabilities.



Panel 1: Livelihoods, Housing and Childcare

The first panel opened with dynamic discussions on livelihoods, housing and childcare. The panel was moderated by Vicky Smallman (Canadian Labour Congress) and included panelists Katherine Scott (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives), Sarah Jama (Disability Justice Network of Ontario), Natasha Pateman (Homelessness Policy Directorate), Kathryn Reinders (University of Guelph) and Morna Ballantyne (Childcare Now).

Key Messages:

Women and girls with disabilities need universal access to services that meet their housing, education and childcare needs, whether or not they are able to be part of the workforce. These universal services need to be treated as a human right. We know that change is possible, where there is political and societal will.

What we heard from panelists:

Livelihoods are about how we make choices to live our lives and how we meet our material needs, develop skills and access services. Intersectionality is key to how we interact with social structures, and this influences the forms of discrimination experienced by women and girls with disabilities. Social and economic services are difficult for people with disabilities to access and pursue, which then leads to unemployment issues. Women and girls with disabilities are not being supported by the current system. We need to create services that support people and allow them to flourish; this means not overlooking or focusing on one service. Without one piece, everything crumbles—we need housing, education, health care, etc.

”

“It’s not just about surviving. It’s about doing better and being able to support everybody in their place and their needs.”

Natasha Pateman
*Homelessness Policy
Directorate*

Women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities were largely ignored in the pandemic response. Before the pandemic, we were seeing a positive improvement in the number of people with disabilities within the workforce. The numbers were still low, but there was progress, showing that change is possible when these issues are treated as urgent and when the political will is there. This all changed with the pandemic, which massively impacted women with disabilities at the low end of the economic spectrum.

There will always be people with disabilities who cannot work. What happens to the people who are left behind? The current message is that for people to earn a livelihood, they must be employable. We are in a fight to prove that care services need to be universally accessible.

”

“Clearly there are gaping holes in the system we are looking into and want to describe very clearly how that works in childcare, disability services and a whole host of publicly funding systems.”

Katherine Scott
*Canadian Centre for
Policy Alternatives*

Panelists were hopeful that there will be large reforms around income and security. For instance, the CERB funds supported people who had an income of less than \$2,000. That was big for people with disabilities and those who did not qualify for social assistance. The most critical piece is access to childcare and early access to education. Childcare and education need to be a right.

Access to services—housing, childcare, education—are linked together and impact livelihoods. As policymakers, we need to be brave and start building a world that makes basic necessities accessible to everyone. We need to approach services from a human rights perspective.

What we heard from the audience:

Audience members spoke to the current mental health crisis, with marginalized communities like those struggling with addictions being the most underserved and affected. Relatedly, there is a lack of continuum of care, with too much onus on individuals to seek out help and a lack of proactive interventions. People need their basic needs met through wraparound supports, whether they be crisis shelters, treatment, childcare, etc. As one individual stated, “Start with the person, and build around them.”

Many people spoke to the siloed nature of government interventions and the fatigue that comes with trying to address ableism in different sectors. Departments aren't speaking with one another, ministers are constantly turning over and the disability portfolio is often stigmatized. Many argued for dismantling systems and giving more power to the individual or appointing accessibility watchdogs. Others argued for more interchange between civil servants and community.

Audience members affirmed that it takes collective response by all ministries (across federal, provincial and territorial governments) to tackle the educational, health care, childcare and employment needs of people with disabilities. Further, there is not enough meaningful engagement from government towards people with disabilities.

In foster care, a significant proportion of children are Indigenous girls and there are currently no policies that are focused on addressing this reality. Some of these children go from the streets to foster care and vice versa, repeating this cycle for many years of their lives.

Often, residential care providers want to take Indigenous children because the per diem is higher. Some of these children are Deaf and cannot access appropriate forms of communication.

The provision of housing is life or death in many parts of Canada. Housing services often do not provide for Canada's climate. People with disabilities living on the streets are often invisible to financing and are not the priority of public policies or the concern of civil society. There is discrepancy in housing support systems across the provinces and territories and there are even cases where abuse has been committed within shelter and housing systems.

There are discrepancies in eligibility criteria for children—especially Deaf children—to access services such as interpreters, and eligibility criteria are often very difficult to meet. Further, Deaf parents currently do not receive the supports they need to address the complexities involved with raising non-Deaf children.

