

Further loss of credibility

It is no secret that women with disabilities are regarded as less credible witnesses. This is often because of the absence of intermediaries in the criminal justice system from reporting a case through to its prosecution if it goes to court at all, but also because of a lack of disability sensitization within policing. In cases where the perpetrator has been reported and the case fails to go to court, women with disabilities tend to lose all credibility. Their communities may subject them to further isolation; local police officers will become dismissive. This might even influence how local police officers handle other similar cases of abuse towards women with disabilities.

Call to Action

The above is what happens when individuals, families, communities and institutions in South Africa condone violence against women and girls with disabilities. When communities normalize violence against women and girls with disabilities, abusers perpetuate violence against women and girls with disabilities unabated. Injustice to women with disabilities is injustice to ALL women. Change starts with you.



#EndGBV

Believe women and girls
with disabilities

Contains information from ;Ortoleva, S., & Hope, L. (2012). Forgotten Sisters - A Report on Violence Against Women with Disabilities: An Overview of its Nature, Scope, Causes and Consequences. Northeastern University School of Law. doi:<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2133332>

Contact the NCPD:

011 452 2774

Andries Pretorius Rd, Edenvale, Johannesburg, 1609

f \TheNCPD @The_NCPD @The_ncpd

www.ncpd.org.za

CONSEQUENCES: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA.



NCPD

National Council of & for
Persons with Disabilities

Gender-based violence risk factors unique to women and girls with disabilities are mostly rooted in social norms, gender roles and the nature and type of disability. When gender inequality intersects with ableism, the resulting consequences to women and girls with disabilities are dire. This publication points out the consequences of violence against women and girls with disabilities. We hope that knowledge of these consequences will encourage families and communities in South Africa to ACT in their various capacities in preventing gender-based violence towards women and girls with disabilities.

Isolation

Women with disabilities who report gender-based violence often experience isolation, particularly in situations where the abuser is a family member or a breadwinner. Isolation also happens in unreported cases, where the perpetrator often prevents the victim access to other people and to the outside world in an attempt to ensure that the abuse goes undetected and unreported.

Homelessness

Disabled women who are victims of gender-based violence are highly likely to become homeless. In an attempt to find a place of safety, women with disabilities may attempt to seek refuge at shelters. Unfortunately, most shelters in South Africa are inaccessible which leaves women with disabilities with no alternative housing. In some instances, the abuser may violently force the disabled woman out of the house. In most instances, friends and extended family hesitate to take in a disabled woman under their care even temporarily because of various reasons, including associated costs of disability, caregiving and stigma associated with living together with a person with a disability.

Intensification of disability

Injuries sustained during fleeing or during the abuse itself can intensify the existing disability. Women with disabilities may also sustain additional disabilities in cases of physical violence.

Destitution

Women with disabilities who experience gender-based violence often lose existing financial support. This is common in cases where the survivor is financially dependent on the perpetrator. The perpetrator may confiscate the victim's SASSA card in order to access their disability grant. In most scenarios, family and friends are afraid to assist for fear of victimization by the perpetrator. The perpetrator may also instruct family members to withhold any financial support in an attempt to close all avenues of financial support to the victim.

In some instances, women with disabilities may lose employment, the perpetrator may threaten to harass them at work, and this leads to absenteeism. The perpetrator may also threaten the victim's colleagues so that they refrain from assisting the victim.

Compromised health

Gender-based violence, domestic violence and sexual violence can lead to disability, as well as increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Psychosocial conditions can also result from isolation, abuse, demeaning conduct and other forms of violence against women with disabilities. In pregnant women with disabilities, violence can cause premature birth or miscarriage, thereby aggravating the devastating effects of the violence. This can negatively affect the woman with disability's future attempts at having children.

Loss of assistive devices

Assistive devices like wheelchairs, white canes and hearing aids can be broken, confiscated or lost during violence or during fleeing from violence. Acquiring an assistive device is very costly in South Africa and beyond the reach of many, so replacing or repairing is just as expensive.

Loss of disability-related support

Women with disabilities may lose their day-to-day support after experiencing violence, including losing a trusted caregiver, losing adapted equipment, furnishings or housing.

Loss of custody

Able-bodied partners may apply for sole custody of a child forcing women with disabilities to lose custody. This is worse in instances where the criminal justice system has not been disability sensitized.

