

**UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN - 4 March - 15
March 2013**

Side-event med RI Global – 4. March

Inga Marte Thorkildsen

Minister, Ministry of Children-, Equality and Inclusion

“Violence against women with disabilities”

Violence against women with disabilities will continue to be invisible to the public if we don't address it in political forums where violence against women in general is discussed and acted upon, not only in forums for the interested few.

I am therefore pleased that RI Global is focusing on this important issue, and honoured to be part of this panel.

More than one billion people in the world are disabled, and more than half of them are women and girls.

This calls for action in many areas of politics and society.

Although there are a considerable number of reports and personal testimonies on violence against women with disabilities, the statistics worldwide are scarce.

Even the statistics which includes violence against women with disabilities, is likely to under-report.

Improving statistics both on a national level and a global level should therefore be a priority!

A sad fact about violence against women is that it often takes place in a close relationship.

The violence is committed by their partners, husbands, or caregivers.

This is sadly also the case for violence against girls and women with disabilities. In addition they experience a wider range of abuses and forms of violence. And there are some additional unique causes and consequences.

Being more dependent on their families than other women, they might have more difficulties in breaking out of a situation with violence.

Girls and women living in residential institutions, or receiving services in their homes might be exposed to violence from their caregivers. Thus being dependent upon their caregivers makes it very difficult to complain or to report such abuses.

Girls and women with disabilities are also facing the risk of sexually abuse, a fact which is neither well known, nor spoken much of. One of the reasons

for neglecting this fact might be that the society tends not to recognize the sexuality of women with disabilities.

One of the reasons that women with disabilities seem to be more exposed to violence than women in general, might be that in many parts of the world many girls and women are excluded from the education system, health system and workforce. Inclusion in society might therefore be one of the best preventive methods we have.

The UN special rapporteur on violence against women, states in her report that research shows that no group has ever been as severely restricted, or negatively treated in respect of their reproductive rights as women with disabilities.

And behind all these statistics are the stories and faith of every individual woman and girl facing abuse.

Abuses of women with disabilities are also common in times of crisis and of war. Where sexual abuse and rape is used as a means of warfare, women with disabilities are no exception. Again I take the opportunity to condemn the perpetrators of sexual violence, and all those who abet such violence and permit impunity to continue.

Let me highlight some of the main Norwegian strategies both nationally and globally:

In a recent White paper submitted from my Government to the Parliament on Norwegian UN policy, it is underlined that the work on the post 2015 goals must include the disability perspective, and that disability is especially important within the areas of women development, education, health and democracy.

In this respect Norway welcomes the UN High Level meeting on disability planned in September this year. Let it be an occasion to globally address disability issues – with a clear gender perspective. Let it draw up a path for our joint efforts forward. Norway is prepared.

We are in the process of ratifying CRPD. Together with the CEDAW, the CRPD constitutes an important instrument for working with violence against women both nationally and globally.

A new and important tool in the fight against domestic violence is the new Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It should serve as an inspiration and guideline for a joint global approach.

The Norwegian government's view is clear. Violence against women is unacceptable. It must be prevented, combated and alleviated through measures to help and protect the victims and through treatment and prosecution of the perpetrators.

Our legislation and actions on violence against women are non-discriminatory regarding women with disabilities.

As early as 1988, unconditional prosecution was introduced in cases of domestic violence. A criminal case may be brought before the court, even if the woman withdraws the formal report.

The Crisis Centre Act oblige every Norwegian municipality to ensure comprehensive crisis service centres to all its inhabitants, men and women alike, who are exposed to abuse or violence and who need a safe, temporary accommodation. This of course also includes women with disabilities.

In January 2012, the Government launched a fourth action plan against violence in close relationships, applicable to the year 2012. Prepared in collaboration by four ministries, the plan is based on the need to see the work against such violence in an integrated, cross-sector perspective.

A White paper on violence against women and domestic violence will be presented in March 2013. The White paper will be followed up with a new action plan for the period 2013-2016.

Still;

It is a fact that we need better knowledge about the violence carried out towards girls and women with disabilities.

In 2010, the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies carried out a state of the art (status of knowledge) on the theme:

- Violence against women with disabilities occurs as least as often as for women in general,
- the violence lasted over a longer periode of time than for other women,
- the abuses towards women with disabilities seem dependent on the type of disability.

Another report based on a health study from 6 counties in Norway showed that girls with disabilities were more exposed to violence than girls without disability. And that girls with hearing impairment were more exposed to sexual abuse than other girls (13 % vs.5%). These are worrying figures.

It is necessary to continue to conduct research, and to actively include women with disabilities in gender -related research and statistics.

I am committed to fight violence against women, women with disabilities being a natural part of that. Let us join forces.

Thank you.