“Change can happen, provided there is political and societal will.”

Sarah Kastner

“I was surprised to hear that there is very little gender analysis or gender sensitive commitments in the DAIP (Disability Inclusion Action Plan).”

Stephen Baranyi
University of Ottawa

Audience members showed optimism in terms of possibilities for achieving change, as evidenced by the rapid policy and workplace changes that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members spoke to the need for pushing forward the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, while also addressing gaps in the Plan related to gender. Finally, audience members spoke strongly about the need for universal income assistance, stating that building the cost of living into income assistance would go a long way to address the livelihood challenges faced by people with disabilities.

Key Recommendations:

- Create holistic services that focus on housing, education and childcare.
- Fight for services that are universally accessible.
- Push forward the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

d. As part of this pillar we're
employment strategy. The goals
sons with disabilities to find
d quality jobs and in their
employers to develop disability
and make workplaces more
accessible and for increased
individuals



Day 2 Programme at a Glance

December 2, 2022

Shaw Centre Ottawa

Opening ceremony & welcome

Panel 2: Gender-Based Violence

Moderator: Bonnie Brayton, DAWN Canada

Panelists:

1. Ann Decter, Canadian Women's Foundation
2. Crystal Garrett-Baird, WAGE
3. Nneka MacGregor, WomenatthecentrE
4. Samantha Walsh, DAWN Canada

Panel 3: Canada's International Assistance

Moderator: Ruvimbo Chidziva, Global Affairs Canada

Panelists:

1. Bonnie Brayton, DAWN Canada
2. Anne Delorme, Humanity and Inclusion
3. Ioanna Sahas-Martin, Global Affairs Canada
4. Deborah Stienstra, EDID-GHDI

Special pre-recorded video-presentation from Soinette Désir

Panel 2: Gender-Based Violence

The second panel around gender-based violence was moderated by Bonnie Brayton (DAWN Canada) and included panelists Ann Decter (Canadian Women's Foundation), Nneka MacGregor (WomenatthecentrE), Samantha Walsh (DAWN Canada) and Crystal Garrett-Baird (WAGE).

Key Messages:

Civil society organizations are at the front lines of supporting those experiencing gender-based violence, but their funding is not sustainable. Intersectional frameworks are key in addressing gender-based violence, but many organizations and levels of government are not trained in their implementation.

What we heard from panelists:

Gender-based violence (GBV) looks different for women and girls with disabilities, as it is not necessarily perpetrated by a spouse or a partner but could be from someone who is supporting them. 55% of women with disabilities report experiencing GBV in their lifetime versus 35% for women without disabilities. The Federal Action Plan to address GBV was not sufficient and more needs to be done. The pandemic highlighted critical gaps such as structural failings that have led to increased GBV and the need for decent work in the care sector (over 50% of unpaid caregiving roles are done by people with disabilities). Further, DAWN Canada has found that people with disabilities are often ungendered in policy spaces, with women ending up as a footnote in policies. The government has committed to GBA+, but where is that reflected? GBA+ erased women and girls with disabilities by putting us in the 'plus.'

Panelists explained that we need to think about the sustainability of organizations that provide support services and that they experience precarity in doing advocacy and activism work. Organizations have the capacity, but we need to advocate for more sustainable funding that will allow these organizations to become sustainable.

An intersectional framework is actioned by an inclusive design perspective that assumes a plurality of humans will show up. There needs to be culturally relevant support that is intentionally designed to support a multitude of people with different experiences. Intersectionality was started for Black women and non-conforming people. It expands beyond these populations, but we cannot forget for whom it was started. 'Black women' is often removed from documents and replaced with the term 'racialized'. We need to centre those at the margins of the margins by naming Black women when talking about these issues.

”

“We need to centre those at the margins of the margins.”

Nneka MacGregor
WomenatthecentrE

What policy actions can be taken to address these critical gaps? Panelists advocated for wrap-around services with service navigation being established and automatic. Collecting data is critical. There is a need for government to implement an intersectional lens in funding relations. We need to implement a National Action Plan to truly get at the root causes of GBV using an intersectional approach. We need continuous engagement with GBV supporters at policy forums like this. We need to remain agile to avoid becoming stagnant.

