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## **Contribution to the European Commission's consultation for the next Gender equality & women's rights worldwide – 2021-25 action plan**

Submission by: Bridging the Gap II - Inclusive policies  
and services for equal rights of persons with disabilities

This contribution is formally submitted by the Director of European Project Bridging the Gap II on behalf of the project consortium.

### **What is Bridging the Gap II?**

“Bridging the Gap II – Inclusive Policies and Services for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities” (BtG-II) is an initiative funded by the European Union aiming to the socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries. BtG-II is implemented by a consortium coordinated by FIIAPP – Spanish Cooperation and composed by the Austrian Development Agency, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Spanish Agency for Development and Cooperation, the European Disability Forum, the International Disability and Development Consortium and, as observers, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

BtG-II works in five countries (Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Paraguay and Sudan) to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities as well as at global level to reinforce disability inclusion's mainstreaming in international cooperation through a dedicated Knowledge and Learning Management Strategy (KMLS). The activity described in the present document is framed in the context of said KMLS.

More information about the project can be found on the official website  
[www.bridgingthegap-project.eu](http://www.bridgingthegap-project.eu)

### **Opportunities to deliver on commitments**

1 in 5 women worldwide live with a disability (19.2%) compared to 11% of men. Women with disabilities are disproportionately affected by multiple forms of discrimination, for being a girl/woman and living with disabilities and are at a higher risk of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and domestic violence. They face



systematic barriers in the environment and the attitudes preventing them from accessing education, health care, including sexual and reproductive health information and services, employment and justice, also hindering their civic and political participation.

The EU Gender Action plan II (GAPII), though paying attention to multiple discrimination and intersectional barriers, does not systematically address the rights of women/girls with disabilities. **Bringing a strong disability perspective in the next GAP will ensure consistency of EU's action between the GAP and EU's commitment to disability inclusion driven from EU's and all EU member states' ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).**

CRPD's article 6 acknowledges that “women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination” and that State parties “shall take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”. In parallel, article 32 requests that “international cooperation, including international development programmes, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities”. A thorough disability perspective in the next GAP will also ensure consistency with CRPD Committee observations (General Comment No. 3) to ensure that international cooperation is disability and gender sensitive and inclusive; includes data and statistics on women with disabilities; supports partner countries' efforts; includes of women with disabilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects and programmes.

In its 2015 concluding observations, the CRPD committee also recommended the EU to adopt a harmonized policy on disability-inclusive development, establish a systematic approach to disability mainstreaming in EU international cooperation policies and programmes, and disaggregate data on disability. It will finally ensure coherence between external and internal policies (EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, European Disability Strategy post-2020).

Bridging the Gap II (BtG-II) considers gender a “cross-cutting component” throughout its action, both in the participating countries and at global level. Since the beginning of the implementation phase, several activities have been conducted in order to:

- Increase women with disabilities' leadership, recognition and participation in decisions that affect their lives;
- Increase economic participation and empowerment by ensuring their access to decent work and opportunities;
- Increase participation in peace and humanitarian response;



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- Ensure that women and girls with disabilities have the capacity to make choices;
- Ensuring women and girls with disabilities have equal access to both primary education and vocational education and training;
- Challenge social norms that create discrimination and perpetuate prejudices.

The gender dimension is present in every BtG-II action. For example, BtG-II's sub-grants support the access to basic healthcare services to women with disabilities in **Burkina Faso** and train the staff of international cooperation programmes and projects on how to include them in their medical plans.

In **Ecuador**, while no specific gender actions are considered due to the scope of the implementation, all educative materials and trainings projected consider gender both via the attendance of women and role representation

In **Ethiopia**, BtG-II trains and guides female community leaders with disabilities via specific trainings and dedicated empowerment techniques.

In **Paraguay**, workshops on fighting violence against women with disabilities were organised to raise the attention and understanding of the dimension of this topic among DPO and sensitise the public administration about its inclusion on policies and procedures. Gender mainstreaming is also present in the design of public indicators of the National Disability Plan of Action and public data collection tools and policies.

Around 150 women with disabilities were trained in agricultural and craft-ship techniques to ensure their capacity to be an active part of the work environment of the rural areas in **Sudan**, leading to the creation of groups of women with disabilities advocating for their rights in the rural state of Gedaref.

