Center for Independent Living Serbia

Baseline Mapping of Women and Girls with Disabilities at Top Management Positions within DPOs and Women CSOs in the Republic Serbia

Final Research Report

January 2019

CONTENT

Annexes

Acronyms

CIL - Center for Independent Living Serbia
CRPD – UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CS - Civil Society
CSOs – Civil Society Organizations
DPOs – Disabled People Organizations
PwD – Persons with Disabilities
ToR - Terms of References
WwD - Women with Disabilities
OHCHR - The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNFPA- United Nations Population Fund
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
ILO- International Labour Organization
SBRA - Serbian Business Registers Agency

1   Executive Summary

The Baseline mapping of women and girls with disabilities at top management positions within disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and women's civil society organizations (WCSOs) in the Republic of Serbia was done by Centre for Independent Living Serbia (CIL). CIL received support from UN Women to identify challenges women-leaders with disabilities face and to map their training needs. This exercise ultimately seeks to contribute to capacity building for leadership resulting in higher share of women-led disabled people's organizations and women with disabilities in women's civil society organizations. A starting point of the mapping was CRPD recommendation regarding a need for consultations with women and girls with disabilities in all matters that affect them directly.

The context analysis conducted as part of the Baseline mapping proves that there is a shortage of data in Serbia in this regard. Thus, methodology used to generate quantitative data on existing women's civil society organizations and disabled people's organizations combined different tools (e.g. informative meetings, desk research, several types of questionnaires, focus group, individual interviews). The mapping further generated findings regarding the current status, challenges and needs of women with disabilities at top management positions. Out of 711 organizations (496 disabled people's organizations and 215 women's civil society organizations) whose contacts were acquired, the sample of 160 organizations and 58 women with disabilities were assessed in more depth. Interest, readiness and openness of the target organizations to take part in the mapping of position of women with disabilities in top management positions were at a much lower level than expected. Respondent rate was much higher within disabled people's organizations than women's civil society organizations and this ratio is reflected in main findings regarding organizational profiles, representation of women with disabilities in leadership structures, factors and needed actions summarized below.

Given that most disabled people's organizations were established over 20 years ago, it is not surprising that traditional approaches still dominate regarding working style, organizational structures and decision-making. They have relatively low capacities and women with disabilities within organizations are still very poorly recognized, both in the founding organization's documents (Statutes or missions and/or strategic goals)), but in practice as well. Also, there are indications that database of organizations is not always accurate, which does not give a true picture of the situation in the organization. Social services are still a dominant type of activity provided to the membership. The most frequent services relate to humanitarian assistance and health-care support, economic empowerment, informal education, and only rarely protection of women from violence. A growing group of activities relate to advocacy, promotion and protection of human rights, legal solutions for persons with disabilities, including isolated attempts to focus specifically on women with disabilities.

Representation of the women with disabilities in governance and executive bodies in disabled people's organizations is low and unbalanced compared to men with disabilities (women's average share is 34.5%, while men's average share is 42.9%). Representation of women with disabilities in management positions is still smaller at less than 3%. Seeking a rationale for such a grave disbalance, many respondents stated that women with disabilities"are not interested in such positions". This is an illustration of 'blaming the oppressed' approaches often related to

discrimination. These approaches take away attention from negative gender norms, stereotypes and unwillingness to remove obstacles to participation.

Within women's civil society organizations' strategic documents, women with disabilities are recognized as a target group in slightly higher percentage than within disabled people's organizations, while at the same time more than half of these organizations do not have the information on the percentage of women of disabilities among their beneficiaries. This research clearly identified that women with disabilities need much more initial support, encouragement, education and adequate services to be able to reach higher management positions.

From the sample of 58 women with disabilities[1] - holders of higher positions, over 70% are serving as presidents and vice presidents and a minor percentage are professional directors and financial managers. In general, number of professional staff is still quite limited and, in practice, governance and management positions are often mixed up with a lot of volunteer work.

A structure of women with disabilities in leadership positions by age is fairly unbalanced. Women under 30 are included in negligible percentages, while over 60% of women belong to the group of 40+. Findings strongly support a recommendation that active measures aiming to encourage new, younger women are needed, including motivation-building, additional skills and knowledge development and support services. The mapping confirmed existence of extensive working experience and solid educational background (formal, but even more informal) among a vast majority of women. One third of women have university education, while the majority has graduated secondary schools. Informal education plays a very important role in capacity building of women with disabilities on leadership positions. This fact is seen as an opportunity for mentorship programs targeting existing and potentially new young women to be prepared for leadership and management roles. With regards to capacity development practices that women with disabilities were included in, the mapping finds that a strategic direction towards strengthening personal self-confidence and knowledge, as well as leadership and management skills of women with disabilities is missing.

While looking at career development and the factors that enabled women with disabilities to reach leadership and management positions, some specifics are clearly identified. The combination of strong activism, dedication (as highly valued factors within disabled people's organizations) and acceptance and recognition by other members of organizations are seen as the ways to reach leadership positions.

Challenges and obstacles that women with disabilities face in their personal path to advancement primarily relate to the type of organizational culture, system of internal shared support, teamwork standards and working atmosphere. The need for balancing work with internal relations within the organization is strongly emphasized among women with disabilities in leadership position. Other factors, such as cases of discrimination, physical and other barriers, level of support services and adequacy of qualification are identified as well, but their importance has not been valued as the most critical.

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[1] Number of women with disabilities who answered the individual questionnaire mentioned above in part of data generated Also explained in the section of Methodology related to data collection (page 7 of this Report)

Based on the actual capacity gaps of women with disabilities in leadership/management positions and needs for support by existing and future women with disabilities leaders, the following key directions for systematic capacity building programs are identified: a) Awareness of disability-based and gender-based discrimination within the broader human rights' framework, followed by the process of building self-awareness and self-acceptance; b) Assertiveness, confidence, public appearance and presentation skills in combination with psychological support in achieving higher confidence; c) Organizational management skills that include general management, strategic orientation, planning, human resource development, fundraising and similar standard set of skills.

The mapping especially emphasizes that building self-esteem, confidence and trust in personal abilities and values of women with disabilities should be treated as a cross cutting theme. Women believe that this approach is the single way forward that helps women to aim for and achieve leadership positions.

Overall, mapping confirmed a need for strategic action towards motivation building of women with disabilities to be actively included in the work of their organizations and to generate wish for and ambition to take up higher leadership position.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

In March 2018, UN Women Serbia, in cooperation with The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, with the support of UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Fund, started implementing the project Autonomy, Voice and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Serbia. UN Women is leading the implementation of activities within the second pillar – ***Strengthening the voice and integrity of women and girls with disabilities***, which responds to CRPD Observations on the Initial Report of Serbia and to the National Strategy for Gender Equality, measure 1.9[2], which calls for the specific measures to strengthen voice and participation of women with disabilities in public and political life in the society. Pillar represents the holistic response to the lack of recognition of the rights of women and girls with disabilities and goes beyond refraining from discriminatory actions to providing channels for voice and agency, raising self-confidence and increasing their power and authority to take decisions in all areas.

In line with the CRPD recommendation stating that consultations with women and girls with disabilities should be ensured in all matters that affect them directly, two main goals for Center for Independent Living Serbia (CIL) as selected service provider were to:

1. Map women and girls with disabilities at top management positions within DPOs and women CSOs in the Republic of Serbia, identify challenges they face and their training needs in order to strengthen their capacities to obtain leadership positions within the DPOs and women CSOs.

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[2] Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 4/2016

2. Facilitate a dialogue among mapped women and girls with disabilities at leadership positions with the aim of developing at least two initiatives on strengthening women's leadership within DPOs and women CSOs[3].

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), there were four tasks to be fulfilled:

1. To conduct a baseline research that will identify: a. the number of DPOs and women CSOs registered in the Republic of Serbia that have mandates within their Statutes to improve the position of women and girls with disabilities; b. the number of women and girls with disabilities who are employed within DPOs and women CSOs; c. the number of women and girls with disabilities at the top leadership positions within these DPOs and women CSOs; and d. the number of women and girls with disabilities who are members of Steering Committees and/or Boards of DPOs and women CSOs registered in the Republic of Serbia.

2. To identify the main challenges faced by the diversity of women and girls with disabilities as members of women's or disability-specific non-governmental organizations, in order to obtain top leadership positions within respective organizations; qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews or focus groups were used, conducted with mapped women and girls with disabilities at the top leadership positions.

3. To identify the areas in which women and girls with disabilities lack the minimum capacity, in terms of knowledge and skills to obtain leadership positions within DPOs and women CSOs and their respective training needs; qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews or focus groups were used, conducted with mapped women and girls with disabilities at the top leadership positions.

4. To organize and facilitate a workshop session with mapped women and girls with disabilities at the top leadership positions, i.e. Presidents, Vice Presidents and Chief Financial Officers, where research results will be presented and at least two initiatives on strengthening women's leadership within DPOs and women CSOs developed.

