

BASELINE MAPPING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS WITHIN DISABLED PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS AND WOMENS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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 **AUTONOMY**
 **VOICE**
 **PARTICIPATION**
of persons with disabilities in Serbia



Center for Independent Living Serbia



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women



Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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ACRONYMS

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

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The baseline mapping of women and girls with disabilities in top management positions within disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and women's civil society organisations (WCSOs) in the Republic of Serbia was carried out by the Centre for Independent Living Serbia (CIL). The CIL received support from UN Women to identify challenges that women-leaders with disabilities face and to map their training needs. This exercise ultimately seeks to contribute to capacity building for leadership resulting in a higher share of women-led disabled people's organisations and women with disabilities (further on in this document also referred as WwD) in women's civil society organisations. The starting point

in the mapping was the CRPD recommendation regarding the 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 lack of data in Serbia in this regard. Thus, the methodology used to generate quantitative data on the existing women's civil society organisations and disabled people's organisations combined different tools (e.g. informative meetings, desk research, several types of questionnaires, a focus group, individual interviews). The mapping further generated findings regarding the current status, challenges and

needs of women with disabilities in top management positions.

Out of 711 organisations (496 disabled people's organisations and 215 women's civil society organisations) the contacts of which were acquired, the sample of 160 organisations and 58 women with disabilities was assessed in more depth. Interest, readiness and openness of the target organisations to take part in the mapping of the position of women with disabilities in top management positions were at a much lower level than expected.

The respondent rate was much higher in the disabled people's organisations than the women's civil society organisations and this ratio is reflected in the main findings on the organisational profiles, representation of women with disabilities in leadership structures, factors and needed actions, as summarized below.

Given that most disabled people's organisations were established over 20 years ago, it is not surprising that traditional approaches still dominate in terms of the operating style, organisational structures and decision-making. They have relatively low capacities and women with disabilities within organisations are still very poorly recognised, both in the organisations' constitutional documents (articles of association, or mission statements and (or) strategic goals) and in practice. There are also indications that the organisations' databases are not always accurate and do not reflect the real situation within them. Social services are still the core activity provided to the membership. The most frequent services include humanitarian assistance and health-care support, economic empowerment, informal education. In rare cases, they engage in protection of women from violence. A growing group of activities include advocacy, promotion and protection of human rights, legal solutions for persons with disabilities,

including isolated attempts to focus specifically on women with disabilities.

The representation of women with disabilities in governance and executive bodies in disabled people's organisations is low and unbalanced compared to men with disabilities (the average share of women is 34.5%, compared to the average men's share of 42.9%). The representation of women with disabilities in management positions is still lower at less than 3%. Seeking a rationale for such a substantial 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 avert the attention from negative gender norms, stereotypes and unwillingness to remove obstacles to participation.

In women's civil society organisations' strategic documents, women with disabilities are recognised as a target group in a slightly higher percentage than within disabled people's organisations, while, at the same time, more than half of these organisations do not have the information on the percentage of women with disabilities among their beneficiaries. This research clearly identified that women with disabilities need much more initial

support, encouragement, education and appropriate services to be able to reach senior management positions.

Out of the sample of 58 women with disabilities¹ - holders of senior positions, over 70% serve as presidents and vice presidents and a minor percentage are professional directors and financial managers. In general, the 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.

The age structure of women with disabilities in leadership positions is fairly unbalanced. Women under 30 are included in negligible percentages, while over 60% of women belong to the 40+ group. The findings strongly support the recommendation that active measures aiming at encouraging new, younger women are needed, including motivation-building, additional skills and knowledge development and support services. The mapping confirmed the existence of an extensive working experience and solid educational background (formal, but even more informal) among the

¹ The number of women with disabilities who answered the individual questionnaire mentioned above. Also explained in the Methodology section related to data collection (page 10 of this Report)

vast majority of women. One third of women have university education, while the majority have graduated from secondary schools. Informal education plays a very important role in capacity building of women with disabilities in leadership positions. This fact is seen as an opportunity for mentorship programmes targeting the existing and, potentially, new young women to be prepared for leadership and management roles. With regard to capacity development practices that women with disabilities were included in, the mapping has found that a strategic direction towards strengthening personal self-confidence and knowledge, as well as leadership and management skills of women with disabilities is missing.

The observation of career development and factors that enabled women with disabilities to reach leadership and management positions helps identify some specific details. The combination of strong activism, dedication (as highly valued factors within the disabled people's organisations) and acceptance and recognition by other organisation members is seen as the way to reach leadership positions.

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

Based on the actual capacity gaps of women with disabilities in leadership or management positions and the need for support from the existing and future women with disabilities leaders, the following key directions for systematic capacity building programmes have been 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 speaking and presentation skills in combination with psychological support in achieving higher confidence;

c) organisational management skills that include general management, strategic orientation, planning, human resource development, fundraising and a 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 only way forward that helps women to aim for and achieve leadership positions.

Overall, the mapping confirmed the need for strategic action towards building motivation of women with disabilities to be actively included in the work of their organisations and generating their aspiration and ambition to take up senior leadership positions.





INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background

In March 2018, the UN Women Serbia, in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), as well as with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, with the support of the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Fund, started implementing the *Autonomy, Voice and Participation of Persons with Disabilities* project 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 Concluding observations on the initial report of Serbia and to the National Strategy for Gender Equality, measure 1.², which calls for specific measures to strengthen the voice and participation of women with disabilities in the society's public and political life. This pillar represents a 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, the two main goals for the Centre for Independent Living Serbia (CIL) as the selected service provider were to:

1. Map women and girls with disabilities in top management positions within DPOs and

women's CSOs in the Republic of Serbia, identify the challenges they face and their training needs in order to strengthen their capacities to obtain leadership positions within the DPOs and women's CSOs.

2. Facilitate dialogue among mapped women and girls with disabilities in leadership positions with the aim of developing at least two initiatives to strengthen women's leadership within DPOs and women's CSOs.³

³ The deliverables related to this goal are not presented in this Final Research Report and will be the subject of another document that will follow in February 2019.

