

Stakeholder Engagement for Disabled Women – CEDAW - Wellington



Date & location:	28 March 2018, 41 the Terrace, Wellington
International convention engagement relates to:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Documents referenced:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CEDAW Concluding Observations from 7th periodic review of NZ (2012)• CEDAW List of issues for 8th periodic report of NZ• NZ Government 8th periodic report (June 2016)• CEDAW Submission template
Attendance:	Around 20 people attended including a number of disabled women. Representation was noted from the Disabled Persons Assembly, the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women, People First, Peoples Wellington, Deaf Aotearoa and the Society of St Vincent de Pauls

A. Background to meeting:

1. Public consultation to inform the Commission's shadow report to CEDAW and provide information on how individuals or groups can make their own submission to the Committee

B. Main issues raised:

2. Participants raised the following human rights issues as the main issues affecting disabled people:
 - Access to services/protection from services
 - Violence and abuse
 - Representation and visibility for disabled women (by ourselves)
 - Bodily autonomy
 - Poverty
 - The right to family and relationships
 - Employment
3. Participants split into three groups to discuss the following main issues:
 - Violence and abuse
 - Access to and protection from services
 - "Other" – which was a group that discussed all issues with a focus on data collection.

C. Summary of recommendations from all groups

1. Establish an independent disabled women's group adequately resourced to engage on disabled women's issues.
2. Ensure greater representation of disabled women in all aspects of decision making.
3. Develop an awareness raising/education campaign similar to the Like Minds, Like Mine Campaign that focuses on the rights of disabled women.
4. Amend S. 8 of the Adoption Act 1955 which allows the children of a disabled mother to be taken away without consent.
5. Amend the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act which allows for the compulsory administration of contraception to disabled women.

6. Ensure disabled women are resourced to allow effective engagement with Government (CRPD twin track approach).
7. Ensure police officers are adequately trained to communicate with disabled people and people with autism – particularly around cases of abuse and violence.
8. Ensure better access to services and protection from services for disabled women. (Disabled women as consumers are sometimes in a position of opposition to carers).
9. Improve working conditions for personal care services in order to increase the availability of these services for disabled women.
10. Improve access to employment and to services relating to seeking employment.
11. Improve assessment services for disabled women.
12. Address structural issues in mental health and funding cuts.
13. Improve access to information for disabled women.

D. Meeting notes from breakout groups

Violence and abuse

- No services for disabled women.
- Disabled women are not featured in the design of programmes. Invisible. “Not considered citizens”.
- There is a lack of data and issues for disabled women are not taken seriously.
- Disabled women are two times more likely to be abused than other women.
- More support for women with learning disabilities is needed.
- Refuges are not safe or accessible for disabled women.
- Disabled women struggle with being heard/being believed by primary intervention agencies.
- There is no accessible information regarding how to access violence and abuse services. More funding is required to make this happen.
- Research focuses on all other varieties of women, but not disabled women. “Researchers make assumptions about us when we are not included.”
- Protection from abuse from caregivers.
- More training for front-line staff required.
- The CRPD’s twin-track approach is not used in all aspects of violence and abuse for disabled women.
- We don’t have data/evidence for violence and abuse. This information is not adequately collected by police.
- There needs to be an independent disabled woman’s group that is adequately human resourced and engages on issues specific to disabled women. DPOs are not used for women issues.
- “Othering” language vs rights.
- Reasonable accommodation is a limitation because its seen as an add on, not as “just the way we do things around here.”
- A campaign similar to Like Minds, Like Mine that is adequately resourced with disabled women in charge would be good for progressing disabled women issues.
- The three CEDAW reports to the UN have said the same thing. What has changed? There has been little action.
- People should enable us to speak for ourselves.
- More stakeholder engagement with disabled women.
- “We need to be part of the thinking, part of the doing and everything in between.”

Access to and protection from services

- There is a lack of personal care services for disabled women. A lack of staff for these services due to low pay.
- Consumers are sometimes in a position of opposition to carers.
- There are structural issues in mental health. Funding cuts.

- Accessibility for people with neurodisabilities, access to information, right to citizenship. Women with neurodisabilities are falling through the gaps.
- The cross-over between mental health and disability should be examined more closely.
- Assessment services not up to scratch. Need specific diagnosis to access services.
- Not enough specialist services work together e.g. communication with deaf clients.
- Accessibility of mental health info e.g. videos in sign-language.
- Access to adequate support in education particularly sexual education – assumption always able-bodied. Links to parenting.
- Difficulties for disabled women obtaining jobs. Jobs that are available can be inappropriate, eg - cleaning at night when public transport options are not available.
- WorkBridge should provide Health & Safety training to all employers re employing disabled people.
- Disabled people should work for WorkBridge. “Disability services for and by those with disabilities”
- Access to housing: TradeMe should put an accessibility badge on accessible houses.
- Accessibility of online information is difficult. Disability an after-thought in design.
- The Government, MP’s and councils need to lead the way in accessibility.
- There should be enforceable accessibility legislation.
- The closure of local banks, post shops and a move for all services on the internet, not face to face makes life more difficult for some disabled women.

Other issues

Data:

- The Census questions were rubbish for disabled people – they need to redo the questions and the frequency of the disability survey. Disabled groups should be consulted in the design of those questions.
- There should be a trigger question in the census – the questions should not be used to check the prevalence of disability in the community – they’re not designed to do this
- Data needs to be collected on mental health issues as it pertains to neurodisabilities.
- Women with underdiagnosed in autism get missed on the spectrum as the diagnostic criteria is based on males.
- New Zealand has a serious lack of data on the autism spectrum – no disaggregation of data

Government services:

- Communication – disabled women should be given the option to express themselves in an accessible way, engage on an equal platform. There should be an exclusive phone contact option for some services.
- Government departments should have multiple modes of communication on offer for disabled women and these should be consistent between agencies like WINZ and IRD.
- Benefits: Support people can’t support children.
- The system is difficult for disabled women. You can lose income and disability support if you are in a relationship with someone whose income is over threshold.

Costs of disability

- Remove means testing of income for disability and income supports (e.g. upon entering a relationship; as an individual.
- Provide government funding for autism/dyslexia testing.
- Education support to be continued after age 8.
- Neurodevelopmental issues to be recognized and have access to support (eg - woman are underdiagnosed for autism). Different diagnosis criteria to be used in NZ.
- Collect data on prevalence of autism and other neurodisabilities.