2.2 Methodology

As to achieve these tasks, CIL designed methodology (accompanied with appropriate tools). This included:

1) **Baseline research**, designed to acquire and collect data on targeted organizations in one place; gather information on engagement of women with disabilities in DPOs and women CSOs; acquire contact/names and other data on women with disabilities in leading positions and Boards/Steering Committees (number, type of positions, age, type of disability etc.). In that respect, baseline research aimed to gather relevant quantitative and qualitative information. This was done through:

   a. **Process of collecting names/contacts of targeted organizations.** Given that there is no reliable database of either type of organizations, CIL team contacted and requested information from wide range of sources including: Ministry for Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, National Alliance of PWD, Unions of organizations for particular type of disability (visual and hearing impairments, physical disabilities, etc.), Governmental Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, Organization of Social Activism (ODA), Network of Women Against Violence and Trag Foundation. CIL also conducted separate research, exploring Serbian Business Registers Agency (SBRA) data, web sites of

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[3] Deliverables related to this goal are not presented in this Final Research Report and will be subject of another document that follows in February 2019.

local self-governments and used wide Internet search. In total, contacts of 711 organizations were acquired, out of which 496 DPOs and 215 women's CSOs.[4]

b. **Collecting data on targeted organizations and women with disabilities in leading positions.** This was done through a questionnaire[5] that focused on attitudes on disability issue in targeted organizations and understanding the position of women with disabilities within organizations. More specifically, the questionnaire looked for: a) general profile of the organization, mission, activities, beneficiaries and whether women with disabilities were identified as beneficiaries/members; b) information on the structure of the organization (main bodies/positions, presence of PwDs and specifically women with disabilities in the human resources); c) Scope and type of PwD/women participation in leading positions and Boards/Steering Committees, disaggregated by position, age, qualifications, type of disability. This questionnaire was available online, but also as word document in order to be accessible for people with different types of disabilities. A total of 160 organizations (22.5% of 711 that were contacted) responded to the questionnaire. Majority of responses came from DPOs (125 - 78%), while the rest (35-22%) were received from women CSOs.

2) **In-depth research on women with disabilities in leading positions.** This part of the research focused on one main aspect: to identify and understand both positive and negative factors which influence the positioning of women with disabilities within the organizations and what could be done to help them overcome some of the challenges, including capacity building actions. Three tools were used:

a. **Questionnaire for women with disabilities in leading positions[6]** (adapted to various types of disability) through which following information was assessed: profile – position, age, type of disability, education (formal and informal), other qualifications (such as languages and computer skills), working experience; career development – how they got to the current position, what were the challenges, what were positive factors, what helped them to overcome challenges; environment – perception of the attitudes toward women with disabilities in the non-profit organizations, main challenges for their professional advancement and ideas for overcoming them, including capacity building and training needs and potential ways for inclusion of younger women/girls with disabilities. The questionnaire was sent out to 76 identified WwD in leading positions, whose names were received from their organizations through the initial questionnaire for the organizations. Out of these 76 identified WwD in leading positions only 58 of them (76%) responded.

b. **Focus group,** which was organized on December 7, 2018, with eight women[7] with disabilities who are on the top leading positions in the both bigger and more active and smaller DPOs. Focus group was used to present preliminary findings of the baseline research (relevant numbers/data on presence and position of WwD, positive and

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[4] Out of that number, mails were returned from 105 addresses as non-existent email addresses from different reasons - non-existent addresses, non-existent providers, full email boxes, etc.). In most cases, the organizations which email was returned no longer exist, which was also verified in SBRA. Of the contacted women's CSO, about 40% of organizations no longer exist or no one answered the phone. It was attempted to contact by the telephone with about 400 organizations which telephone contact existed. Some organizations were contacted for several days in a row, but no one answered the phone. An additional check by an associate has determined that organizations ceased to operate. Of the contacted PwD organizations, about 20% do not answer on phones, or even if they formally exist, they are shut down and nobody is working in them.
[5] Annex no 1: Questionnaire for organizations in Serbian language
[6] Annex no 2: Questionnaire for women with disabilities in leading positions in Serbian language
[7] Annex no 3: List of WwD who participated at Focus group and individual interviews

negative factors which influence positioning of women with disabilities within the organizations, as well as their knowledge and skills) and to contribute to clarification and formulation of final findings and conclusions.

   c. **In-depth interviews** were conducted with the sample of 4 women, representing different type of DPOs, such as organizations gathering persons with different physical disabilities and persons with visual impairments. The main criteria for selecting women for in-depth interviews were level of understanding of the wider picture that they demonstrated through responses in the questionnaire. These interviews provided deeper understanding of the issues tackled by the questionnaire and those that were opened during focus group.

2.2.1 Limitations and challenges

While large number of contacts was acquired through the mapping process, it is clear that these are not all existing DPO and women CSOs. Nevertheless, this database is at this point the most comprehensive database of both types of organizations. It has to be noted though that contacts gathered were not always accurate; therefore, CIL performed repeated phone checks. These checks verified obtained data in some cases; however, in some cases they proved that some organizations don't exist anymore or exist only on paper, or, in spite of efforts invested, it was not possible to reach them. Further, at the stage of direct assessment of organizational practices, certain level of unwillingness to respond was noted. In some cases, this was the result of the lack of information within the organization (e.g. number of them had no information on women with disabilities either as members or beneficiaries). In other cases, organization representatives stated lack of time as a reason for not responding or deemed that questions were not relevant to their practices. In women CSOs usual explanation for not taking part in the research was that they have no women with disabilities within their staff or beneficiaries.

Finally, not all women with disabilities in leading positions were willing to respond. Certain number stated that they need permission of the president of organization (usually a man) to answer to the questionnaire, some stated lack of time as a reason for not responding. This was partially overcome with the support of UN Women Office which also sent request to the targeted women in order to help getting relevant data for the research.

3 Context

Having in mind the main topic of this research - position of women and girls with disabilities at top management positions within DPOs and women CSOs, wider context in the Republic of Serbia is still rather challenging, but with some promising ongoing trends, due to awareness raising on the importance of participation of women at the managerial positions in general.

In the sphere of politics and public life women in Serbia are generally not adequately represented, although there are significant steps to improve this, especially on the state level. For example, in the research of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality „Gender equality in local self-government units"[8] , there are only 12 women Mayors/Presidents of the

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[8] Online publication, published by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality 2017, available on the link: http://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/en/gender-equality-in-local-self-government-units-current-situation-in-terms-of-implementing-recommendations-containing-measures-issued-to-local-self-government-units-with-the-aim-of-achieving-gender-equ/

municipalities out of 169 cities and municipalities in Serbia, which amounts to 7.1%. Also, there are just 14% of women on the position of Deputy Mayor/President of the municipality.

Therefore, it is expected that many vulnerable groups of women are excluded from the active dialogue and creation of policies that concern their life, particularly women with disabilities, Roma women, single mothers, elderly, rural women, etc.

According to the Census of population in Serbia 2011[9], there are 571,780 persons with some type of disability in Serbia, out of which 238,940 (41.8%) are men with disabilities and 332.840 (58.2%) women with disabilities.

Although the number of women with disabilities is higher than the number of men, position of women with disabilities in the society is still more difficult compared to men. Due to the traditional role of woman in the society, it is expected of her to be a good housewife, mother, and if she is working to be successful in her job. Fulfilling these roles is more difficult for women with disabilities because of the existence of prejudices about their abilities. Statistics is showing that women with disabilities are employed in lesser number than men with disabilities.[10] Women with disabilities rarely get married and build their own families. If they wish to have the children, they might have problem with reproductive health, mainly caused by prejudice towards women with disabilities. Under these circumstances, women with disabilities are not particularly interested to be included in the political life in the society.

By analyzing the legislative and strategic framework in the context of the situation of women with disabilities and the review of decision-making processes, it can be concluded that women with disabilities are not particularly recognized in the majority of strategic and legislation documents. Almost in all documents that are mentioning women with disabilities, they are included (classified) into a general group of multiple discriminated or vulnerable women without stating any specifics of this group of women.

The same happens when it comes to documents referring to the persons with disabilities, as usually women with disabilities are not recognized as a separate group among the persons with disabilities in general.

Serbia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[11] that addresses problems of women with disabilities in Article 6. Although the Convention and its Optional Protocol contain provisions related to the obligation of the signatory state to take specific measures for the elimination of multiple discrimination against women and girls with disabilities, many Serbian legislative documents do not recognize them as specific group.

One of good illustrations of this approach is the Law on Prevention of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities[12], which is not gender sensitive.

The Strategy for Improving the Position of Persons with Disabilities 2007-2015[13] within specific objective 10 stated that it is necessary to develop and ensure equal opportunities for women

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[9] http://popis2011.stat.rs/?page_id=2720&lang=en
[10] http://boom93.com/projekti/da-se-razumemo/44454/zaposljavanje-osoba-sa-invaliditetom.html
[11] The Law on the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "Official Gazette of RS – International Treaties" no. 42/09
[12] Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 33/06 and 13/16

with disabilities for active participation in community life, but there was no concrete action proposed.

During 2009, number of various laws relevant for persons with disabilities was adopted. Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in the Republic of Serbia[14] does not recognize specifically women with disabilities, but only recognizes persons with disabilities in general; Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities[15] supports the affirmation of the employment of persons with disabilities, respecting the principles of international regulations, and thus the principle of gender equality. However, none of them has provisions specifically referring to women with disabilities as a particularly sensitive group. Law on Gender Equality[16] does not recognize women with disabilities as a specific group.