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the following four tasks need to be accomplished:

1

To conduct a baseline research that will identify: a. the number of DPOs and women's CSOs registered in the Republic of Serbia that have mandates within their articles of association to improve the position of women and girls with disabilities; b. the number of women and girls with disabilities who are employed by the DPOs and women's CSOs; c. the number of women and girls with disabilities in top leadership positions within these DPOs and women's CSOs; and d. the number of women and girls with disabilities who are members of the steering committees and (or) boards of DPOs and women's 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 organisations, in order to obtain top leadership positions within their respective organisations; qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews or focus groups were used with mapped women and girls with disabilities in 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's CSOs and their respective training needs; qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews or focus groups were used with mapped women and girls with disabilities in top leadership positions.

4

To organise and facilitate a workshop session with mapped women and girls with disabilities in top leadership positions, i.e. presidents, vice presidents and chief financial officers, in which the research results will be presented and at least two initiatives on strengthening women's leadership within DPOs and women's CSOs developed.

² Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 4/2016

2.2. Methodology

In order to achieve these tasks, the CIL developed the methodology (accompanied by the appropriate tools), which comprised:

1) The baseline research, designed to acquire and collect data on the targeted organisations in one place; gather information on the engagement of women with disabilities in DPOs and women's CSOs; acquire contact, names and other data on women with disabilities in leading positions and boards and steering committees (number, type of positions, age, type of disability etc.). In that respect, the baseline research aimed at gathering relevant quantitative and qualitative information. This was done through:

a) **The process of collecting names and contacts of targeted organisations. Given that there is no reliable database of either type of organisation**, the CIL team contacted and requested

information from a wide range of sources including: the Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the National Alliance of PwD, unions of organisations for a particular type of disability (visual and hearing impairments, physical disabilities, etc.), the Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, the Organisation of Social Activism (ODA), the Network of Women Against Violence and the Trag Foundation. The CIL also conducted a separate research, exploring the Serbian Business Registers Agency (SBRA) data, the web sites of local self-governments and engaging in a broad Internet search. In total, contacts of 711 organisations have been acquired, out of which 496 DPOs and 215 women's CSOs⁴

b) **Collecting data on targeted organisations and women with disabilities in leading positions.** This was done through a questionnaire that focused on

attitudes towards the disability issue in targeted organisations and understanding the position of women with disabilities within organisations. More specifically, the questionnaire looked for:

a) the general profile of the organisation, mission, activities, beneficiaries and whether women with disabilities were identified as beneficiaries or members;

b) information on the structure of the organisation (main bodies and positions, presence of PwD and specifically women with disabilities in the human resources);

c) the scope and type of PwD and women's participation in leading positions and on boards or steering committees, disaggregated by position, age, qualifications and type of disability.

This questionnaire was available online, but also as a word document in order to be accessible to people with different types of disabilities.

⁴ Out of that number, emails returned from 105 addresses for different reasons - non-existent address, non-existent provider, full email box, etc.). In most cases, the organisations from which these emails returned no longer exist, which was also verified by the SBRA. Of the contacted women's CSOs, about 40% no longer exist or no one answered the phone. Attempts at making a phone contact were made with about 400 organisations for which a telephone contact existed. Some organisations were being contacted for several days in a row, but no one answered the phone. An additional check by an associate established that the organisations had ceased to operate. Of the contacted PwD organisations, about 20% do not answer the phones, or, even though they formally exist, they remain closed and nobody works in them.

A total of 160 organisations (22.5% of 711 that were contacted) responded to the questionnaire. The majority of responses came from the DPOs (125 - 78%), while the rest (35 - 22%) were received from women's 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 the positive and the negative factors which

influence the positioning of women with disabilities within the organisations and what could be done to help them overcome some of the challenges, including capacity building actions. Three tools were used:



Questionnaire for women with disabilities in leading positions (adapted to various types of disabilities) 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 the challenges were, what the positive factors were, what helped them overcome challenges; environment – perception of the attitudes toward women with disabilities in non-profit organisations, main challenges to their professional advancement and ideas for overcoming them, including capacity building and training needs and potential ways of including younger women and girls with disabilities. The questionnaire was sent out to 76 identified WwD in leading positions, whose names were received from their organisations through the initial questionnaire for the organisations. Only 58 out of these 76 identified WwD in leading positions (76%) responded.



Focus group, which was organised on December 7, 2018, with eight women with disabilities who are in top leadership positions in both bigger and more active as well as smaller DPOs. The focus group was used to present preliminary findings of the baseline research (relevant data on the presence and position of WwD, positive and negative factors which influence the positioning of women with disabilities within the organisations, as well as their knowledge and skills) and to inform the formulation of the final findings and conclusions.



In-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of 4 women, representing different types of DPOs, such as organisations gathering persons with different physical disabilities and persons with visual impairments. The main criterion for selecting women for in-depth interviews was the level of understanding of the broader picture that they demonstrated through their responses in the questionnaire. These interviews provided a deeper understanding of the issues addressed by the questionnaire and those opened during the focus group.

