



## Introduction

This Ability Trust is a women-led nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance the sexual reproductive health and rights of women and girls with disabilities across Africa. We envision a society in which women and girls with disabilities have access to quality dignified healthcare with their rights respected and upheld. Our model focuses on leveraging various forms of technology to increase access to dignified and equitable sexual reproductive healthcare services and information, strengthen the capacities of healthcare providers to build inclusive healthcare systems and inform policy advocacy on sexual reproductive health rights based on the lived realities of women and girls with disabilities.

## Background

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are recognized internationally in documents such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Beijing Platform of Action and more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals. Nationally, sexual and reproductive health rights are constitutionally recognized under Article 43(1)(a) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 read together with several sets of laws including the Sexual Offences Policy of 2021, the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2015, the Penal Code Cap. 63, as well as the National Guidelines on Management of Sexual Violence in Kenya, among many others. Despite the above legal protection, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) is perhaps one of the most widespread and socially tolerated human rights violations, cutting across borders, race, class, ethnicity and religion. SGBV in Kenya affects mainly women and girls and even more so women and girls with disabilities.

Women and girls with disabilities experience a dual impact of discrimination due to their gender and disability status. This intersectionality places them in a particularly vulnerable position within society. Women and girls with disabilities face societal stereotypes and misconceptions that contribute to their vulnerability. They may be seen as dependent, incapable, or a burden, which can exacerbate their risk of violence.<sup>1</sup> The physical and social barriers faced by women with disabilities, such as inaccessible environments and limited mobility, can lead to social isolation. This isolation may make them more dependent on caregivers, potentially increasing their vulnerability to abuse. In addition, some women with disabilities may face challenges in communication, making it difficult for them to report or seek help when they experience violence. This can be especially true for those with intellectual or communication disabilities.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2013/493006/IPOL-FEMM\\_ET\(2013\)493006\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2013/493006/IPOL-FEMM_ET(2013)493006_EN.pdf)



Women and girls with disabilities also encounter difficulties in accessing healthcare services, including services related to reproductive health and sexual assault. This lack of accessibility may further limit their ability to escape or report violence.

Women and girls with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing justice, due to discrimination on the basis of both gender and disability, accessibility barriers to the justice system, and lack of reasonable accommodations throughout judicial proceedings. Compared to both men with disabilities and women without disabilities, women with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from legal protection and are more likely to have their credibility questioned or justice denied.<sup>2</sup>

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the mechanism that supervises the implementation of the CRPD) has pointed out that the main reasons for concern are violence, health and sexual/reproductive rights, and discrimination. It has also shown strong concern about the effects of multiple discrimination and other matters linked directly to violence, including the right to life, sexual violence, forced sterilization, female genital mutilation, sexual and economic exploitation, and forced institutionalization.<sup>3</sup>

Our Legal Framework does not adequately address the specific needs and challenges faced by women with disabilities resulting in a lack of protection and redress for survivors. Existing policy fails to address specific needs by women and girls with disabilities. As a result, the implementation often excludes women and girls with disabilities in multiple aspects, from information to accessibility. For example, section 4.2.5.6 of the Sexual Offences Policy of 2021 states that the Cabinet Secretary in charge of persons with disabilities in collaboration with the National Gender Equality Commission (NGEC) shall ensure that persons with disabilities access Gender Based Violence Recovery Centers free of charge and The National Council for Persons with disabilities is adequately equipped to assist persons with disabilities and that persons with disabilities have access to the Council, however, realities on the ground, paint a different picture.

## **Problem Statement**

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive and deeply rooted issue that affects individuals worldwide, transcending cultural, economic, social and geographic boundaries. Many gaps and challenges exist that negatively

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<sup>2</sup><https://womenenabled.org/wp-content/uploads/Women%20Enabled%20International%20Facts%20-%20Access%20to%20Justice%20for%20Women%20and%20Girls%20with%20Disabilities%20-%20English.pdf>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8882641/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://statelaw.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Sexual-Offences-Policy-2021.pdf>



affect the capacity and ability to access justice for the violations experienced by the women and girls with disabilities.. These gaps and challenges exist at the family, community and institutional levels.