Previous Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality (2009-2015) listed an objective to "create pre-conditions for participation of women from multiply discriminated groups in public and political life" within the list of measures and activities to be implemented.[17] However, the Evaluation of National Action Plan Implementation showed limited results "in the area of enhancing participation of discriminated and disadvantaged women in public and political life". Report concludes that a number of documents were not drafted (e.g. action plan for improvement of position of multiply discriminated women, gender budgeting/partially realized at provincial level), while certain activities have not been implemented, such as training of women with disabilities and women from minority groups for participation in political life, campaigns on capacities of disabled women."[18]

Current National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020) and accompanied Action Plan (2016-2018) recognize absence of Roma women, women with disabilities and women from other vulnerable groups from public and political life and it has a specific objective on improving position of women from multiply discriminated and vulnerable groups.[19] Unfortunately, there is a lack of evidence and assessment of such measure. Within the framework of this goal implementation, a promotional campaign has been planned under the title of "Capacities of Women with Disabilities", with purpose to raise general awareness of capacities of women with disabilities and to implement pilot projects and seminars intended to this group of female citizens in order to increase their participation in the public and political life.
In Anti-discrimination strategy 2013-2018[20] women with disabilities are mentioned again in part of so-called double or multiply discriminated groups of women who are particularly vulnerable, Roma women, women with disabilities, etc.
There are not many researches done about political participation of women with disabilities. Few researches done by DPOs are focusing on other different issues such as protection in cases

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[13] Official Gazette of RS, no. 1/07
[14] Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 22/2009
[15] Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 36/2009 and 32/13
[16] Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 104/2009
[17] National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Improving Gender Equality (2009-2015), the Government of Serbia and Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Gender Equality (2010-2015)
[18] Evaluation of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality in the Republic of Serbia, Final Report, available on link
https://gate.unwomen.org/EvaluationDocument/Download?evaluationDocumentID=4876
[19] National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016 to 2020) with accompanied Action plan for 2016-2018, Participation in political and public life, and Special objective 2.6;
[20] Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 60/2013

of violence[21], quality of life of women with disabilities[22], health and sexuality[23] of women with disabilities.

Report on Accessible Elections - Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Political and Public Life[24]" has shown that women are more excluded from public life than men. Report assume that the principle of respect for diversity might be one of the reasons, as women are more confronted with labeling and disdain in public life than men. As well as that, women are more likely to face discrimination in this area.

Research of the Center for Independent Living of Serbia from 2009 „Development of Advocacy Capacities of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in Serbia"[25] for the first time mentioned the status of women with disabilities at the managerial positions in DPO's, although it was just a small part of the research. The sample of the research included 56 DPO's, operating both locally and on the national level and represent persons with all forms of disability. While DPOs should play an important role in the creation and monitoring of relevant policies and actively advocate for the rights of PWDs, the research findings indicated that there was a significant gap between the capacities of DPOs and their role in advocacy and policy making, as envisaged in the CRPD. There was a positive trend related to the increase of participation of PWD in the governance and management structures of DPOs. Yet, women with disabilities were significantly underrepresented in these structures compared to men with disabilities. In the highest decision making bodies, there were 25.9 % women with disabilities, while men with disabilities were presented in 41.4% in observed organizations. At managerial positions there were 19.6% women with disabilities, and 53.6 % men with disabilities.

Therefore, this project „Mapping of Women and Girls with Disabilities at Top Management Positions within DPOs and Women CSOs in the Republic Serbia" is in some way follow-up of the previous attempts to research issues of women with disabilities in decision-making positions within DPOs and women's CSOs particularly and with more focus.

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[21] The role of the centers for social work in the system of protection of women victims of violence, „Out of Circle" - Serbia, 2018
https://ombudsman.rs/attachments/article/4540/1%20Uloga%20CSR%20u%20zastiti%20zrtava%20nasilja.docx
[22] Exploratory Report on the quality of life of women with disabilities in Vojvodina, „Out of Circle" – Vojvodina, 2013
http://www.izkrugavojvodina.org/2013/03/06/istrazivacki-izvestaj-o-kvalitetu-zivota-zena-sa-invaliditetom-u-vojvodini/
[23] „Sexuality of women with physical disabilities from Vojvodina", „Out of Circle" – Vojvodina, 2014
http://www.izkrugavojvodina.org/2014/10/01/istrazivacki-izvestaj-o-seksualnosti-zena-sa-motornim-invaliditetom-u-vojvodini/
[24] http://www.cod.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Pristupacni_izbori_web_rezolucija.pdf
[25] http://www.cilsrbija.org/ebib/200911102248240.istrazivanje_kapaciteta_organizacija%20_OSI.pdf

4 Findings

4.1 Sample

Type of organization (%)
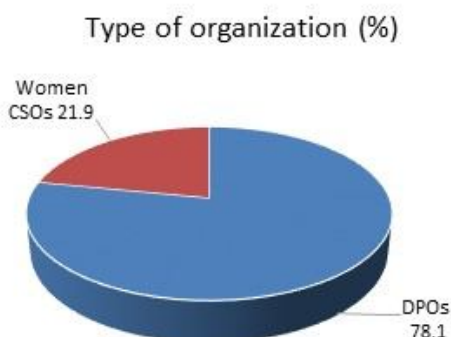

In total, 160 organizations (22.5% of total identified number and 40% of those that could be confirmed/contacted) responded to the questionnaire.

From this number, 125 (78.1%) are DPOs and 35 (21.9%) are women CSOs[26].

Among DPOs that responded to the questionnaire there were also few organizations of parents who have children with intellectual disabilities.[27] Although they responded to the questionnaire, they stated their members are parents – children with intellectual disabilities are treated as the beneficiaries. From obvious reasons the beneficiaries could not take any leadership positions in the organization, although they are sometimes included in decision-making processes.

How long organization exists (%)
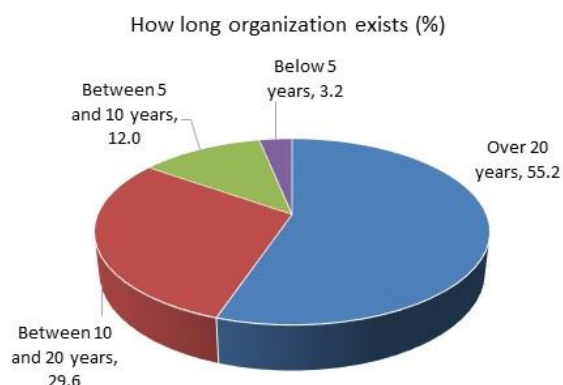
4.2 Women with Disabilities in DPOs

4.2.1 Profile of DPOs

Collected data shows that over 80% of assessed organizations are operating from 10 to over 20 years. (55.2% over 20 years, plus 29.6% that are active between 10 and 20 years). Very low percentage of organizations operates less than five years (3.2%).

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[26] Annex 04: List of organizations (DPOs and women CSOs) who participated in the research
[27] Among disability movement and according to the Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs those organizations are also treated as DPOs, or organizations for PWD.
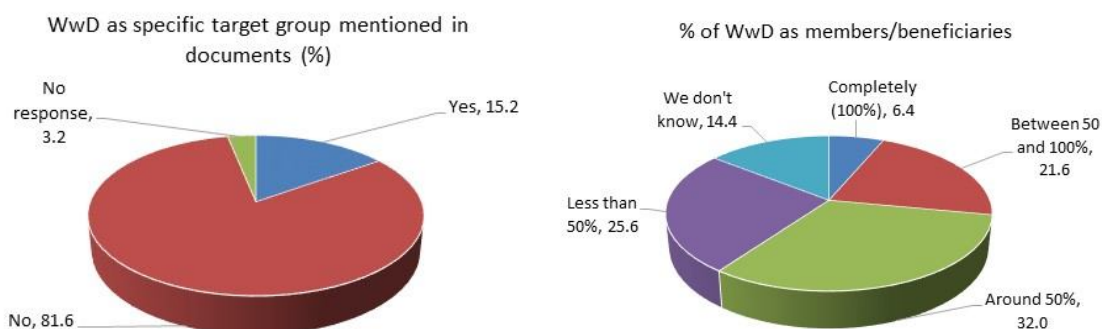
It is our assumption that this means that traditional type of organizations of persons with disabilities is still quite dominant. Usually, these types of organizations are founded according to the type of disability and are more formal in their structure. They have relatively low capacities (especially those operating at the local level) and are facing challenges of transition at becoming modern, effective organization with functional governance and management structure , but also, more than that to be efficient at operational level, skillful in fundraising and strategic development. Additional to that "older" organizations are usually acting within traditional pattern, being more oriented towards medical and charitable model, rather than "human right" based approach.

As for the core activities, majority of them (72.8%) are providing different sorts of social services to their membership and beneficiaries (35.2% stated that as their dominant activity). Advocacy, promotion and protection of PWD's rights (both genders), including advocacy for better legal solutions for women, has been identified as second major group of activities. Although percentage of organizations that include this as dominant activity is not so high (24.8%), it demonstrates that DPOs are aware of importance on turning their focus on influencing external environment.

If, however, we look at the activities directed to women, including women with disabilities, it is noted that most frequent services are: Providing humanitarian and health support; Economic empowerment; Informal education, while Providing services for protection of women from violence has been mentioned rather rarely (only 1.6% of organization declare it as dominant activity, while 6.4% claimed that protection of women from violence is included in small measure or not as dominant activity).