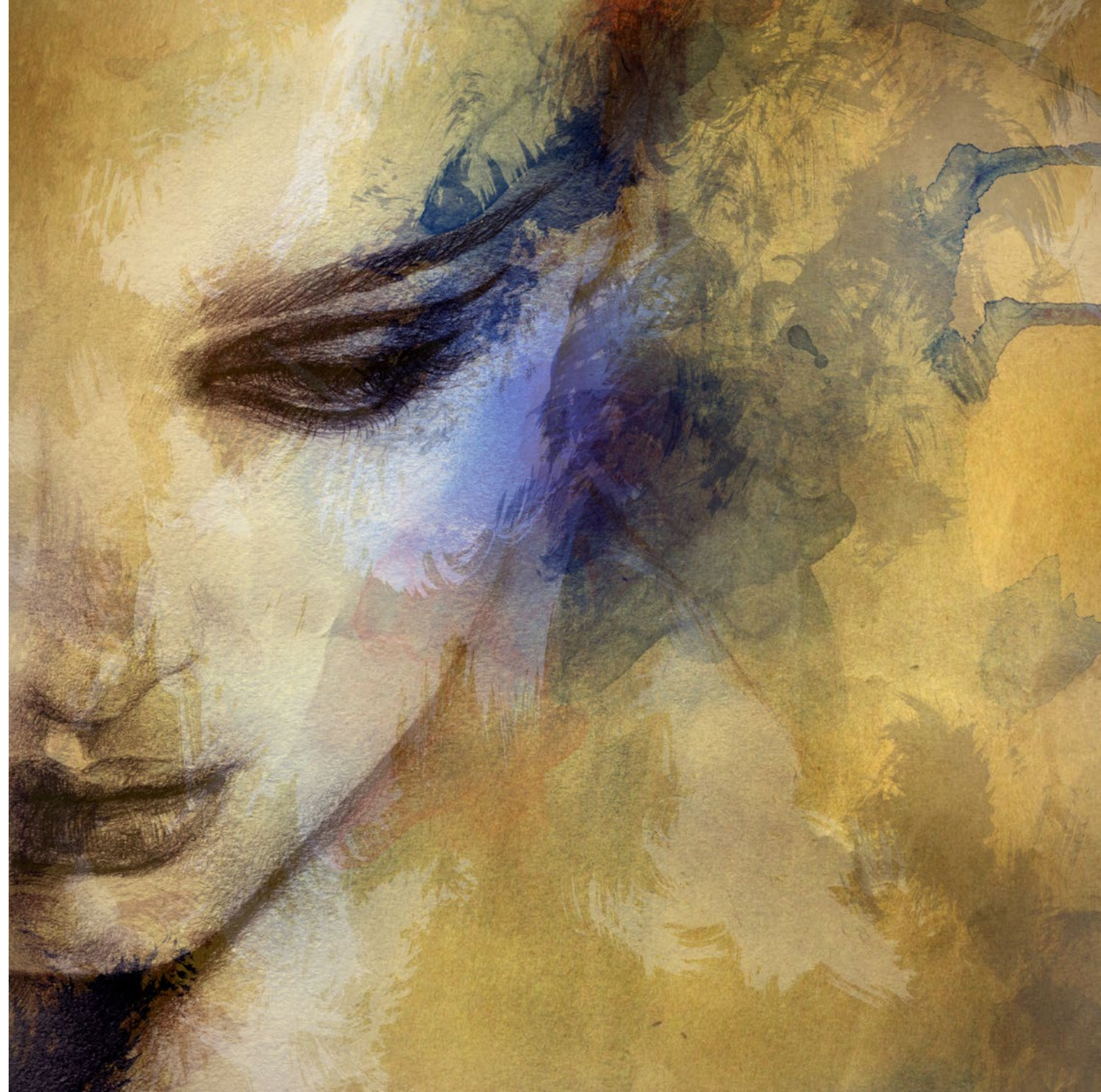
2.2.1. Limitations and challenges

While a large number of contacts were acquired through the mapping process, it is clear that they are not all for operating DPOs and women's CSOs. Nevertheless, this database is at this point the most comprehensive database of both types of organisations. It has to be noted, though, that contacts gathered were not always accurate; therefore, the CIL performed repeated phone checks. These checks verified the obtained data in some cases; however, in some cases they proved that some organisations did not exist anymore or that they existed only on paper. In some cases, in spite of the efforts made, it was not possible to reach them. Furthermore, at the stage of direct assessment of organisational

practices, a certain level of unwillingness to respond was noted.

In some cases, this was the result of the lack of information within the organisation (e.g. a number of them had no information on women with disabilities either as members or as beneficiaries). In other cases, the organisation representatives quoted lack of time as the reason for not responding or deemed that questions were not relevant to their practices. In women's CSOs, the common explanation for not taking part in the research was that they had no women with disabilities as their staff or beneficiaries.

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



3

CONTEXT

Having in mind the main topic of this research – the position of women and girls with disabilities in top management positions in DPOs and women's CSOs, the broader 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 in managerial positions in general.

In the political and public arena, 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 entitled “Gender Equality in Local Self-Government Units”⁵, there are only 12 women mayors and presidents of municipalities out of 169 cities and municipalities in Serbia, which amounts to 7.1%. Also, there are only 14% of women deputy mayors or presidents of municipalities deputy.

Therefore, it is expected that many vulnerable groups of women are excluded from active dialogue and

creation of policies that concern their life, particularly women with disabilities, Roma women, single mothers, older and rural women, etc.

According to the 2011 population census in Serbia⁶, there are 571,780 persons with some type of disability in Serbia, 238,940 (41.8%) of whom are men with disabilities and 332,840 (58.2%) women with disabilities.

Although the number of women with disabilities is higher than that of men, the 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 all these roles is more difficult for women with disabilities because of the existence of prejudices about their abilities. The statistics show that less women with disabilities than men with disabilities are employed.⁷ Women with disabilities rarely get married and build their own families. If they wish to have children, they may face problems with reproductive health services, mainly caused by prejudice towards women with disabilities. Under these circumstances, women with disabilities are not particularly interested in getting involved in the political life in the society.

Following the analysis of 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 recognised in the majority of strategic and legislative documents. In all documents that mention women with disabilities, they are included (classified) into a general group of multiply discriminated or vulnerable women without stating any details on 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 recognised as a separate group among persons with disabilities in general.

Serbia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁸ 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 States Parties to take specific measures for the elimination of multiple discrimination against women and girls with disabilities, many Serbian legislative documents do not recognise them as a specific group.

A good illustration of this approach is the Law on Prevention of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities⁹, which is not gender-sensitive.

The Strategy for Improving the Position of Persons with Disabilities 2007-2015,¹⁰ under specific objective 10, provides that it is necessary to develop and ensure equal opportunities for women with disabilities' active participation in community life, but no specific action is proposed.

⁵ The online publication, published by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality 2017, available at the following 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/>

⁶ http://popis2011.stat.rs/?page_id=2720&lang=en

⁷ <http://boom93.com/projekti/da-se-razumemo/44454/zaposljavanje-osoba-sa-invaliditetom.html>

⁸ The Law on the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “Official Gazette of the RS – International Treaties” no. 42/09.