What we heard from the audience:

The audience stressed that we need more concrete action from government including accountability mechanisms, metrics and sharing of successes and failures. Metrics must include the voices of people with lived experience. More academic partnerships and research is needed that focus on disaggregated data and move away from quantitative data approaches. We need more equitable funding allocation and we must improve funding models so that they are sustainable in the long-term.

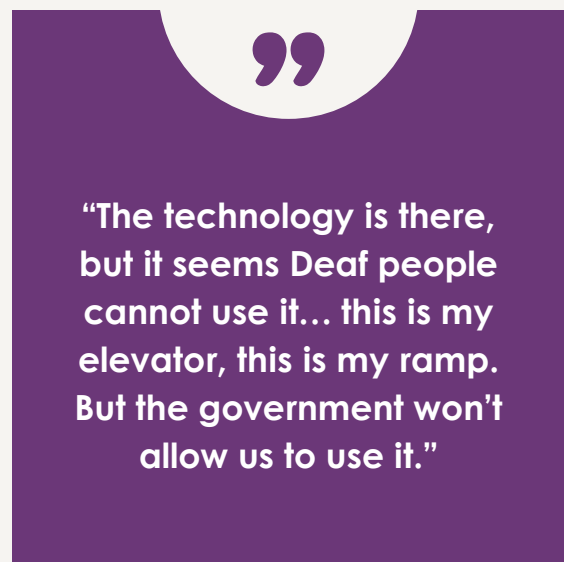
There has been evolution of GBA within the government from the 1980's-90's to today, recognizing that there is a proliferation of lenses through which reality has to be viewed, e.g. intersectionality and climate change. “Canada is considered a leader in gender-related issues, which is comforting, but at the same time challenging, because researchers and especially civil society push us to do more.” Still, different government departments are working with intersectionality differently. There needs to be a mainstreaming of intersectional frameworks and all levels of government need to be educated in how to implement them. Panelists suggested we might learn from Indigenous organizations about culturally relevant frameworks for GBV.

There is a pressing need to examine the use of technology for gathering data. Who are we missing? We need to get to the margins of the margins, i.e. those who might not have access to technology. Technology is a tool in the toolbox for collecting data, but we need to think critically about how we are using it and who is impacted.

For instance, video relay services are regulated so that you can only use them if there is an emergency. Often GBV is not perceived as an emergency, so you cannot use them. Increased funding for these technologies would allow many people with disabilities to access these services. As one audience member stated; “The technology is there, but it seems Deaf people cannot use it [...] this is my elevator, this is my ramp [...] but the government won’t allow us to use it.”

Deaf culture in particular needs more funding and research. Deaf women and their needs tend to be ignored. During the pandemic, it became clear there were not enough deaf interpreters, and interpreters were not being paid enough.

Audience members asked: How do you access the door to the unheard that you need to talk to? That is through civil society. People will talk to who they trust. It is critical that government and academia build relationships with the people who have trust and relationships with the unheard. On a related note, when we engage with people, we’re asking them for their free labour and rarely are they paid for their time. We should be consistently paying them honoraria, covering transportation, paying for food and childcare. We also need to make sure that women and girls with disabilities have access to peer support as it relates to GBV.



Finally, we must combat the ‘it takes too long’ attitude. As COVID-19 showed us, where there is political and societal will, there is the ability to create change in a matter of days.

Key Recommendations:

- Advocate for sustainable funding for disability organizations.
- Push for wraparound, interconnected services.
- Mainstream intersectional frameworks and educate government in their implementation.
- Examine the use of technology for gathering data.



"I am encouraged by DAWN's mission to end the poverty, isolation, discrimination and violence experienced by women with disabilities and Deaf women. DAWN's work is not only well aligned with the priorities of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, but more importantly as an organization they are a representative and credible voice for and with women and girls with disabilities."

Cheryl Urban

*Assistant Deputy Minister, Sub-Saharan Africa Branch
Global Affairs Canada*

Panel 3: Canada's International Assistance

The third panel around Canada's International Assistance was moderated by Ruvimbo Chidziva (Global Affairs Canada) and panelists included Ioanna Sahas-Martin (Global Affairs Canada), Bonnie Brayton (DAWN Canada), Deborah Stienstra (EDID-GHDI) and Anne Delorme (Humanity and Inclusion), with a special pre-recorded video-presentation from Soinette Désir.