Activity	Dominant activity	Included, but not dominant	In small measure	Total
Providing social services	35.2	29.6	8.0	72.8
Advocacy, promotion and protection of rights of PWD, both genders	14.4	3.2	0.8	18.4
Advocacy, promotion and protection of rights of women including WwD	7.2	4.8	1.6	13.6
Economic empowerment of women including WwD	2.4	5.6	5.6	13.6
Providing humanitarian and health support to women including WwD	6.4	3.2	2.4	12.0
Advocacy for better legal solutions for women including WwD	3.2	4.0	3.2	10.4
Informal education of women, including WwD	3.2	4.0	2.4	9.6
Providing services for protection women from violence including WwD	1.6	1.6	4.8	8.0

4.2.2   General representation of women with disability in DPOs

WwD as specific target group mentioned in documents (%)

No response, 3.2

Yes, 15.2

No, 81.6

% of WwD as members/beneficiaries

We don't know, 14.4

Completely (100%), 6.4

Between 50 and 100%, 21.6
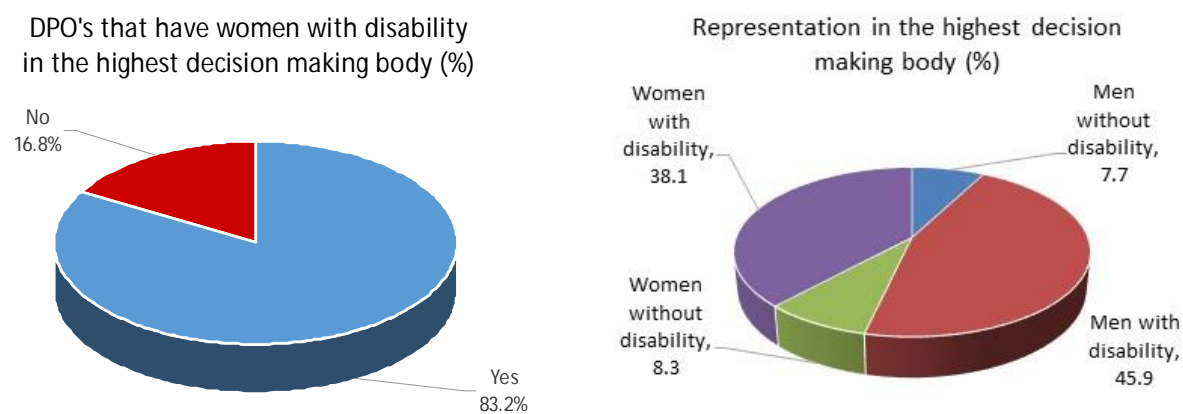
Less than 50%, 25.6

Around 50%, 32.0

As gathered information demonstrates, women with disabilities have not been clearly (or sufficiently) recognized as a specific target group in founding organizations' documents such as Statute and Statements on Mission and/or strategic goals. As many as 81.6% organizations do not mention WwD as specific target group; while only 15.2% have recognized them (3.2% of organizations did not respond to the question).

Situation is a bit different when looking at the organizations' assessment of women with disabilities as members or beneficiaries. In 32% of DPOs there is a gender balance among members/beneficiaries, as women make around 50% of total number of members/beneficiaries. About one fourth of organizations (25.6%) have less than 50% of women as members/beneficiaries. On the other hand, in 21.6% of organizations, WwD make more than 50% of beneficiaries and 6.4% of DPOs have only WwD as members or beneficiary group. It is interesting that 14.4% of organizations are not sure how many women they have among their members/beneficiaries.
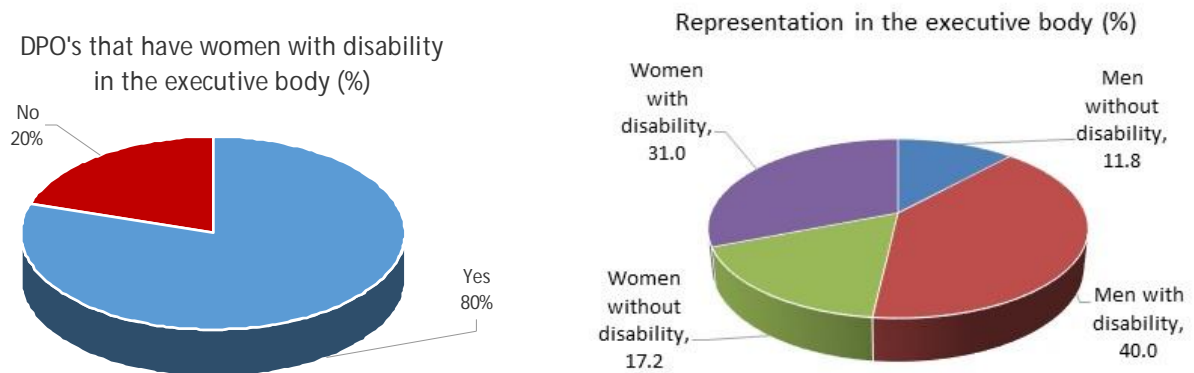
4.2.3   Women with disabilities in decision-making bodies/positions

The highest decision-making body of DPOs is Assembly. Given the fact that assemblies consist of all members (or elected delegates) information that in 83.2% of organizations women with disabilities are represented is not surprising.

DPO's that have women with disability in the highest decision making body (%)

No 16.8%

Yes 83.2%

Representation in the highest decision making body (%)

Women with disability, 38.1

Men without disability, 7.7

Women without disability, 8.3
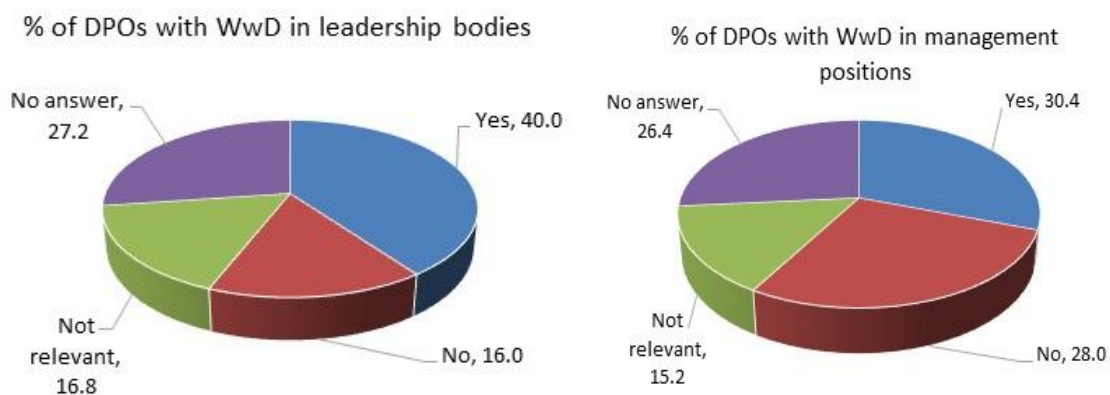
Men with disability, 45.9

However, when we look at the structure of the highest bodies (as presented in the graph), we see that women with disabilities make only 38.1% of total members of highest bodies' membership.

When it comes to the representation in the Executive Body (which varies between Board of Trustees, Executive Board, Presidency or other forms), DPOs claim that in app. 80% of those bodies, there are women with disabilities.

DPO's that have women with disability in the executive body (%)
No 20%
Yes 80%

Representation in the executive body (%)
Women with disability, 31.0
Men without disability, 11.8
Women without disability, 17.2
Men with disability, 40.0

Again, if we look at the structure, it shows that women with disability make only 31% of total number of people in executive bodies.

Two other sets of data are important when looking at WwD in DPOs: percentage of DPOs with women with disabilities in executive/leadership bodies and percentage of DPOs that have/had women with disabilities in management positions *in the last five years*.

% of DPOs with WwD in leadership bodies
No answer, 27.2
Yes, 40.0
Not relevant, 16.8
No, 16.0

% of DPOs with WwD in management positions
No answer, 26.4
Yes, 30.4
Not relevant, 15.2
No, 28.0

This data is somewhat questionable given that great number of organizations did not give an answer or stated that for some reason the question is not relevant for them[28]. Still, we believe that this data can serve as an illustration of how accurate databases in organizations are,

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[28] Which may mean that they don't have executive/leadership body, or they don't have accurate evidence of the number of members in leadership bodies or management positions in the organizations in the last five years, or that there were no WwD in these positions or question might not be properly understood?

especially as the organizations were also asked for reasons for not having WwD in management positions.

The most frequent answer explaining not having WwD in management positions is lack of financial resources (20 organizations - 12.5%); it must be noted here that this reason is not quite clear, as presumably lack of financial resources would also apply to other groups (men with/without disabilities). Next, 19 organizations (11.9%) stated that there is lack of interest among women with disabilities (*"Women with disabilities are disappointed with current situation and are not motivated to be active"*); 8 organizations (5%) claimed that lack of adequate qualification stops them to hire WwD. Lack of accessibility (physically inaccessible space or lack of other conditions for accessibility of communication for visually or hearing-impaired persons) was noted by 5 organizations (3%) as important *("Female members live outside of the seat of the organization, usually alone, without vehicle and driving services available. Practically they are unable to be professionally activated at any position"* - questionnaire respondent).

DPOs that used to have women with disabilities in management positions before answered similarly on the reasons why they were not engaged anymore, mostly emphasizing lack of financial resources to maintain certain position (8 cases), lack of interest (4) and lack of adequate qualifications (3); other reasons include retirement, personal reasons, expired mandate and similar.

4.3 Women with Disabilities in Women Organizations

4.3.1 Profile of women organizations

How long women CSO exists (%)
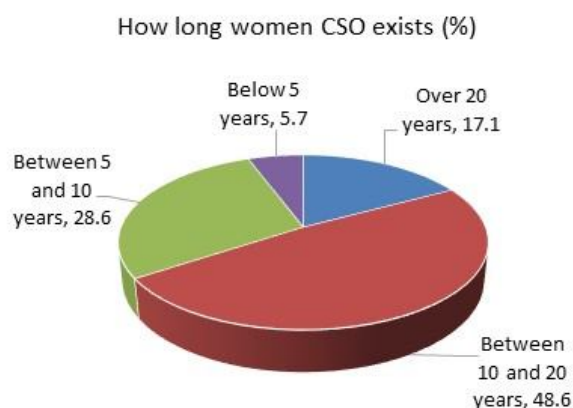
In difference to DPOs, only 17.1% of women CSOs which answered the questionnaire exist over 20 years; most of them (48.6%) operate between 10 and 20 years, further 28.6% between 5 and 10 years and 5.7% less than 5 years. This was to be expected given that women's movement in Serbia as such was established later then DPOs.

In terms of activities in 54.3% of women CSOs main field of work is social services provision, of which 34.3% have that as dominant activity. More specifically, 14.3% of women CSOs are providing services for protection of women from violence including WwD at different scope, while 11.4% of women CSOs are dealing with humanitarian and health support to women, including WwD. Economic empowerment of women, including WwD, is part of activity portfolio of 14.3% women CSOs.