⁹ Official Gazette of the RS No 33/06 and 13/16

¹⁰ Official Gazette of the RS, no. 1/07

During 2009, a number of laws relevant for persons with disabilities were adopted. The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in the Republic of Serbia¹¹ does not specifically recognise women with disabilities, but only persons with disabilities in general; the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities¹² 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. The Law on Gender Equality¹³ does not recognise women with disabilities as a specific group.

The previous Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting

Gender Equality (2009-2015) provided the 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.¹⁴ However, the Evaluation of the National Action Plan implementation showed limited results "in the area of enhancing participation of discriminated and disadvantaged women in public and political life". The report concludes that a number of documents have not been drafted (e.g. the action plan for the improvement of position of multiply discriminated women and gender budgeting, partially implemented at provincial level) and that certain activities have not been implemented, such as the training for women with disabilities and women from minority groups on participation in political life, or campaigns on the capacities of disabled women."¹⁵

The current National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020) and its accompanying Action Plan (2016-2018) recognise the 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 the position of women from multiply discriminated and vulnerable groups.¹⁶ Unfortunately, there is a lack of evidence and assessment of such a measure. Within the framework of the implementation of this goal, a promotional campaign has been planned entitled "Capacities of Women with Disabilities", with the purpose of raising general awareness of the capacities of women with disabilities and implementing pilot projects and seminars intended for this group of female citizens in order to increase their participation in the public and political life.

11 Official Gazette of the RS No 22/2009

12 Official Gazette of the RS No 36/2009 and 32/13

13 Official Gazette of the RS No. 104/2009

14 The 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)

15 The 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 at the following link: <https://gate.unwomen.org/EvaluationDocument/Download?evaluationDocumentID=4876>

16 The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016 to 2020) with the accompanying Action Plan for the 2016-2018 period, Participation in political and public life and Specific Objective 2.6

In the Anti-discrimination Strategy 2013-2018,¹⁷ women with disabilities are mentioned again in the section on the so-called double, or multiply discriminated groups of women who are particularly vulnerable, Roma women, women with disabilities, etc.

There are not many researches about the political participation of women with disabilities. Few researches carried out by the DPOs focus on other issues, such as protection in the cases of violence¹⁸, the quality of life of women with disabilities¹⁹, health and sexuality²⁰ of women with disabilities.

Report on Accessible Elections - Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Political and Public Life²¹ has shown that women are more excluded from public life than men. The report assumes that the principle of respect for diversity might be one of the reasons, as women are more confronted with labelling and disdain in public life than men. Women are also

more likely to face discrimination in this area.

The 2009 research of the Centre for Independent Living of Serbia entitled "Development of Advocacy Capacities of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in Serbia"²² mentioned for the first time the status of women with disabilities in managerial positions in DPOs, although it was just a small part of the research. The research sample included 56 DPOs, operating both locally and on the national level and represents 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 the PwD, the research findings indicated that there was a significant gap between the capacities of the 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 the PwD in the governance and management

structures of the DPOs. Yet, women with disabilities were significantly underrepresented in these structures compared to men with disabilities. In the top-level decision-making bodies, there were 25.9% women with disabilities, while 41.4% men with disabilities were represented in the observed organisations. There were 19.6% women with disabilities and 53.6% men with disabilities in managerial positions.

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

17 Official Gazette of the RS No. 60/2013

18 The role of the centres 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>

19 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-vojudini/>

20 "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-vojudini/>

21 Available at: http://www.cod.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Pristupacni_izbori_web_rezolucija.pdf

22 Available at: http://www.cilsrbija.org/ebib/200911102248240.istrazivanje_kapaciteta_organizaciona%20OSI.pdf

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Sample

In total, 160 organisations (22.5% of the total number of those identified and 40% of those that could be verified - contacted) responded to the questionnaire.

From this number, 125 (78.1%) are DPOs and 35 (21.9%) are women's CSOs.

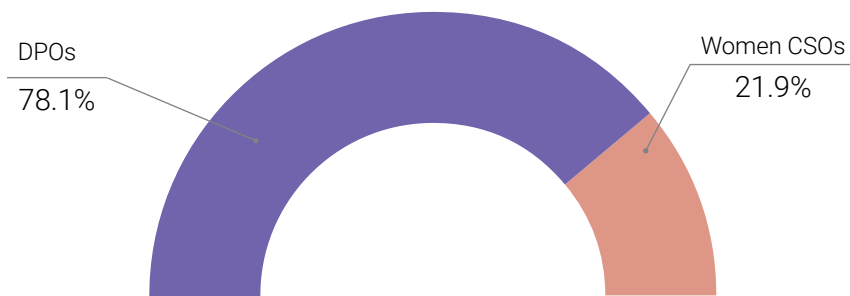


Figure 1. Type of organization that responded to the questionnaire

Among DPOs that responded to the questionnaire, there were also a few organisations of parents who have children with intellectual disabilities.²³

Although they did respond to the questionnaire, they stated that their members were the parents, while the children with intellectual disabilities were treated as the beneficiaries. For

obvious reasons, the beneficiaries could not take any leadership positions in the organisation, although they are sometimes included in decision-making processes.

4.2. Women with Disabilities in DPOs

4.2.1. The DPOs Profile

The collected data show that over 80% of assessed organisations have been operating from 10 to over 20 years. (55.2% for over 20 years, plus 29.6% that have been active between 10 and 20 years). A very low percentage of organisations have been in operation for less than five years (3.2%).