Key Messages:

Discussions around the inclusion and leadership of women with disabilities are still missing from international policy discussions and debates. More funding is needed to empower women with disabilities to take on leadership roles in this movement.

”

“Women with disabilities need training in how to be leaders in this movement.”

Soinette Désir

A message from Soinette Désir:

In the current global context, the issues of inclusion, accessibility, female leadership and intersectionality are missing. Disabled women's struggles are rarely discussed. Within the Office of the Secretariat [in Haiti], the struggle has been to advocate for disabled women's rights and inclusion for who have all been victims of discrimination based on gender and disability. Tearing down these barriers to emancipate women with disabilities is a long battle.

We need to make sure we are meeting the commitments of the CRPD. We need to ensure that women with disabilities are able to enjoy the same rights as people without disabilities. Women with disabilities need training in how to be leaders in this movement. We need empower these women; only then can we begin to combat the discrimination women with disabilities face. We can no longer be considered footnotes.

What we heard from panelists:

In 2020-2021, only 5% of Canada's disability inclusive international assistance funding directly targeted gender equality and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities. Most of this development assistance has been focused on medical supports and there has been very little funding to support the empowerment and leadership of women with disabilities. Issues extend beyond funding – it's about what we are funding and how funding is being used. Panelists asked: Are there new ways of looking at or approaching funding for women and girls with disabilities?

How is Canada doing? Not very well, but we are getting better. A lot of progress has happened because of the push from advocates and research. Women must continue to come together to organize and demand that they are no longer going to be a side event – they are the majority of people with disabilities.

There are opportunities to learn from several existing initiatives. These include the Making it Work initiative, which strengthens capacity for advocacy for GBC and building relationships with government; funding models in the United Kingdom and Nordic countries; LGBTQIA+ programming in Canada; and the Active Fund. Panelists stressed that we need to bring together as many women with disabilities organizations as possible, particularly from the Global South, to organize and advocate for change.

Panelists reminded us that women with disabilities are not vulnerable; they are vulnerable-ized (i.e. made vulnerable) by the structures around us that are not able to currently support us. Education, policy and advocacy are key to moving forward. We need to stop treating disability as a marker and focus instead on what makes spaces inclusive and accessible. We need to shift from the social model to the human rights model and provide services because it is a human right.

What we heard from the audience:

Audience members stressed the need to get more funding to local organizations and to have international assistance be accessible to those who need it most.

They asked; "How do we get funding from federal government to civil society organizations run by women with disabilities?" They also stressed the need to orient international assistance to the needs of the Global South.

”

“How do we get funding from federal government to civil society organizations run by women with disabilities?”

More data is needed, and not just quantitative data – there are other ways of knowing, sharing and gathering data about various programs outside of quantitative yes/no questionnaires. That very binary approach erases meaningful life experiences that don't entirely tick that yes or no box.

More dialogue is needed with partners and people with lived experience, and women with disabilities need a seat at the head of the table when it comes to engaging with organizations like GAC. We need to work together (government, civil society, academia) and we need to continue working to educate ourselves and others about the needs and priorities of women and girls with disabilities. From the perspective of civil society, it was stated; "Governments – don't lead us, follow us."

”

**“Governments – don't
lead us, follow us.”**

The National Action Plan was described as a great plan, one that is ambitious, but that still struggles with wording with a lot of 'should' and 'could.' Audience members asked: Who is going to turn these aspirations into actions? And what are the qualitative measures for tackling the results of the Action Plan?

The audience questioned whether there are country-level, successful examples where policy has been harmonized across health, international and other sectorial policies to reflect the needs and priorities of women and girls with disabilities. Some members suggested looking to the United Kingdom, the African Disability forum and learning from other disability organizations in various countries.

Key Recommendations:

- Use available funding to support the empowerment and leadership of women with disabilities.
- Get more funding to local organizations.
- Focus efforts on data collection – not just quantitative data but also qualitative.
- Look to disability organizations in other countries to learn from their examples.