About 17.2% of organizations have informal education of women (including WwD) in their portfolio, but with only 8.6% claiming that as their dominant activity.

In comparison with DPOs, slightly higher percentage of women CSOs is engaged in some kind of advocacy activities: 28.6% in total have those as dominant activity in their portfolio.

Activity	Dominant activity	Included, but not dominant	In small measure	Total
Providing social services	34.3	8.6	11.4	54.3
Informal education of women, including WwD	8.6	5.7	2.9	17.2
Advocacy, promotion and protection of rights of women including WwD	11.4	5.7	-	17.1
Economic empowerment of women including WwD	11.4	2.9	-	14.3
Advocacy, promotion and protection of rights of PWD, both genders	8.6	5.7	-	14.3
Providing services for protection women from violence including WwD	5.7	2.9	5.7	14.3
Advocacy for better legal solutions for women including WwD	8.6	2.9	-	11.5
Providing humanitarian and health support to women including WwD	5.7	5.7	-	11.4

4.3.2 General representation of women with disabilities in women CSOs
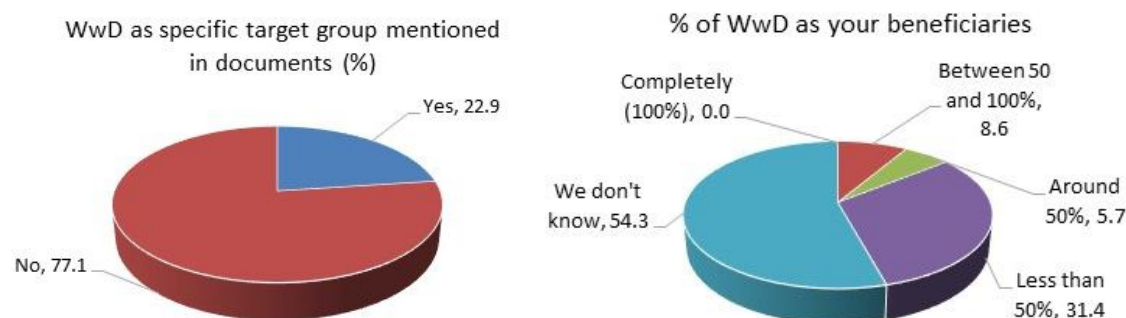
Interestingly, women CSOs mention women with disabilities in their Statutes (or missions and/or strategic goals) in slightly larger percentage than DPOs: 22.9% (compared to 15.2%). However, this could give a wrong impression as one should have in mind that from the total number of active women CSOs (129) only 35 responded to the questionnaire, while other said that they don't need to answer the questionnaire as they are not dealing with WwD or did not answer at all.
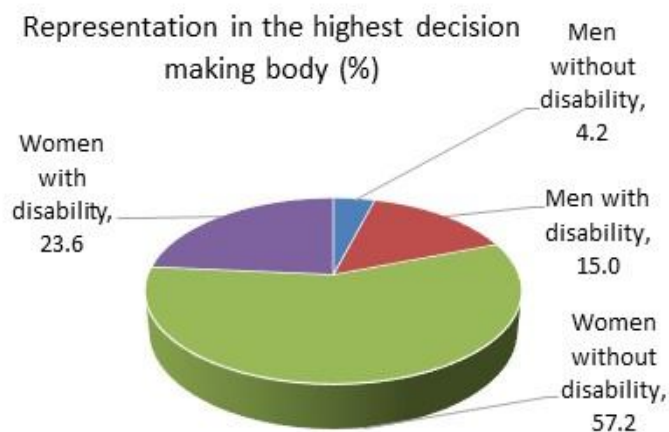
On the other hand, more than half of organizations – as many as 54.3% - that responded to the questionnaire do not have the information on the percentage of women of disabilities as their beneficiaries. From the rest, 31.4% have less than 50% of WwD as beneficiaries, 5.7% have around 50% of WwD as beneficiaries and 8.6% have between 50 and 100% WwD as beneficiaries.

It seems that women CSOs, while accepting women with disabilities as beneficiaries, are not strongly focused on their inclusion. Partially, the reason for that might be that WwD in small

number have founded their own women CSOs (there is only 1 of them which gathers WwD, but recognizes itself as women CSO rather than DPO, while other 4 organizations which gather WwD recognize themselves as DPOs).

Still, it would be interesting to find out more on the reasons of not noting WwD as beneficiaries or members, in such large percentage of respondent organizations. Even more, it would be interesting to find out why great number of women CSOs does not recognize the need to include WwD in their organizations and activities.

4.3.3   Women with disabilities in decision-making bodies/positions

Representation in the highest decision making body (%)

Men without disability, 4.2
Men with disability, 15.0
Women without disability, 57.2
Women with disability, 23.6

In about 77% of women CSOs that responded, Assembly is the highest body (the rest is mostly Board of trustees). Nevertheless, only 31.4% of organizations have WwD in their assemblies or other highest decision-making bodies.
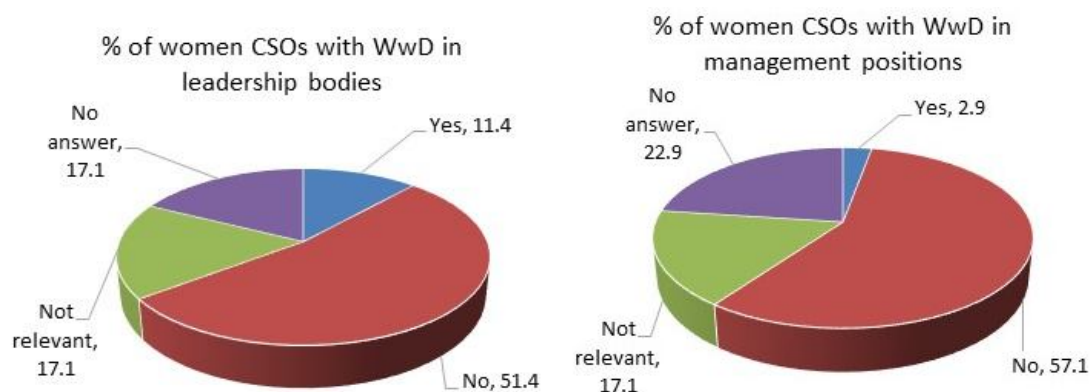
When we look at the structure of the highest bodies (as presented in the graph), we see that women with disability make only 23.6% of total members of highest bodies membership.
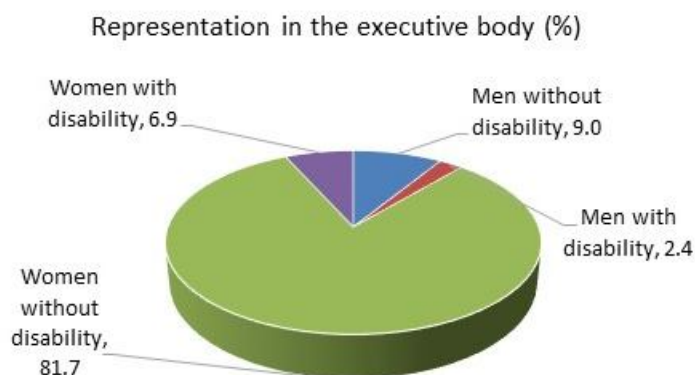
When it comes to representation in the Executive body (which varies between Board of Trustees, Coordinating Board, Executive Board, Presidency or other forms), women CSOs state that in 28.6% of those bodies, there are women with disabilities.

Representation in the executive body (%)

Women with disability, 6.9
Men without disability, 9.0
Men with disability, 2.4
Women without disability, 81.7

Again, if we look at the structure, it shows that women with disabilities make only 6.9% of total number of people in executive bodies.

As in DPOs, we also looked at two other sets of data: percentage of women CSOs that have/had women with disabilities in executive/leadership bodies before, and percentage of women CSOs that have/had women with disabilities in management positions *in the last five years.*

% of women CSOs with WwD in leadership bodies

No answer, 17.1

Yes, 11.4

Not relevant, 17.1

No, 51.4

% of women CSOs with WwD in management positions

No answer, 22.9

Yes, 2.9

Not relevant, 17.1

No, 57.1

While again between 30% and 40% of organizations did not provide answers to those questions or claimed that it is not relevant for them, it is indicative that, from those that responded, 51.4% had no WwD in leadership/executive bodies and 57.1% had no WwD in management positions *in the last five years.*

Most frequently, the reason for not having WwD represented in management positions was lack of financial resources (11 organizations – 31.4%). Eight organizations (22.8%) stated accessibility constraints, both physical and those related to communication. The same number of organizations (22.8%) emphasized lack of adequate qualifications of WwD, while a bit smaller percentage of organizations (6 organizations – 17.1%) believe that WwD are not interested in higher ranked positions. Explaining their position, one organization said that they had tried to get WwD employed but no one applied to their call, while another said that they have never tried actively to find any WwD to join their organization. Another organization claimed that they had some WwD engaged through public works, *"but after its completion none of them wanted to stay"*[29].