It is our assumption that this means that the traditional type of organisations of persons with disabilities is still quite dominant. These types of organisations are usually 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 the challenges of transition towards becoming modern, effective organisations with functional governance and management structure, but also, more than that, towards becoming efficient at the operational level, skilful in fundraising and strategic development. In addition to that, the "older" organisations usually

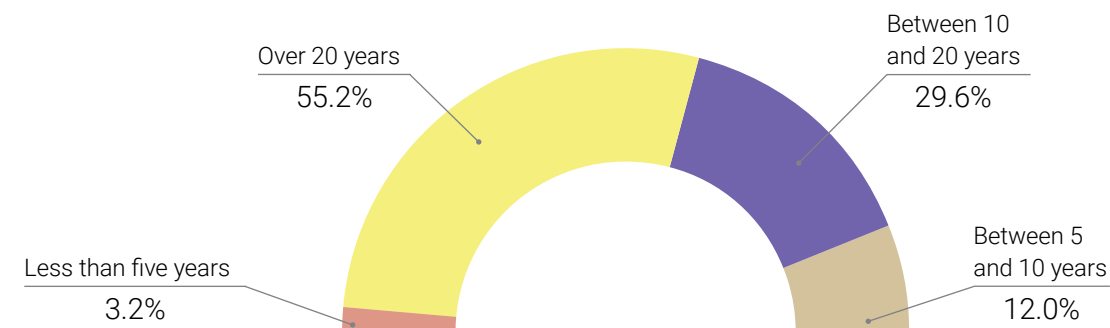


Figure 2. How long organization exists

²³ Within the disability movement and according to the Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs those organisations are also treated as DPOs, or organisations for PwD.

act within the traditional pattern, they tend to follow the medical and charitable-type organisation model, rather than the "human rights" based approach.

As for the core activities, the majority of them (72.8%) provide different types of social services to their membership and beneficiaries (35.2% stated that as their dominant activity). Advocacy, promotion and protection of the PwD rights (both genders),

including advocacy for better legal solutions for women, has been identified as the second major group of activities. Although the percentage of organisations that include this as the dominant activity is not so high (24.8%), it demonstrates that DPOs are aware of the importance of shifting their focus to influencing the external environment.

If, however, we look at the activities addressing women, including women

with disabilities, it is noted that the most frequent services are as follows: 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 organisations declare it as their dominant activity, while 6.4% claim that protection of women from violence is included to a small degree or not as the dominant activity).

Activity	Dominant activity	Included, but not dominant	To a small degree	Total
Providing social services	35.2	29.6	8.0	72.8
Advocacy, promotion and protection of the rights of PwD, both genders	14.4	3.2	0.8	18.4
Advocacy, promotion and protection of the 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 of women from violence, including WwD	1.6	1.6	4.8	8.0

Table 1. Activities of the disabled persons' organizations

4.2.2. General representation of women with disabilities in DPOs

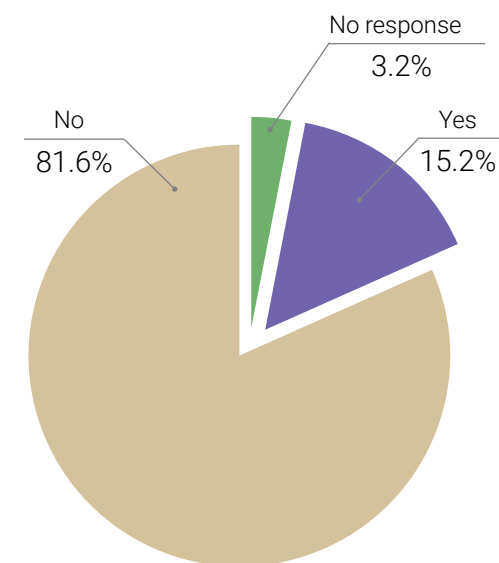


Figure 3. Percentage of women with disabilities who have been recognised as a specific target group in the constitutional documents of the disabled persons' organizations

As demonstrated by the collected data, women with disabilities have not been clearly (or sufficiently) recognised as a specific target group in the organisations' constitutional documents such as their articles of association, mission statements and (or) statements on strategic goals. As many as 81.6% of organisations do not mention WwD as a specific target group, while only 15.2% have recognised them (3.2% of

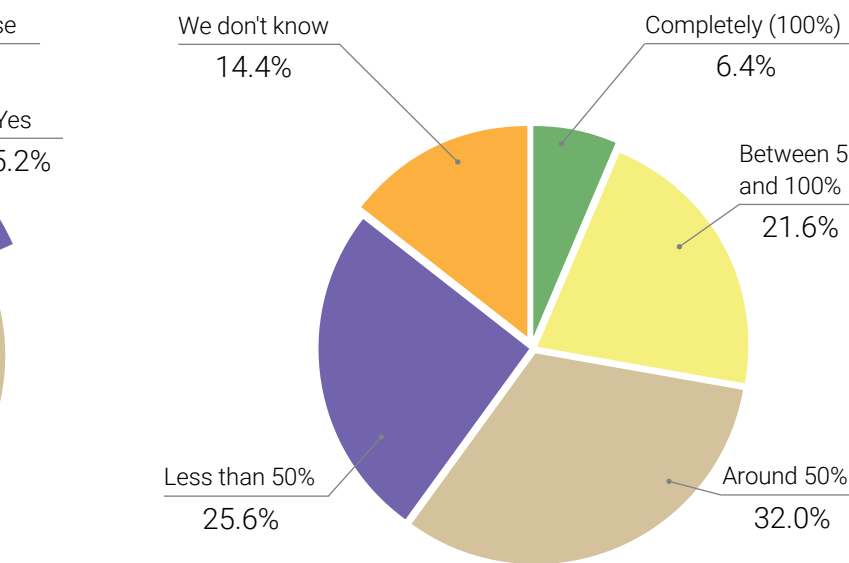


Figure 4. Percentage of women with disabilities as members or beneficiaries of the disabled persons' organizations

organisations did not respond to the question).

The situation is a bit different when looking at the organisations' assessment of women with disabilities as members or beneficiaries. In 32% of the DPOs, there is a gender balance among members and among beneficiaries, as women make up around 50% of the total number of members and beneficiaries. About one

fourth of the organisations (25.6%) have less than 50% of women as members or beneficiaries. On the other hand, in 21.6% of organisations, WwD make up 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 organisations are not sure how many women they have among their members and beneficiaries.

4.2.3. Women with disabilities in decision-making bodies (positions)

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

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

When it comes to the representation in the executive body (the board of trustees, the executive board, the presidency or other forms), the DPOs claim that women with disabilities are part of approximately 80% of them.

