

## CONCEPT NOTE

# NATIONAL SEMINAR ON “ROLE OF YOUNG AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF INDIA”



Organised by



**Society for Disability and Rehabilitation Studies**  
In collaboration with  
**Human Rights and Disability Studies Programmes,**  
**School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi**

**Venue: Committee Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor), SIS, JNU, New Delhi**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019 (Thursday & Friday)**

## (A) BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

The youths constitute the most creative segment of any society comprising 34% of total population of India. Insofar as disabled youth and adolescent girls are concerned, they are amongst the most marginalized and poorest of all the world's youth, whose basic rights are not well met and for whom full societal acceptance is often out of reach. Disparities in education, employment, and relationships are more pronounced in youth with disabilities. Their role and contribution are vital to nation building and national integration, especially in a country of diversities like ours with wide social, cultural and other demographic variations. Like all young people, young and adolescent girls need to live in safe and supportive environments; they need education, health services and access to sports and recreation. They also need to develop skills that will enable them to find work and that will serve them well in the work-place.

However, things are not so cosy in case of young and adult girls with disabilities at the grassroots level; who have to face social isolations, poverty and discrimination. Notwithstanding the rights guaranteed to them by the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the young and adult girls with disabilities are normally debarred from meaningfully participating in their families and communities. They often lack basic health care and are not allowed to attend school or to find work. Compared to their non-disabled peers, they are at great risk of physical and psychological abuse and sexual exploitation. In many countries, they are routinely institutionalized and are often the recipients of unnecessary and unwanted medical and surgical procedures, including forced sterilization. The situation has become

worse and perplexing in case of young girl and women with disabilities, especially those who are from minority communities.

Estimating the global numbers and distribution of adolescent and young girls with disabilities seems to be a difficult, if not impossible, task in the Indian context because of lack of accurate statistical data. According to the United Nations, 80 per cent of all disabled individuals live in developing countries. In some countries, only the most severely disabled individuals are identified; in others, even those with mild disabilities are included in surveys and census reports. Estimated rates of adolescents with disabilities range from 108 per 100,000 in Myanmar to 6,726 per 100,000 in Canada. (Among 15- to 19-year-olds, similar ranges occur, from 142.6 per 100,000 in Myanmar to 5,099.5 per 100,000 in Austria), though any such figures are not available in our country. Not included in these numbers are the millions of additional children, adolescents and youth affected by chronic infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, and girls who face significant impairments as a result of the practice of female genital mutilation. The situation has got further aggravated; as adolescent and youth organizations advocating for young people, in general, are not inclined to acknowledge the presence of young and adult girls with disabilities.

Significantly, adolescents are at increased risk of being disabled by violence. Adolescents are frequently participants in or victims of wars, civil unrest, and tribal warfare. Both males and females are often forced to serve as child soldiers or drafted into armies and resistance movements. Violence against civilian populations, including landmine violence, is also of concern. Additionally, many societies have high levels of social violence, with adolescent males and females joining in gang warfare and armed fights with guns, knives and other weapons. Adolescent girls with disabilities are greater risk of being subjected to forms of interpersonal and domestic violence. In some nations, increased use of drugs and alcohol among adolescents, as well as poorly regulated or unregulated access to firearms, increases the likelihood that such conflicts could result in disability to the individual. Despite their growing numbers and their striking needs, adolescents and young girls with disabilities have historically fallen through the cracks. Not to speak of India, even in Western countries, the programmes that are intended for young people rarely purport to include those with disabilities.

It may be noted that attitudes and discrimination linked to disability make it much more difficult for them to go to school, to find work or to participate in local activities. The most prominent unmet medical need identified for adolescent and young girls with disabilities is the continuing lack of rehabilitation services. In many communities, both rural and urban, the environment is immensely challenging with physical and communication barriers that make it hard for them to participate in social life. Nevertheless, there is quite dearth of research on the prevalence and consequences of disabilities among youth and adolescent with disabilities, especially in developing country like ours. Despite having the same hopes and ambitions as non-disabled persons, they encounter plethora of barriers that make it much harder for them to succeed. Young girls with disabilities experience significant discrimination in several areas--such as, education, health, gender, social security and equality.

This despite the fact that plethora of schemes/programmes have been launched by the Government of India and State Governments under successive Five-Year Plans and Three-Year Action Agenda, 2017-18 to 2019-20 (released by NITI AAYOG/GOI) for ameliorating the plight of the youth and adults, including those who have some or other disabilities. The National Youth Policy also seeks to emphasize, among other things, (i) organising the youth force for the promotion of national and cultural integration; (ii) promoting awareness and involvement of youth in social programmes pertaining to literacy, environment, health and family welfare, and community development; (iii) fostering and developing interaction between youth from different parts of the country specially the isolated border and tribal areas; (iv) promoting education and self-employment capability of the rural

youth, especially of girls and youth in backward areas; (v) developing the interest of youth in adventure and other outdoor activities; and (vi) providing opportunities for leadership training. However, despite all these affirmative action-oriented initiatives, the goal of mainstreaming the millions of young and adult girls with disabilities still remains as far away as ever.

## **(B) AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND JUSTIFICATIONS**

Against this background, the idea of organizing the proposed National Seminar on "Role of Young and Adolescent Girls with Disabilities in National Integration of India" has been mooted by the Society for Disability and Rehabilitation Studies--SDRS(New Delhi), in collaboration with JNU's Human Rights and Disability Studies Programmes, as a sequel to our nationwide social awareness campaign at Committee Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor), SIS, JNU, New Delhi on 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019 (Thursday & Friday) with the basic objective of generating awareness about the potential role of young and adolescent girl with disabilities in the developmental agenda as also the national integration process, especially in the aftermath of ratification of CRPD and enactment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) by the Government of India.

Against this background, the proposed National Seminar is basically intended to trace answers to the following pertinent questions: (i) How young and adult girls with disabilities are being excluded from decision making? (ii) What is the experience of young and adult girls with disabilities regarding their contribution in nation building? (iii) Why is it that when society breaks down, the young girls with disabilities become vulnerable? (iv) Do you subscribe to the view-point that by changing attitudes, the hidden potential of the young and adult girls with disabilities could be tapped for national development and integration? (v) What role could be played by communication and information technology in regard to harnessing the inherent capabilities of young and adult girls with disabilities? (vi) How could the CRPD help to increase the visibility of young and adult girls with disabilities?

## **(C) SUBJECTS/ ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED**

The following themes/ sub-themes are identified for discussion at this National Seminar--(i) Adolescent and Young Girls and Women with Disabilities: Issues and Challenges; (ii) Disability, Youth and Community Living; (iii) Promoting Inclusion in Recreation and Leisure; (iv) Young Girls with Disabilities in Institutional Settings; (v) Disability Policy for Young and Adult Girls and Women with Disabilities: Achievements and Limitations; (vi) Criminal Justice System for Young and Adult Girls and Women with Disabilities; (vii) National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action; (ix) Right to Community Integration for Young and Adult Girls and Women with Disabilities; (x) Role of Young and Adult Girls and Women with Disabilities in Nation Building and National Integration;