

Statement on behalf of disability and gender justice organizations in response to the report by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences on 'Sex-based violence against women and girls: new frontiers and emerging issues'

June 2025

Hello, I am Beatrice Leong, from AIDA (Autism Inclusiveness Direct Action Group) and I am making this statement on behalf of 16 global disability and gender rights activists and organizations.

As women, girls, and gender-diverse people with disabilities, we express our deep alarm and grave concern with the latest report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences. Across the globe, 20% of women and girls identify as persons with disabilities, and UN data shows that we are more vulnerable to violence and discrimination than our non-disabled counterparts. This report risks compounding that harm by reinforcing narratives that pathologize our identities and erode our personhood.

People with disabilities advocated for decades to introduce a human rights model of disability. In 2006, with the adoption of the UNCRPD, the human rights model was finally enshrined as a fundamental human rights standard. Recognising people with disabilities as their own personhood and as right holders. Yet this report undermines those protections by drawing heavily from outdated medicalised frames. Autism and gender diversity are repeatedly referenced as symptoms of confusion or harm, conflating diagnosis, self-identification, and trauma without effective community consultations or distinction between correlation and causation. This not only misrepresents the realities of marginalised groups but also legitimises punitive interventions such as forced institutionalisation and denial of access to gender-affirming care.

In many culturally conservative or authoritarian contexts, where laws and policies have historically targeted queer, trans and disabled persons under the guise of protection or rehabilitation, the framing in this report could be weaponised to justify further surveillance, erasure, and control.

We urge the Special Rapporteur to initiate an open and inclusive consultation with women, girls, and gender-diverse people with disabilities to collate comprehensive data on the challenges being faced by those with visible and invisible disabilities. Societies already frequently overlook the data and policy needs of people with disabilities, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, which exacerbates a number of obstacles to work, healthcare, education, and public involvement. This silencing is particularly acute for autistic, neurodivergent, and trans youth who are often pathologized or erased in these spaces.

The difficulties are made worse when coupled with the stigma and discrimination stemming from deeply rooted stereotypes and prejudices about sexual orientation and gender identity. This can lead to a hostile environment that isolates, marginalizes, and sustains violence and discrimination against members of these communities and populations.

This report must not be used to reverse progress. We call for reaffirmation of CRPD principles, respect for survivor knowledge, and genuine engagement with rights holders. Nothing about us, without us.

Organizations which have endorsed the statement:

1. Diverse Empowerment Foundation
2. Women with Disabilities Development Foundation
3. International Disability Alliance
4. Inclusive Rainbow Voices
5. Autistic Self Advocacy Network
6. Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
7. Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network
8. American Association of People with Disabilities
9. Autistic People of Color Fund
10. Access Ready Inc
11. Women Enabled International
12. Autism Inclusiveness Direct Action Group
13. IWRAW-AP
14. Disability Rights Fund
15. Transforming Communities for Inclusion
16. Center for Inclusive Policy