Some respondents believe that disability influences personal self-esteem and confidence, which they consider the reason that women with disabilities have difficulties accepting higher level of responsibility demanded for management positions. Some additional comments related to identified reasons for not having WwD within management structures indicate (the same as in previous answers) potential prejudices, or lack of understanding of the barriers that women with disabilities face: *"They (WwD) don't get out of homes"; "Women with disabilities hardly accept obligations on leadership positions"; "We do not have any of WwD included as they are simple not interested to work. This is my personal experience and my personal stand."*

Very specific comment was given by one organization that pointed out: *"Formally, we do not have WwD among us because some women do not want to declare themselves as women with disability and we respect it".*

It is important to note the comment coming from women with disabilities that responded the survey which accurately reflects relations between DPOs and other CSOs, including women CSOs: *"Majority of other CSOs still does not recognize the need to include WwD at various forms of social activism. WwD are still invisible for majority of CSOs. Other CSOs talk about us*
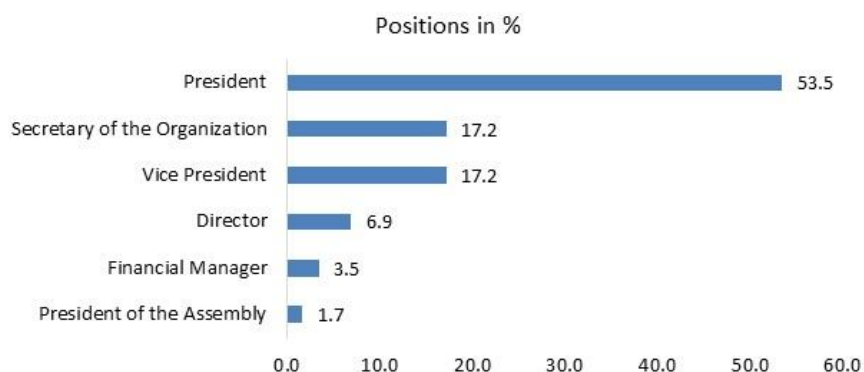
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[29] Public works employ persons by National Employment Office for the short period of time (usually 4 months) and after that period persons are not employed anymore and do not get any salary. If they want to stay and work in organization they could do it only in voluntary base.

but without us. I was personally invited many times by eminent CSOs to the event organized at inaccessible space. This makes me feel that WwD are invited pro forma, without essential wish to hear our voice."

4.4   Women with Disabilities in Leadership Positions
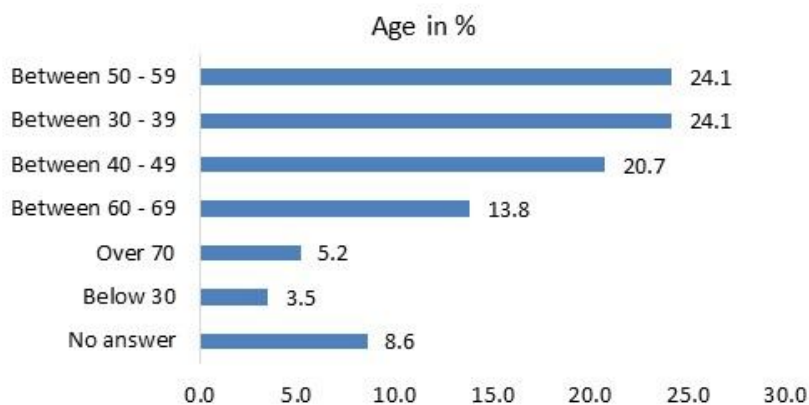
4.4.1   Sample and general data

Data presented in the following sections is based on the answers of 58 respondents, which is 76% of total identified number of women in leadership positions (76 WwD). From this number, 56 are in DPOs and only two women with disability are coming from one woman CSOs which is specifically gathering women with disabilities. .
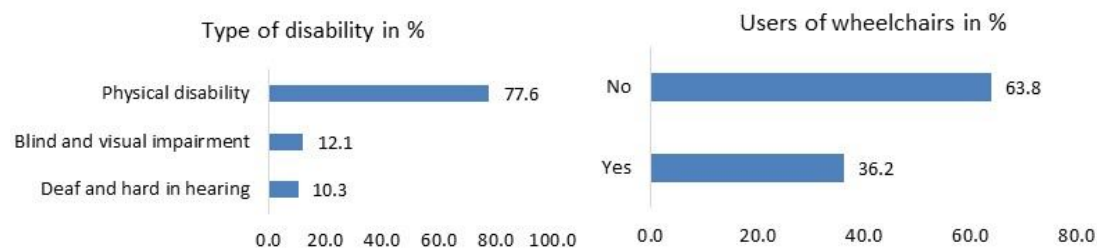
Positions in %

Position	%
President	53.5
Secretary of the Organization	17.2
Vice President	17.2
Director	6.9
Financial Manager	3.5
President of the Assembly	1.7

If we look at the *position,* majority of respondents (53.5%) are serving as presidents, 17.2% as vice presidents and the same percentage as secretaries of the organization[30]. Minor percentage of women (6.9%) is directors or financial managers (3.5%). As almost all of them are coming from DPOs, it is important to note that number of professional staff is still quite limited in this type of organizations, as well as that governance and management positions are often mixed up in practice. This also means that President is often volunteering and yet has wide authority. More professional structures with directors, CSOs are still quite rare among traditional DPOs. Mainly, persons in leadership positions in DPOs are working voluntary as their positions are not financed by national or local authorities. The exceptions are National Alliances of big diagnosed-bound organizations (blind, deaf, intellectual disability, muscular dystrophy, etc.) financed by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs.

While looking at the age of WwD at leadership positions, it is notable that only 27.6% of women under 40 are in leadership positions; out of that percentage, only 3.5% are below 30 years old. In comparison, 43.1% of women in leadership positions are over 50 years old, which confirms the assumption that composition of WwD leadership structure is rather misbalanced from the perspective of age and that active measures aiming to encourage new, younger women are needed.

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[30] While ToR doesn't mention this function, it is included here because number of DPOs still has this position as one of the major leadership positions within the organization.

Age in %

Age group	%
Between 50 - 59	24.1
Between 30 - 39	24.1
Between 40 - 49	20.7
Between 60 - 69	13.8
Over 70	5.2
Below 30	3.5
No answer	8.6

Regarding the type of disability of leaders among WwD, the vast majority of them are women with physical disability (77.6%). Percentages of women in leadership positions with other type of disabilities (visual and/or hearing impairments) are considerably smaller – 12.1% and 10.6% respectively, which in great extent corresponds with existing structure of PwD community in Serbia, segregated by type of disability[31].

Type of disability in %

Type	%
Physical disability	77.6
Blind and visual impairment	12.1
Deaf and hard in hearing	10.3

Users of wheelchairs in %

|	%
No	63.8
Yes	36.2

4.4.2   Qualifications and working experience

Total of 37.9% of women with disabilities serving in leadership positions have some level of post-secondary education. Varieties of different professions are present among them: economists, lawyers, teachers/professors, journalists, psychologists and pedagogy experts, medical doctors, etc. Still, it is indicative that over half of respondents are actually with high-school degree.

As for informal education, as many as 46.6% of women attended more than 10 trainings and further 22.4% attended between 5 and 10 trainings. Areas of educational activities that women listed and assessed as very useful were mostly related to project proposals writing, public relations and communication skills, disability awareness trainings, public advocacy, social services provision trainings, human/women's rights trainings and training on upgrading particular skills such as computer literacy, English language, bookkeeping course etc. However, it is obvious that there was no systematic approach in training practices. Importance of additional education was emphasized by almost all women, and according to the interviewed individuals, specific, comprehensive CSO leadership and management training is much needed.

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[31] According to the Census of population in Serbia 2011, 59.5 % are persons with physical movement, 41.9 % are persons with visual impairment and 25.3 % persons with hearing impairment. http://popis2011.stat.rs/?p=2719

It is the fact that 54.4% of women with disabilities who filled the questionnaire still did not have any informal education or they participated in very few such activities.

Level of formal education in %

Informal education in %
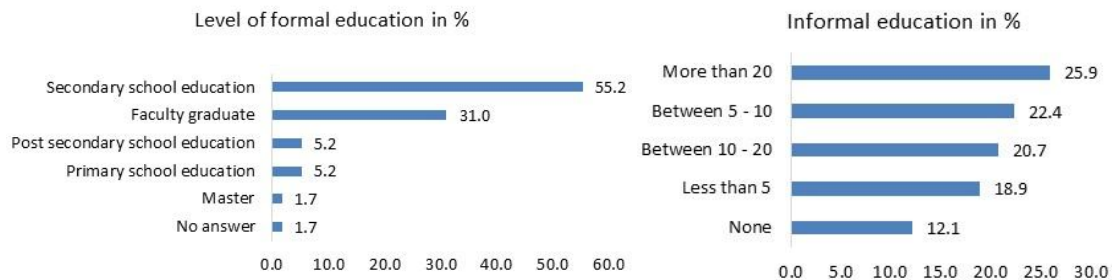
As for additional skills and knowledge, 58.6% of women speak one foreign language, while 12% speak two. Close to 30% of women do not speak any foreign language. In terms of computer literacy, 20.7% of women do not use computers, while 53.4% have basic knowledge, and only about on fourth (25.9%) have advanced level in using computers. Social networks are much more used (74.1% claiming they use social networks as communication channel). However, it would be interesting to explore further if social networks are used also for professional purposes.

Knowledge of work with computers in %

Use of social networks in %
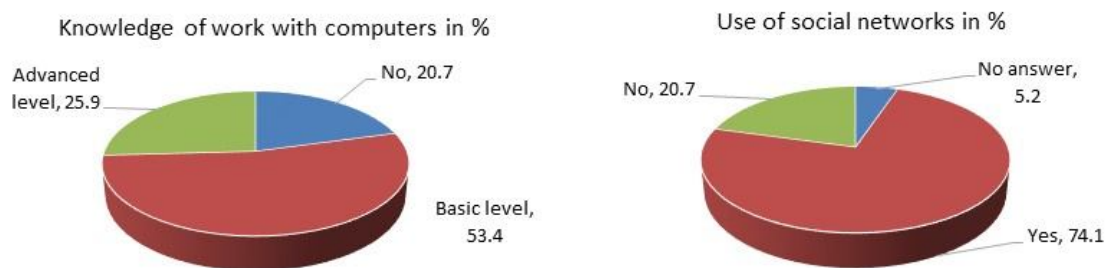
Assessment demonstrates that women with disabilities in leadership positions in general have extensive working experience. Majority (25.9%) have between 10 and 20 years of experience, closely followed by those who are working between 5 and 10 years (24.1) and those that have worked between 20 and 30 years; 19% of interviewed women have over 30 years of experience, and only 8.6% have less than 5 years of experience.


