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1. PURPOSE

This policy outlines IWDA's principles and practices to achieve disability inclusion and articulates IWDA's roles and responsibilities in promoting recognition of the needs, interests and multiple discriminations faced by women and girls living with disabilities. The policy reflects and demonstrates IWDA's commitment to addressing intersecting barriers to the achievement of gender justice and the rights of women and girls in all their diversity.

2. SCOPE

The commitments made in this policy apply to all aspects of IWDA's operations, programs and partnerships, including our organisational culture and behaviour; our development programs, and our engagement with Australian and international partners.

This Policy applies to all staff (casual, fixed-term or permanent), board members, volunteers, interns, and contractors (together called "IWDA personnel")

3. DEFINITIONS

Disability - Includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. It includes physical disfigurement and the presence in the body of disease- causing organisms, such as human immunodeficiency virus. It covers disabilities that people have now, had in the past, may have in the future or which they are believed to have. (The Disability Discrimination Act 1992).

Social model of disability - sees 'disability' as the result of interaction between people living with impairments and an environment filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and institutional (legislation/policy) barriers. It is these barriers that need to change if people living with impairments are to participate in society on an equal basis with others.

Intersectional discrimination - occurs when a person with a disability or associated to disability suffers discrimination of any form on the basis of disability, combined with colour, sex, language, religion, ethnic, gender or other status. Intersectional discrimination can appear as direct or indirect discrimination, denial of reasonable accommodation or harassment....¹

Associated to disability – is also known as 'discrimination by association' refers to discrimination faced because of an individual's association with someone with a disability (eg as a parent or support person or other kind of association with the disability community).

Reasonable adjustment – These are changes that employers, educational authorities and goods and services providers are required to make so that a person with disability can do their job, participate in education or access good and services (Equal Opportunity Act 2010). This also includes assistance aid, such as equipment including a palliative or therapeutic device; an assistant, for example, an interpreter or a reader; or an assistance dog (Equal Opportunity Act 2010).

4. POLICY

¹ General Comment No. 6 (2018) on Equality and Non-Discrimination: Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

IWDA is committed to recognising, respecting and promoting the rights of all people, including those who live with disabilities. IWDA acknowledges its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), Fair Work Act (2009), the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

IWDA's organisational focus on progressing women's rights and gender equality informs and frames our approach to all our policies. In the context of disability inclusion, IWDA has a particular focus on women with disabilities noting one in five women globally has a disability². IWDA recognises women and girls with disabilities experience discrimination and stigma based on their gender, the nature and severity of their disability and other perceived and actual markers of identity. Women with disabilities are two to three times more likely to experience violence than women without disabilities and men with disabilities in their communities³. Multiple and intersecting sources of discrimination impact on their ability to realise their rights including to participate fully in their communities and access public services, education, health and employment opportunities.

IWDA recognises that women and girls are still overwhelmingly responsible for unpaid care within the home. In Australia, women represent over 70% of primary carers to people with disability and older people and 90% of carers for children with disability⁴

IWDA understands the need to take an intersectional approach, recognising "that people's lives are shaped by their identities, relationships and social factors. These combine to create intersecting forms of privilege and oppression depending on a person's context and existing power structures such as patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia and racism⁵.

Women with disabilities are frequently marginalised from development activities, including 'disability inclusive' and gender transformative activities. They are often not counted in research and their specific concerns may not be well recognised by either women's rights organisations (WROs), organisations of disabled persons (OPDs) or other groups, eg LGBTQIA+ organisations. Women with disabilities have historically been excluded from the women's rights movement. These forms of exclusion almost certainly result in the development of programs, services and policies that do not adequately reflect the needs and rights of women and girls with disabilities, or may even reject them.

This context informs IWDA's commitment to helping make visible the nature and impact of overlapping sources of discrimination experienced by women and girls with disabilities and addressing the barriers that undermine their participation. We seek to work with women with disabilities through research, programming and collaborative advocacy, and contribute to available evidence and strengthened research and development practices as they relate to women with disabilities.

Disability inclusion in our partnerships, movement strengthening and knowledge translation work

IWDA integrates disability considerations at all levels in our program management cycle, including design, appraisal and monitoring approaches.

IWDA understands that disability inclusion needs to be based on genuine partnerships with women with disabilities and with OPDs. Women with disabilities are not only beneficiaries of outcomes but active participants in all processes.

Disability inclusion is both a process and an outcome, and women with disabilities need to be meaningfully engaged in both.

² ibid

³ UNFPA (2018) Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for Women and Young Persons with Disabilities

⁴ Women's experiences of accessing individualized disability supports: gender inequality and Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme - PMC (nih.gov)

⁵ Hankivsky, O. (Ed.), (2014). Intersectionality 101. Vancouver: Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy, Simon Fraser University

IWDA's Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (2022 – 2027) is founded on five strategies:

- To make resourcing decisions that help to improve health, safety, dignity, wellbeing, and full inclusion for people with disabilities
- To use our power and relationships to enable OPDs and WROs to connect and to better represent, and be represented by, constituents with intersecting characteristics
- To grow and strengthen the intersectional data available to IWDA, partners and policy-makers to support advocacy for stronger implementation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the human rights of people with disabilities
- To use and extend our locational power to facilitate greater support for positive changes to policy, resourcing and norms around gender and disability
- To increase staff confidence and capacity to ensure that IWDA's approaches fully integrate disability inclusion

Disability inclusion in our organisation

Acknowledging the significance of access and equality for people with a disability, and the needs of carers in the organisation, and the provision of a workplace free from discrimination, bullying and harassment, IWDA is committed to:

- a) Applying human resources policies and practices that support and enable diversity and inclusion, including being explicit when recruiting that people with disabilities are encouraged to apply.
- b) Providing reasonable adjustments for IWDA personnel whether the disability is an existing or an acquired condition, or of a temporary or permanent nature.
- c) Providing adequate budget or other resources to ensure that appropriate equipment and support services are available to IWDA personnel with a disability so they are able to perform their job on equal basis with others.
- d) Ensuring accessibility is a baseline consideration when development workplace information and IWDA internal and external communication .
- e) Having due regard for each person's right to privacy and confidentiality when seeking information about their disability for the purpose of making reasonable adjustments.
- f) Ensuring IWDA employees with a disability can access paid personal leave to enable them to seek support to help manage their disability and maintain their health and wellbeing
- g) Recognises the additional and disproportionate obligations women often carry as carers, including for people with disabilities. IWDA provides additional generous leave entitlements for carers

5. IMPLEMENTATION

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the interpretation and application of this policy.

IWDA contracts of employment require each IWDA personnel to understand and implement this policy in the context of their position and responsibilities.

IWDA personnel can make a complaint using the process outlined in IWDA's Anti-Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy where they believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably in any matter related to their employment because of their disability.

6. REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

The policy and supporting procedures will be formally reviewed every three years and any amendments made at the discretion of the Board.

7. REFERENCES/RELATED DOCUMENTS

- IWDA Respect & Dignity at Work PolicyIWDA Grievance & Conflict Resolution Policy
- IWDA Remote Working Policy
- IWDA Code of Conduct
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.