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

percentage of DPOs with women with disabilities in executive or leadership bodies and the percentage of DPOs that have or had women with disabilities in management positions in the last five years.

Two other sets of data are important when looking at WwD in DPOs: the

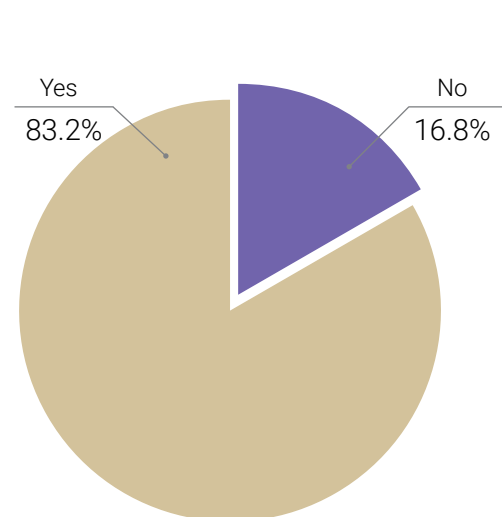


Figure 5. Disabled persons' organizations that have women with disabilities in the highest decision making body

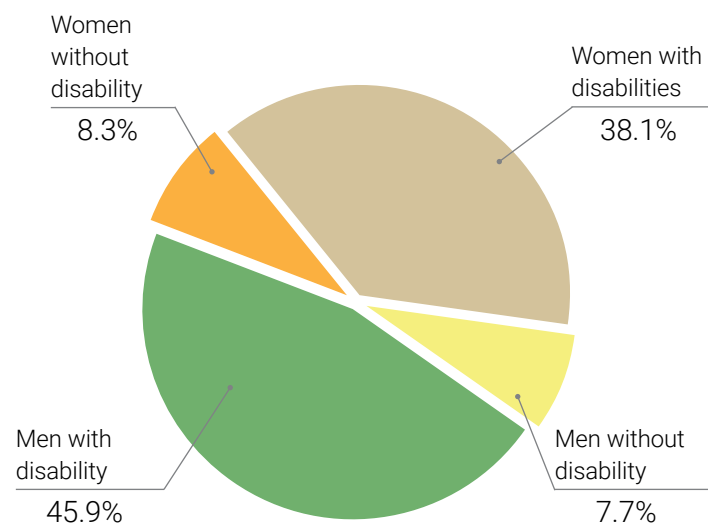


Figure 6. Representation of women and men in the highest decision making body

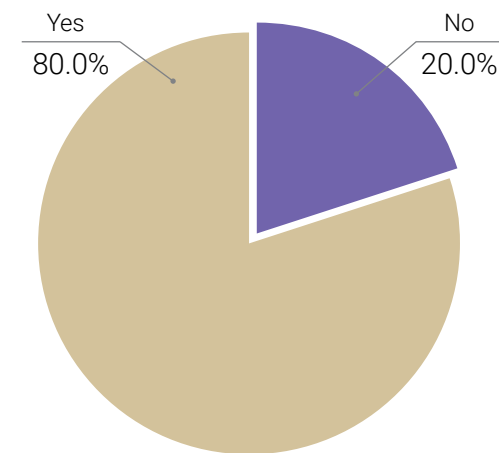


Figure 7. Disabled persons' organizations that have women with disability in the executive body

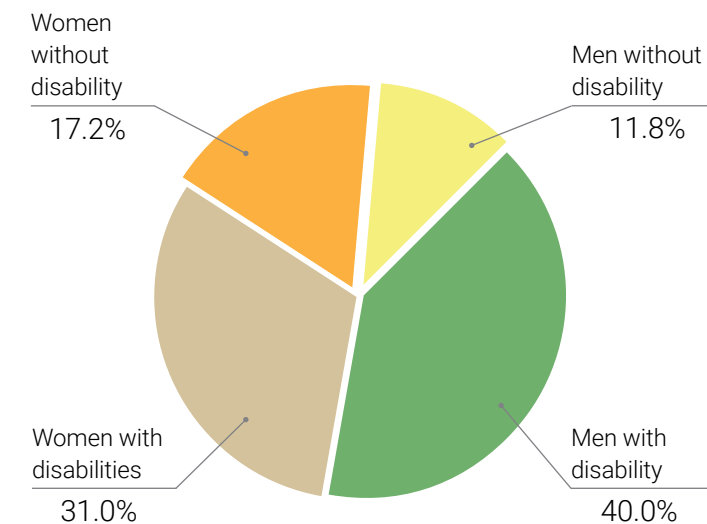


Figure 8. Representation of women and men in the executive body

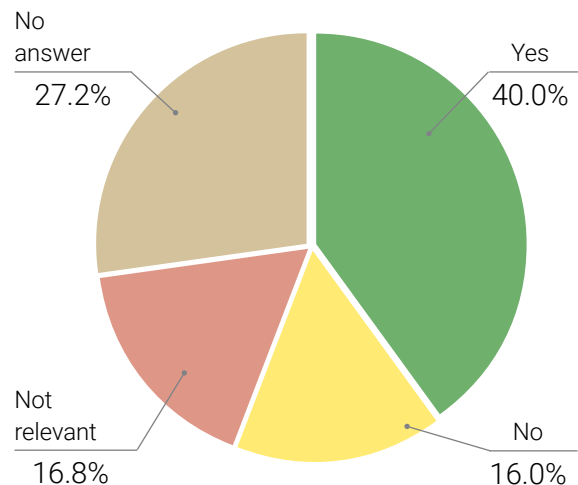


Figure 9. Percentage of disabled persons' organizations with women with disability in leadership bodies