Total working experience in %
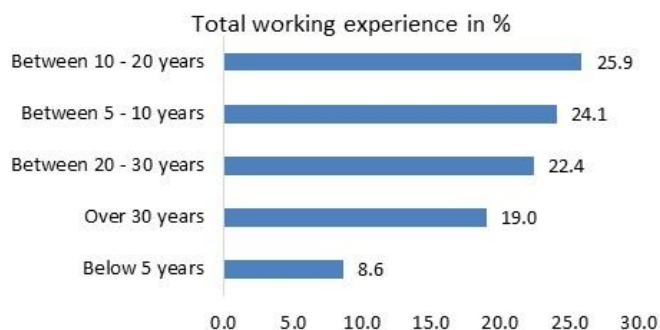
This generally corresponds with the data presented in previous section – that majority of women with disabilities in leadership positions are over 40 years old.

4.4.3   Career development – factors that contribute and challenges/obstacles

CIL explored the main challenges of women with disabilities in their path to reaching top leadership positions from several aspects.

Firstly, women were asked to describe their "road to current position", that is how they came to leadership position.
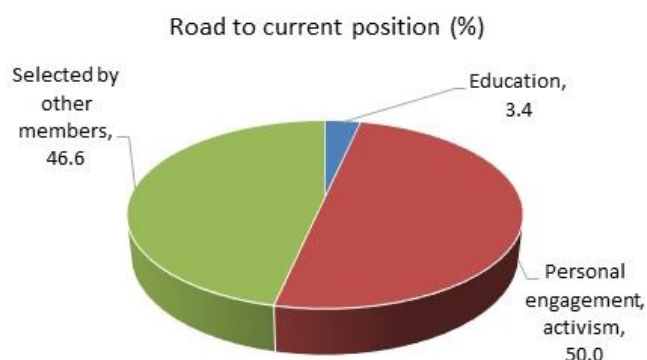
In 50% of the cases they responded that personal engagement and activism brought their advancement. Some of the answers from focus groups and interviews clarified this as: *"Without personal attitude, activism and dedication, I would never reach this position. This was crucial for what we do and for our accountability!"; "I believe that a WwD has to have many additional talents, to be much better than any men in order to be treated equally. While we take over leading position we usually have to apply men's principle in order to get supported and accepted by them".*

Interestingly, 46.6% of women claimed that they have reached their current position because "they were appointed/elected by others". This can be interpreted in two ways: it is possible that they were referring to the formal procedures through which governance/executive body has to appoint/confirm the decision of someone's advancement. This interpretation again brings us to the activism and personal engagement. On the other hand, it is also possible that women wanted to emphasize practice through which *"men push hardworking and dedicated women to accept responsible working positions in the organization, while they usually preserve positions that are more honorable and visible and have higher level of decision-making authority."* It has to be also kept in mind that usually some of the leadership positions are not paid or are underpaid, so the situations in which women are "pushed" to accept them are not rare.

It is also indicative that education and qualifications were recognized as paths to advancement in only 3.4% of interviewed women. When this issue was raised in group discussion, it was obvious that, while women do not question importance of education and qualification, they do not find it crucial for career advancement. Comments from group discussion and interviews illustrate and clarify this position: *"We can lack the highest education, but we can't take any recognized role in the organization without proven history of activism. Activism makes a difference. We need to be women-warriors in order to succeed."*

It seems that combination of strong activism, acceptance/recognition by other members of organizations and education are recognized as the way to reach leadership positions.

In addition, another approach was to ask women to identify factors that contributed or presented an obstacle to their own professional advancement.

Thus, when asked directly what were the factors that contributed/helped them to reach leadership position[32], women again identified Activism (32 answers); Knowledge & experience (25 answers); Professionalism and hard work (22 answers); Perseverance (19 answers); Cooperation/ability to cooperate well with others (8 answers); Communication skills (3).

When identifying challenges/obstacles they faced in their personal path to advancement, with possibility to identify multiple factors, women pointed out the following challenges:

- **Atmosphere within organization** (34.5%), that was described as lack of trust, not supportive internal relations, lack of interest and responsibility of other members, weak teamwork etc. Balance between individual career goals and relation among people in organization was pointed out as crucial for effective acting at leadership position.

- **Physical and other communication barriers** are noted as a challenge faced by 20.7% WwD. Women commented: *"How to reach point A from point B; Accessible transport is not available; Not accessible office and public space; I live out of town; Our office is not fully functional from the perspective of its adjustments to my needs; Due to the type of disability I have, people cannot understand what I am saying."* However, it was interesting that only 12 women pointed out this challenge, given that all women must have faced it, either constantly or at one point. In focus group this was confirmed/clarified by comment of one of the participants*: "We are, unconsciously, ignoring constrains in order to normalize them".* In other words, women are acknowledging this as a challenge, but they do not expect society help in resolving them - they are trying to overcome them by themselves. Once they solve the problems, they don't count them as a challenge for other women who were not in a position to overcome the physical and other communication barriers.

- **Discrimination and stereotypes** were recognized as challenges personally faced by 17.2% of women. Comments on discrimination they faced were quite general, without specific illustrations/examples. Women in focus groups and interviews noted this might be a consequence of low level of self-confidence and self-esteem. They commented that *"Women with disabilities still blame themselves for many things they face, not recognizing who is responsible for the lack of access to education, mobility challenges, or lack of inclusion and visibility in the society. We need to work harder on this issue"; "Deep inside, if a woman does not accept her own disability status, it makes her not being able to recognize discrimination. "*

- **Lack of qualifications** was recognized by 10.3% of women, which corresponds with earlier finding that they do not consider that as crucial factor for advancement.

- **Lack of support services** was recognized by only 6.9% of women, which was quite surprising and interesting, given that support services help in overcoming physical, communication and other barriers. Women that participated in group discussion or in-depth interviews stated that 'Independent living' concept is not still dominant approach. Consequently, PwD, including women, still believe that they have to rely on themselves and families, instead of counting (or demanding) support from the society and the state. Among them, services, including the most important one - personal assistance - were recognized as one of the crucial for WwD everyday function:*"Personal assistance is the starting point for all of us. I would not be able to function and do anything without it"; "Usage of speaking program and assistance tools for blind and those with visual impairment, as well as psychological support programs for PwD and their families are crucial for us."*[33] Not seeing the bigger

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[32] With possibility of multiple answers

[33] Participants in group discussion were WwD who were wheelchair users or blind, and they all came to Focus group with their personal assistants. In spite of that, they said that they did not put in the questionnaire the lack of support services as a

picture might be the reason why only 6.9% women with disabilities recognize the lack of support services as a one of the barriers to take higher position in organizations.

Yet another approach was used as women were asked to express their agreement/ disagreement with number of statements which describe their attitude toward various factors that might cause challenges/obstacles for their advancement. Answering these statements, 58.6% of women stated they **disagree** that their disability made achieving leadership position more difficult and 67.2 % stated they **disagree** that gender made achieving leadership positions more difficult.

Statement	Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree	No answer
Achieving leadership position was more difficult because of my disability	12.1	28.7	**58.6**	8.6
Achieving leadership position was more difficult because of my gender	12.1	15.5	**67.2**	5.2
My disability is not obstacle in everyday work	**50.0**	37.9	12.1	0.0
My gender is not obstacle in everyday work	**81.0**	13.8	15.2	0.0

It must be noted that responses presented in the table were intensively discussed during focus group and women who participated commented answers in different ways. One of the explanations offered was that *"Disability itself is not necessary obstacle while/if all support services are in place. Otherwise, we would never be able to say that persons with and without disabilities have equal opportunities."* On the other hand, women who participated in the discussion have been top leaders for many years, who obviously accepted social model of disability and were not focusing on their disability, but on barriers and challenges in the environment and society. We should have in mind that many other WwD are not aware of social model of disability and see their disability as main obstacle to be active. It is also interesting that 81.0% women do not recognize discrimination on the ground of gender.

At the same time, when asked about attitudes in the organizations, 67.2% said that they recognize discrimination based on disability and 53.4% said based on gender.

What prevents professional advancement (%)
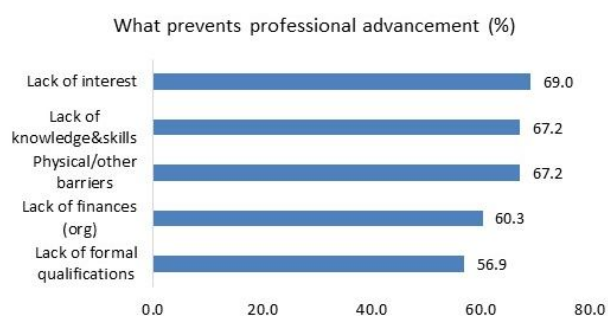
Additionally, when asked what prevents professional advancement of women with disabilities, women in larger percentages marked almost all offered answers, with minor variations. While lack of interest was recognized as an important obstacle, as well as lack of knowledge and skills, it is interesting that in general physical/other barriers were recognized as an obstacle by 67.2% of women, while only 20.7% of them recognized that as an obstacle in their own professional advancement.

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problem, because they already resolved it, as they have their personal assistants. Only during the discussion did they recognize this as one of the main barriers for being an active leader and taking a leadership position.