Reflections: Bonnie Brayton

CEO

DAWN Canada

Hosting this inaugural policy forum in December 2022, in person, in Ottawa over two days with three incredible panels at two venues was an ambitious undertaking.



More than a Footnote will stand as a turning point for DAWN Canada in the advancement of our mission. Research, education, policy and advocacy are the four pillars and foundation of our work at DAWN Canada. That we were able to launch this biennial policy event, with two key partners in our international work, Professor Stienstra and EDID-GHDI Canada partners and Ruvimbo Chidziva from Global Affairs Canada, along with so many of our other partners both on panels and joining us as conference participants (and on Zoom!) was an affirmation that policy matters, and that women, girls and gender-diverse people with disabilities currently represent the 'policy gap.'

More than a Footnote has already resulted in an important dialogue that must continue between civil society organizations, our academic research partners and those in positions of leadership, in particular policy leadership to address the gaps through an intersectional lens. We MIND the gap!

***“More than a Footnote
will stand as a turning
point for DAWN
Canada in the
advancement of
our mission.”***

Reflections: Deborah Stienstra

EDID-GHDI

One of the goals of the EDID-GHDI partnership is to build relationships and share knowledge between government, civil society and researchers around the experiences of women and girls with disabilities.



This policy forum exceeded my hopes for involving all three sectors and sharing knowledge from their different vantage points. I especially appreciated the frank comments and conversations about policy gaps and directions in each of the three panels. The conversations among panelists were rich and respectful, but often challenging. They modelled a way of learning from and with each other, including across our differences. The contributions from audience members, including in their table discussions, complemented and extended the insights from panellists by highlighting additional policy gaps and areas for change.

”

“This policy forum exceeded my hopes for involving all three sectors and sharing knowledge from their different vantage points.”

Together, all were able to identify new and emerging directions to address the barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities and illustrate what gendered disability justice requires of governments, civil society and researchers.

Reflections: Ruvimbo Chidziva

Senior Policy Analyst

Human Rights and Inclusion, Global Affairs Canada

This was an important forum for civil society and disabled peoples' organizations to advocate directly with government and lead work on disability inclusion.



It was critically important for Global Affairs Canada to take part in this inaugural policy forum focused on women and girls with disabilities.

It was an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from women and girls with disabilities and their representative organizations how we as a government can better serve them. In the spirit of 'nothing without us', we are looking forward to partnering with women and girls with disabilities to ensure we meet our international commitment to 'leave no one behind'.

Personally, it was a privilege to work directly with DAWN and EDID to bring this to life. Global Affairs is looking forward to continuing this relationship and valuable partnership.

”

“We are looking forward to partnering with women and girls with disabilities to ensure we meet our international commitment to ‘leave no one behind’.”

Wrap-up Questions

The policy forum discussions wrapped up with final thoughts and questions:

How do we keep policy makers accountable to these recommendations?

How do we ensure that all levels of policy makers are accountable to the people they serve?

It is essential that we keep talking about these issues as we move forward and look towards the next *More Than a Footnote* Policy Forum.

Words to take away:

Resiliency

Accountability

Solidarity

Urgency

Bravery

Humility

Acknowledgments

This report was a collaborative effort led by University of Guelph graduate student **Jessica Lukawiecki** who compiled two very full days into a framework and somehow managed to filter the hundreds of exchanges into a report that is animated by all the participants.

The hosts of the Forum – **Bonnie Brayton** (DAWN Canada), **Ruvimbo Chidziva** (Global Affairs Canada) and **Deborah Stienstra** (EDID-GHDI) – would readily admit to enjoying the collaboration and contribution to the planning of our two BIG days and to this report.

DAWN Canada's **Maggie Lyons-MacFarlane** began the editing process, listening to the recordings to capture those nuggets we feature here. The final version of this report, including editing and design, are thanks to communications consultant **Brittany Howlett**.

A big thanks to the staff and students from the University of Guelph who were our team in planning and on the ground both days.

To the translators, interpreters, captioners, attendants and technical teams, our thanks, merci, mgwetch!

We also appreciate the excellent customer service we and our guests enjoyed from the staff at the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel and the Shaw Centre Ottawa.

Finally, a HUGE thank you to the DAWN Canada staff team, without whom this Forum and final report would not have been possible. Merci.

