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**Questionnaire: Sexual and reproductive health and rights of**

**girls with disabilities**

1. **Context**

For her next report to the General Assembly, 72nd session, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, intends to focus on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities.

The Special Rapporteur is currently carrying out the research work and invites Governments, National Human Rights Institutions, independent monitoring mechanisms, civil society organizations and networks, including organizations of persons with disabilities, and other relevant stakeholders, to contribute by submitting replies to the questionnaire below.

Due to limited capacity for translation, we kindly request that you submit your answers, if possible, in English or Spanish and, no later than 20 May 2017. Please keep your responses concise.

We would be grateful if your submissions, in accessible formats (Word), could be sent electronically to sr.disability@ohchr.org.

For further information, please contact Ms. Alina Grigoras, Associate Human Rights Officer (e-mail: agrigoras@ohchr.org, tel.: +41 22 917 92 89).

1. **Questionnaire**
2. Please provide any information and statistics (including surveys, censuses, administrative data, literature, legal and policy documents, reports, and studies) related to the exercise of sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities, with particular focus in the following areas:
* Harmful stereotypes, norms, values, taboos, attitudes and behaviours related to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities;

**“Violence against Ethiopian Children with Disabilities: The Stories and Perspectives of Children” (2008)**: a research conducted by Light for the World’s CBR advisor Marieke Boersma. It describes the experiences of violence from girls’ and boys’ own perspectives (p. 26-33). Perspectives of family and community members are also included.

P.33: *“When children are asked about violence, they talk about exclusion from family and community life. They talk about wanting to have equal treatment to other children. They mention the violence they faced in the form of hitting, rape or neglect but they emphasise that they would like to be included. The children ask to be accepted and to be considered equal to others in society. It could be seen as a very “childish” solution of the children to expect the police to be there to protect them. However, children ask to be increasingly included in society so as to be considered in general protection measures and also when seeking justice after becoming victims of violence.”*

The research also analyses causes of vulnerability (p. 34-45) and includes stories of children who managed to seek justice or protection (p. 45-46). It also reflects on attitudes and harmful beliefs towards girls with disabilities: deaf girls tend to be married off young to work in their new household instead of getting education (p. 42), girls with disabilities mostly do not have access to sex education, contraceptives etc. due to wide-spread belief that they are asexual (p. 42f).

Finally, the research analyses the social capital / networks of the children and their families, in terms of inclusion / exclusion.

* Sex education (in formal and non-formal settings) and access to sexual and reproductive health information;

**Her Body, Her Rights. Making sex education work for young women with intellectual disabilities (2016).** A case study from Ethiopia: <https://www.light-for-the-world.org/her-body-her-rights> More details below.

* Access to child and youth friendly quality sexual and reproductive health services;
* Prevention, care and treatment of sexually transmitted infections;
* Violence against girls with disabilities impacting their enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health rights; and
* Harmful practices, such as forced sterilization and child, early and forced marriage.
1. Please provide information in relation to any innovative initiatives that have been taken at the local, regional or national level to promote and ensure the exercise of sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities, and identify lessons learned from these.

**Her Body, Her Rights:**

With the partner organisation CBR Network Ethiopia (CBRNE) Light for the World did a pilot project to make SRHR services accessible to girls with intellectual disabilities. In the project we brought Community-based Rehabilitation workers (experienced in working with girls with intellectual disabilities) together with government health extension workers (experienced with SRHR and sex education). Together, workshops for girls and their mothers were organised to create a safe space to learn about sexual and reproductive rights. The key lessons and experiences of the girls, their families and the CBR/health workers are described in this short publication: <https://www.light-for-the-world.org/her-body-her-rights>

**Different. Just Like You. A psychosocial approach promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities (2015)**

Light for the World published a handbook (together with Red Cross, JUUL and ICSSPE/CIEPSS) focusing on a psychosocial approach to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The handbook has two key aims:

• to create awareness of the importance of psychosocial support and inclusion in

promoting the well-being of (young) persons with disabilities;

• to provide guidance about psychosocial support and inclusion, along with practical resources for inclusive psychosocial activities for all kinds of settings.

Overall, this initiative has been based on the lesson learned in each of our organizations that there is an important link between (sexual) violence, neglect, exclusion and psychosocial wellbeing. Therefore the initiative aims to promote meaningful participation and empowerment.

The manual aims to support professionals and volunteers who work with persons with disabilities (such as schoolteachers, social workers, pedagogues, health workers, coaches or volunteers) in organizations, sports clubs and recreational facilities. It addresses issues of stereotypes from an empowerment perspective and includes topics such as sexual behaviour in schools and personal hygiene. It further provides individual case stories to help understand the issues and very practical tools and ideas for inclusive activities to promote wellbeing.

Link: <https://www.light-for-the-world.org/different-just-you>

Finally, we can share some publications which are not our own, but which could be relevant to your research project:

* “Out from the Shadows: Sexual Violence Against Children with Disabilities”
* “What to do if someone hurts you”
* “Breaking the silence: violence against children with disabilities in Africa”
* “Safeguarding adults and children with disabilities against abuse”

For any questions on information provided in this submission please contact Magdalena Kern (Advocacy Coordinator, Light for the World): m.kern@light-for-the-world.org