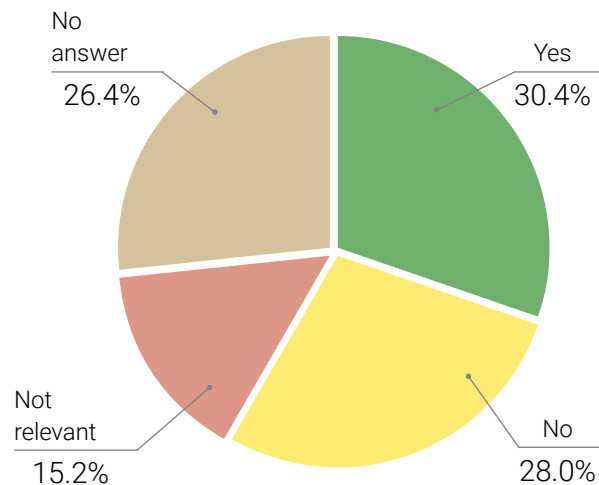


Figure 10. Percentage of disabled persons' organizations with women with disability in management positions

This data is somewhat questionable given that a great number of organisations did not give an answer or stated that for some reason the question was not relevant for them.²⁴ Still, we believe that this data can serve as an illustration of how accurate databases in organisations are, especially as the organisations were also asked about reasons for not having WwD in management positions.

The most frequent answer explaining the absence of WwD in management positions is lack of financial resources (20 organisations - 12.5%); it must be noted here that this reason is not quite clear, as, presumably, the lack of financial resources would also apply to other groups (men with and without disabilities). Next, 19 organisations (11.9%) stated that there was a lack of interest among women with disabilities:

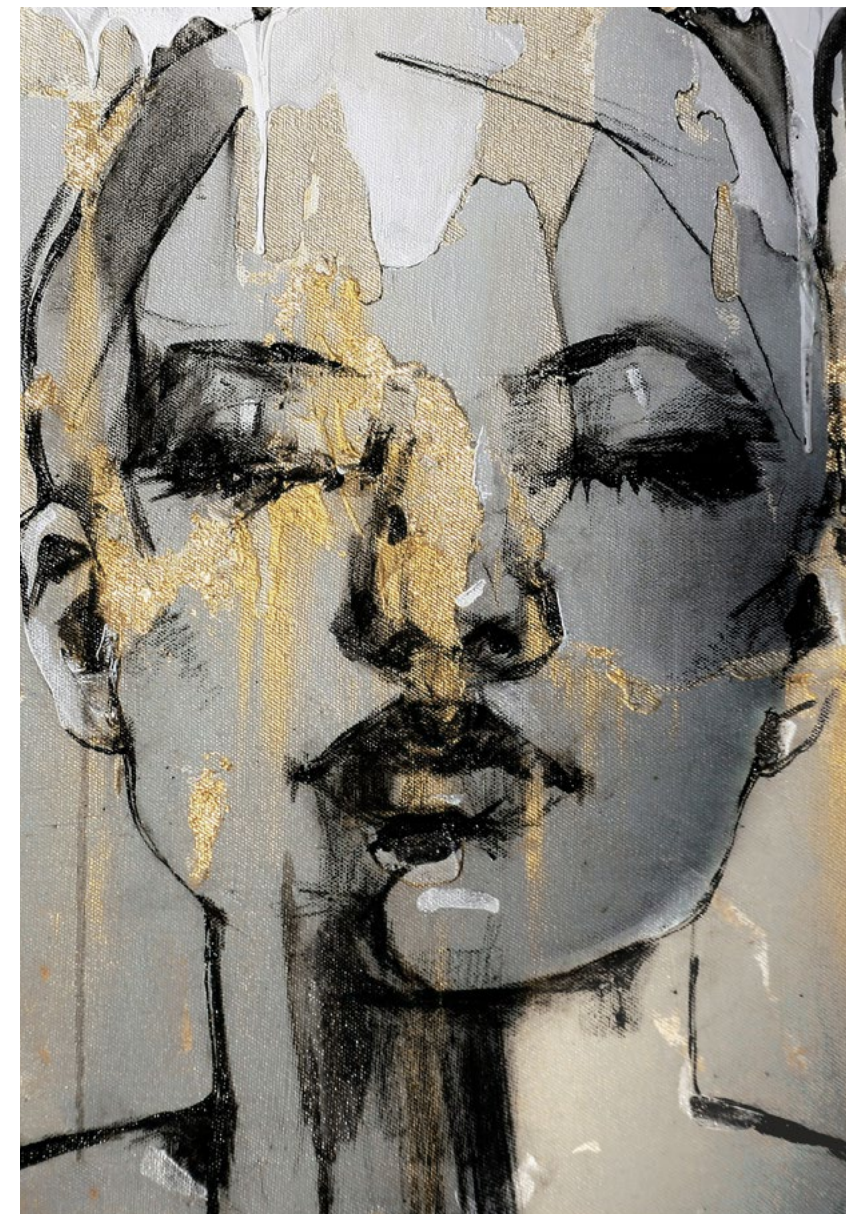
“Women with disabilities are disappointed with the current situation and are not motivated to be active”.

Eight organisations (5%) claimed that lack of adequate qualifications prevented them from hiring WwD. Lack of accessibility (physically inaccessible space or lack of other conditions guaranteeing access

to communication for visually or hearing-impaired persons) was noted by 5 organisations (3%) as important.

“Female members live outside the seat of the organisation, usually alone, without a vehicle and driving services available. They are practically unable to be professionally activated in any position” - a 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 a certain position (8 cases), lack of interest (4) and lack of adequate qualifications (3); other reasons include retirement, personal reasons, end of the term of office and similar.



²⁴ Which may mean that they do not have an executive/leadership body, that they do not have accurate records on the number of members in leadership bodies or management positions in the organisations in the last five years, that there were no WwD in these positions or that they have not understood the question properly.

4.3. Women with Disabilities in Women's Organisations

4.3.1. Profile of women organisations

By contrast to DPOs, only 17.1% of women's CSOs which answered the questionnaire exist for over 20 years; most of them (48.6%) have been operating between 10 and 20 years, 28.6% between 5 and 10 years and 5.7% for less than 5 years. This was to be expected given that women's movement in Serbia as such was established later then the DPOs.