Until recently, disability was referred to as an ‘impediment’ or ‘handicap’ and approached from a medical, welfare, and dehumanizing perspective. In many societies, ‘people with disabilities are still viewed as recipients of charity services or individuals subject to the decisions of others, but not the holders of rights’.

Sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR) are fundamental components of overall well-being, yet women with disabilities continue to face significant challenges in accessing accurate information and support. Limited awareness, cultural taboos, and inadequate dissemination of information contribute to the prevailing problem of insufficient access to SRHR services and education.

Women with disabilities encounter barriers in seeking information and support related to their sexual and reproductive health. This includes challenges in accessing family planning resources, comprehensive sexuality education, safe pregnancy and childbirth services, and assistance for issues such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and gender-based violence. The lack of a centralized, confidential, and user-friendly platform exacerbates these challenges, resulting in gaps in knowledge and care.

### **Justification**

Due to stigma and other societal norms, women and girls with disabilities are often viewed as asexual. As a result, women and girls with disabilities are commonly left out of Sexual and Reproductive Health Right spaces. To address this critical gap in our response to GBV and SRHR, This Ability Trust established Mama Siri. This dedicated helpline aims to serve as a confidential, easily accessible, and survivor-centered resource for reporting incidents of GBV, providing SRHR referrals and support, connecting survivors to comprehensive services such as counseling, medical assistance, legal aid, and safe shelter.

Mama Siri offers women a confidential and immediate channel to seek support, guidance, and information regarding Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The anonymity provided by toll-free hotlines encourages women and girls with disabilities to reach out for help without fear of judgment. It serves as a reliable source of information on SRH and GBV issues, providing women with disabilities with accurate and up-to-date information about reproductive health, family planning, and ways to prevent and address gender-based violence. In addition, women with disabilities experiencing crises related to SRH or GBV can access timely intervention through the toll-free number and immediate assistance, referrals to support services, and crisis management strategies.



Mama Siri also plays a crucial role in educating women about their sexual and reproductive rights, as well as providing awareness campaigns to prevent GBV. This contributes to empowering women and girls with disabilities with knowledge and promoting healthier communities. Mama Siri serves to ensure accessibility, especially for women in remote or rural areas where access to SRH and GBV support services may be limited. It bridges the gap by offering assistance to those who might otherwise face geographical barriers. By providing information and resources, Mama Siri contributes to the prevention of SRH issues and GBV. Early intervention and education can help break the cycle of violence and promote healthier relationships.

### **Long Term Goal**

Mama Siri aims to address the information gap in SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights) and GBV (Gender Based Violence) for women and girls with disabilities throughout Kenya.

### **Short Term Goals**

To ensure the successful operation of the Mama Siri toll-free service line for women with disabilities, improving access to essential healthcare, justice for GBV survivors and reduced occurrences among women with disabilities.

### **Objectives**

1. To provide reliable and accessible SRHR and GBV referrals to women and girls with disabilities in the 13 counties that we are active in to increase access to quality SRHR and reduce GBV occurrences.
2. To utilize the referrals to increase the number of confirmed convictions and active cases in court.

### **Indicators**

1. Increase the number of successful referrals made by 10,000 within the second quarter of 2024.
2. Increase the number of successful confirmed convictions to 30 and cases in court to 45 by the end of the first quarter of 2024.
3. A documented increase in access to inclusive SRHR services for women and girls with disabilities specifically in Nairobi and Narok counties where we have Mama Siri centers and the other 11 counties that Mama Siri is active in by the end of the fourth quarter of 2024.
4. Reduced cases of GBV among women and girls with disabilities by at least 10% within the 13 counties with Mama Siri presence by the end of the fourth quarter of 2024.



**Outcome**

Through Mama Siri, women and girls with disabilities have access to quality, reliable SRHR and GBV referral information to increase access to justice and reduce GBV occurrences.