While these answers may seem contradictory, it is our assumption that this actually points out that speaking about (and recognizing) discrimination from general perspective is easier for women than recognizing it from personal examples. This also confirms clarifications provided in focus groups and through individual interviews – these women have difficulties in recognizing discrimination, especially gender discrimination, and they as well as tend to place responsibility on themselves rather than society and/or environment.

Interviewed women commented that *"Women with disabilities require from themselves impossible things. Some of us never fully accepted our own disability, as well as consequences that disability brings to our lives. We are used to living with numerous barriers, even ignoring existence of discrimination just in order to keep going forward."*

4.4.4   Capacity development/training needs

In looking at the areas in which capacities of women with disabilities need to be strengthened, CIL again applied various approaches.

Women with disabilities already in leadership position were asked what could help in professional advancement, with possibility of multiple answers. Their answers can be grouped in three main areas:

- Motivation, active engagement, perseverance – 36.2% chose one or two of these answers; while slightly different, they all point to the similar direction, which is actually building a base of motivated and persistent activists, whose motivation will come from belief in themselves, their abilities and their right to be equally treated and their values recognized.
- Knowledge and skills – 32.8% of women consider this to be an important area; this means not so much formal education (although that should not be underestimated), but building knowledge and skills important for management and governance.
- Reducing prejudices, additional support (services and in family) – 31% chose one of these two answers, which again slightly differ from the individual answers on what the obstacles were to achieving leadership position (6.9%); in this part women pointed out the need for having 'support network' both in the environment (society) as well as in their families.

In terms of specific knowledge/skills that they need, graph shows all identified areas. While organizational management is the topic that was recognized by largest percentage of women (86.2%), it is interesting to note that knowledge on rights of people with disabilities (74.1%); public appearance and presentation of ideas (69%) and confidence (69%) were also very high on the list. Other areas include strategy and planning, women's rights, fundraising, multiple discrimination and HR management.
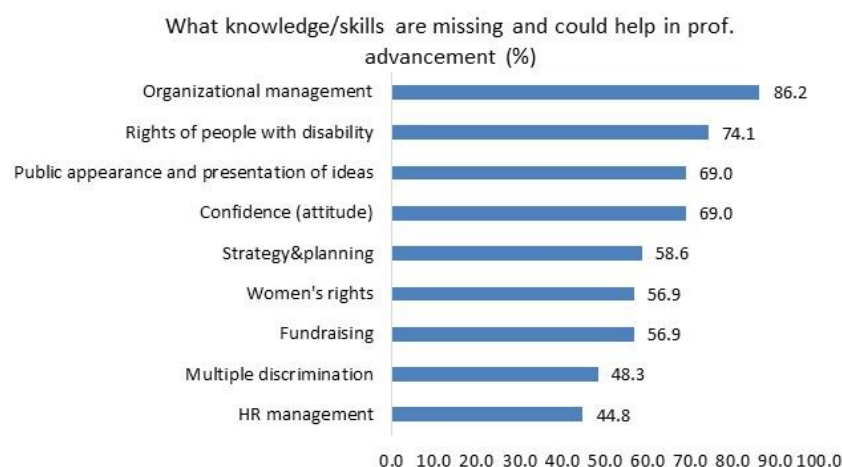
These results (both answers on what can help and identifying specific areas) actually confirm number of findings/observations presented in previous sections, pointing out that there are three different directions in which systematic capacity building should be designed:

1) Raising awareness of disability-based and gender-based discrimination, with the next step of building knowledge on the rights of PwDs and women rights. In looking at strengthening capacities in this area, it is important to have in mind that challenges which need to be overcome are coming from 'inside', either from low self-esteem or internalized perception that women with disabilities should not acknowledge obstacles and discrimination, because that would mean they are not 'equal to the task'. In a sense, before building systematic knowledge on human rights, process of self-awareness and self-acceptance needs to happen.

2) Assertiveness, confidence, public appearance and presentation. Again, this is combination of building skills/knowledge and psychological support in achieving higher confidence and trust in one's own value and rights.

3) Organizational management skills. This includes skills from general management to strategy, planning, HR, fundraising. However, this should be viewed as third and final layer, because if undertaken without other two previously identified areas, it will not produce adequate results. Knowledge and skills in these areas might be gained, but without building self-esteem, confidence and trust in personal abilities and values it will not help women to aim and achieve leadership positions.

5   Conclusions

▪ Interest, readiness and openness of identified DPOs and women CSOs to deal with the mapping of position of women with disabilities on top management positions was expressed, but in much lower level than expected. Among other factors that could have influenced this, stereotype on "who has the right to hold the power", might be the one of them. Even some prominent civil society organization hardly recognized the topic of the research as priority and of high importance. But, from the other hand, majority of women with disabilities in leadership position were eager to share experiences and on top of that are interested to support actions in that regards.

▪ According to the fact that the majority of DPOs were established over 20 years ago, there are indications that traditional approach is still dominant style of working, structuring and decision making. Usually, these organizations are established according

to type of disability, being more focused on helping their disabled members rather than implementing human rights approach, independent living and inclusion. They are more formal in their structure, have relatively low capacities and the position of women with disabilities within organizations are still very poorly recognized, both in the basic organization's documents (Statutes, or missions and/or strategic goals), but in practice as well. Transition process to become modern, effective and efficient organizations appears to be a huge challenge   for majority of them.   More capacity building interventions on governance, management, operational and gender mainstreaming level are required. In addition to that, there are indications that database of organizations is not always accurate, so it doesn't give a true picture of the situation in the organization.

- Social services are still dominant type of activities provided by DPOs. The most frequent services mostly relate to humanitarian and health support, economic empowerment, informal education, while providing services for protection women from violence are rather rare. Advocacy, promotion and protection of human rights, including advocacy for better legal solutions for persons with disabilities, with some rather lonely attempts to put in focus women with disabilities specifically, have been identified as growing group of activities. Anyhow, both service provision and advocacy actions need improvements related to the scope, practice and effects made.

- Representation of women with disabilities in governance and executive bodies at DPOs is rather low and misbalanced compared to men. The highest DPOs decision making bodies (Assembly) counts 38% of women with disabilities, while at executive bodies (Board of trustees, Executive Board, Presidency,) women make 31% of total number of participating persons. While explaining the rational for such situation, many of respondents stated that disabled women are not interested in such positions. This might mean that, again, stereotypes are on place, as well as "blaming" women without insight into deeper causes for such behavior. Anyhow, this research clearly identified that women with disabilities need much more initial support, encouragement, education and adequate services in order to be able to reach higher management positions.

- Within the practices of women CSOs, women with disabilities are recognized as target group in their documents in slightly higher percentage than within DPOs. But at the same time more than half of these organizations do not have the information on the percentage of women of disabilities as their beneficiaries. These results might give wrong impression as questionnaire was filled by a very small number of women CSOs, (27.1%), usually dealing with women from other vulnerable groups. Representation of women with disabilities is very poor, specifically at management position - less than 3 %. Although financial and accessibility constrains were noted, it would be valuable to find out more on the reasons why the women CSOs in their current practices do not recognize women with disabilities as specific group and explore opportunities for their closer cooperation with DPOs on the topic on WwD, as well as support their higher promotion on management positions.

- Total of 76 women with disabilities were identified as holders of higher positions at DPOs and women CSOs. Vast majority are active in DPOs, only two at women CSOs. From the sample of 58 women with disability who responded to individual questionnaire, over 70% are serving as presidents and vice presidents and minor percentage of them is professional directors and financial managers. In general, number of professional staff is still quite limited and governance and management positions are often mixed up in practice with lot of volunteering.

- Composition of WwD leadership structure is rather misbalanced from the perspective of age. Women under 30 are included at negligible percentage, while from the other side, more than 60% of women are over 40 years old. Therefore, it is clear, that active measure aiming to encourage new, younger women are needed, including motivation, additional skills and knowledge and support service. Extensive working experience that vast majority of women have could serve as an opportunity for a mentorship program for existing and potentially new young women to be prepared for leadership and management roles.
- One third of women have university education, while the majority graduated secondary schools. Informal education plays very important role in capacity building of WwD on leadership positions. Vast majority attended various training courses, but it is obvious that their capacity development was not strategically directed towards strengthening personal self-confidence, leadership and management knowledge and skills of women with disabilities. Comprehensive and focused, tailored training program could be of significant help.
- While looking at career development and the factors that enabled women with disabilities to reach leadership and management position, some specifics are clearly identified. The combination of strong activism and acceptance, as well as recognition by other members of organizations was recognized as ways to reach leadership positions by majority of respondents. Special emphasis is put on activism and dedication as highly valued factors within DPOs.
- Challenges and obstacles that WwD faced in their personal path to advancement primarily relate to the type of organizational culture, system of internal shared support, teamwork standards and working atmosphere. The need for balancing work with internal relations within the organization is strongly emphasized. Other interesting factors, such as cases of discrimination, physical and other barriers, level of support services and adequacy of qualification, are identified as well, but their importance has not been valued as the most critical.
- Based on the current status of lacked capacities of WwD at leadership/management positions and the needs to strengthen existing and future WwD leaders, direction for systematic capacity building program should focus on: a) Awareness of disability-based and gender-based discrimination in the light of human rights. This should be followed by the process of building self-awareness and self-acceptance; b) Assertiveness, confidence, public appearance and presentation skills as a combination with psychological support in achieving higher confidence; c) Organizational management skills that include skills from general management to strategy, planning, HR, fundraising. Building self-esteem, confidence and trust in personal abilities and values of women with disabilities should be treated as a cross cutting theme. Women believe that this approach is the single way to help women with disabilities to achieve leadership positions.
  Finally, there is a strong need to motivate women with disabilities to be actively included in the work of their organizations and to create wish and ambition to take up higher leadership position.