In this framework, BtG-II analyses, interacts with and influences international and national policies, programs and experiences aimed at removing barriers to the economic and social empowerment of women and girls with disabilities. BtG-II supports the promotion of **affirmative action measures** for the development, advancement and empowerment of women with disabilities, the creation of **organisations of women with disabilities** and their inclusion in wider networks, as well as the carrying on of specific researches on the situation of women and girls with disabilities.

In our project's experience, the following are of critical importance for the upcoming EU's Gender Action Plan:





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- **Explicitly refer to the CRPD** in all documentation related to the next GAP and include consistent references to disability.
- **Ensure accessible involvement** of women/girls with disabilities and their representative organisations at all stages (design, implementation and monitoring of the GAP; programming, implementation and monitoring of projects/programmes) and at all levels (regional and country levels). When including women/girls with disabilities, ensure their perspectives are given due weight and included.
- **Provide adequate resources and funding** to ensure full accessibility of processes and information for women/girls with disabilities, including reasonable accommodation.
- **Apply the twin-tack approach** to disability inclusion in development cooperation to the gender action plan. The approach consists of (a) mainstreaming a gender perspective and the rights of women/girls with disabilities of all ages, (b) initiatives targeting women/girls with disabilities. Provide several and good examples of mainstreaming and targeted actions in the documentation.
- **Collect and disaggregate data** by gender, age and disability and provide systematic support to partner countries and EU delegations overseas, also by [making use of the indicators developed under component I of Bridging the Gap](#).
- At country level, **mainstream an intersectional analysis and support the design and implementation** of policies and initiatives that do not adversely impact women/girls with disabilities, including needs and risk assessments.
- **Strengthen internal capacities** of gender focal points in EU delegations and headquarters, to ensure that all aspects and stages of design, implementation and monitoring of initiatives are disability-inclusive and accessible for women/girls with disabilities.
- **Recognise women/girls with disabilities as experts and leaders**, support the empowerment of women/girls with disabilities and the capacity development of their organisations for instance by providing dedicated funding.

## EU Action Plan of gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations for 2021-2025

Summary (3375 characters/4000 characters' maximum)

1 in 5 women worldwide live with a disability (19.2%) compared to 11% of men. Women with disabilities are disproportionately affected by multiple forms of





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discrimination, for being a girl/woman and living with disabilities, and are at a higher risk of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and domestic violence.

The EU Gender Action plan II (GAPII), though paying attention to multiple discrimination and intersectional barriers, does not systematically address the rights of women/girls with disabilities. **Bringing a strong disability perspective in the next GAP ensure consistency of EU's action between the GAP and EU's commitment to disability inclusion driven from EU's and all EU member states' ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).** The article 32 requests that “international cooperation, including international development programmes, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities” to ensure that international cooperation is disability and gender inclusive.

Bridging the Gap II (BtG-II) considers gender a “cross-cutting component” throughout its action. Several activities have been conducted in order to:

- Increase women with disabilities' leadership, recognition and participation in decisions that affect their lives;
- Increase participation and empowerment by ensuring access to decent work and opportunities;
- Increase participation in peace and humanitarian response;
- Ensure that women/girls with disabilities have the capacity to make choices;
- Ensuring women/girls with disabilities have equal access to primary education and vocational education and training;
- Challenge social norms that create discrimination and perpetuate prejudices.

The gender dimension is present in every BtG-II action, as synthetically described in the attached contribution.

In our project's experience, the following are of critical importance for the upcoming EU's Gender Action Plan:

- **Explicitly refer to the CRPD** in all documentation related to the GAP and include references to disability.
- **Ensure accessible involvement** of women/girls with disabilities and their representative organisations at all stages and at all levels.
- **Provide adequate resources** to ensure full accessibility of processes and information, including reasonable accommodation.
- **Apply the twin-tack approach** to disability inclusion in development cooperation to the gender action plan. It consists of (a) mainstreaming a gender perspective and the rights of women/girls with disabilities, (b) initiatives targeting women/girls with disabilities.





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- **Collect and disaggregate data** by gender, age and disability and provide systematic support to partner countries and EU, also by [making use of the indicators developed under component I of Bridging the Gap](#).
- At country level, **mainstream an intersectional analysis and support the design and implementation** of policies and initiatives that do not adversely impact women/girls with disabilities.
- **Strengthen internal capacities** of gender focal points in EU delegations and headquarters, to ensure that all aspects and stages of design, implementation and monitoring of initiatives are disability-inclusive and accessible for women/girls with disabilities.
- **Recognise women/girls with disabilities as experts and leaders**, support the empowerment and the capacity development of their organisations.