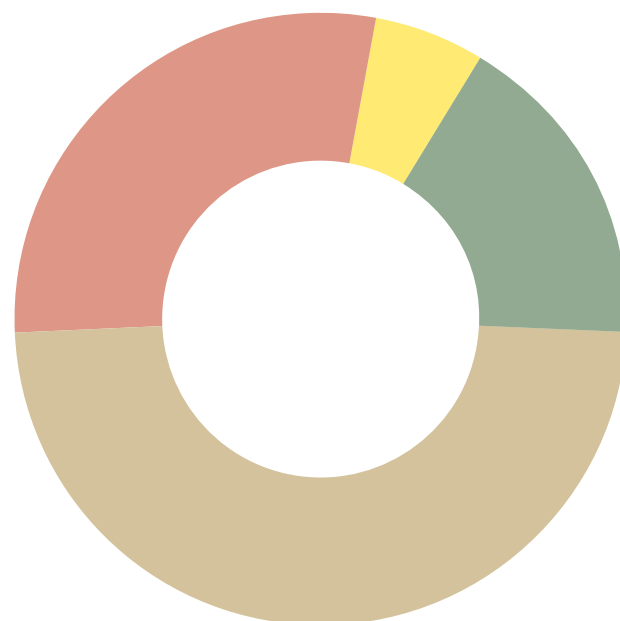


Figure 11. How long women civil society organization exists

In terms of activities, in 54.3% of women's CSOs the core field of activity is social services provision, of which 34.3% have that as their dominant activity. More specifically, 14.3% of women's CSOs provide services required for protection of women from violence including WwD at different scope levels, while 11.4% of women's

CSOs deal with humanitarian and health support to women, including WwD. Economic empowerment of women, including WwD, is part of the activity portfolio of 14.3% women's CSOs.

About 17.2% of organisations have informal education of women

(including WwD) in their portfolio, however, only 8.6% listed that as their dominant activity.

In comparison with DPOs, a slightly higher percentage of women's CSOs are engaged in some kind of advocacy activities: 28.6% in total have them as the dominant activity in their portfolio.

Activity	Dominant activity	Included, but not dominant	To a small degree	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 required for protection of 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

Table 2. Activities of the women's civil society organizations

4.3.2. General representation of women with disabilities in women's CSOs

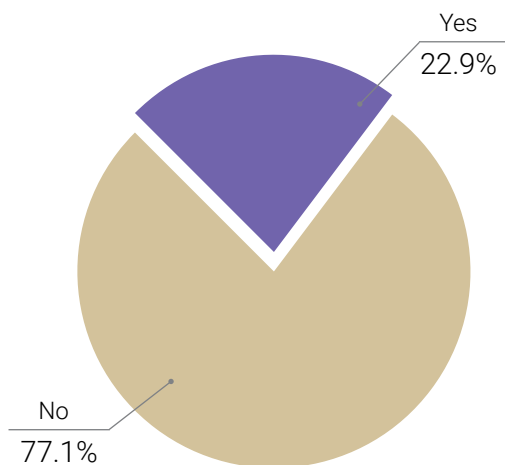


Figure 12. Percentage of women with disabilities who have been recognised as a specific target group in the constitutional documents of the women's civil society organizations

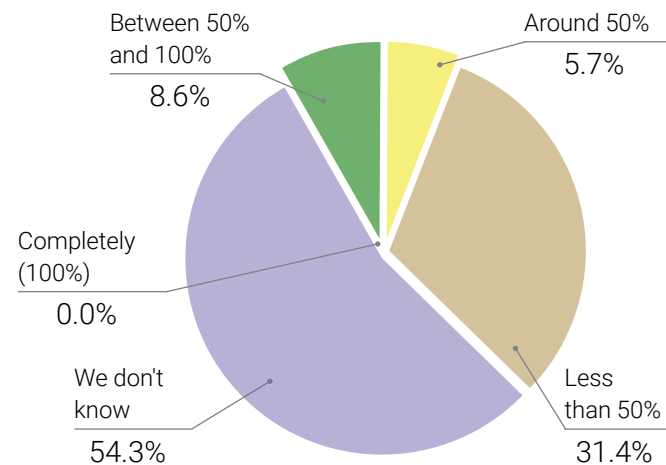


Figure 13. Percentage of women with disabilities as beneficiaries of the women's civil society organizations

Interestingly, women's CSOs mention women with disabilities in their articles of association (or mission statements and (or) strategic goals) in a slightly higher percentage than DPOs: 22.9% (compared to 15.2%). However, this could give a wrong impression as one should have in mind that, of the total number of active women's CSOs (129) only 35 responded to the questionnaire, while others said that they did not need to answer the questionnaire as they

were not dealing with WwD or did not answer at all.

On the other hand, more than half of organisations – as many as 54.3% - that responded to the questionnaire do not have the information on the percentage of women with disabilities as their beneficiaries. Out of the remaining number, 31.4% have less than 50%, 5.7% have around 50% and 8.6% have between 50 and 100% of WwD as their beneficiaries.

It seems that women's CSOs, while accepting women with disabilities as beneficiaries, are not strongly focused on their inclusion. The reason for that might partially be that WwD have, to a small degree, founded their own women's CSOs (there is only 1 of them which gathers WwD, but identifies itself as a women's CSO rather than a DPO, while other 4 organisations which gather WwD recognise themselves as DPOs).

Still, it would be interesting to find out more on the reasons for not recording WwD as beneficiaries or members in such a large percentage of respondent organisations. It would be all the more interesting to find out why a great number of women's CSOs do not recognise the need to include WwD in their organisations and activities.



4.3.3. Women with disabilities in decision-making bodies (positions)

In about 77% of women's CSOs that responded, assembly is the highest body (and, mostly, the board of trustees in the rest of them). Nevertheless, only 31.4% of

organisations 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 disabilities make up only 23.6% of the total number of members of the highest bodies.

When it comes to the representation in the executive body (which varies between the board of trustees, the coordinating board, executive board, presidency or other forms), women's

CSOs state that there are women with disabilities in 28.6% of these bodies.

Again, if we look at the structure, it shows that women with disabilities

make up only 6.9% of the total number of people in the executive bodies.

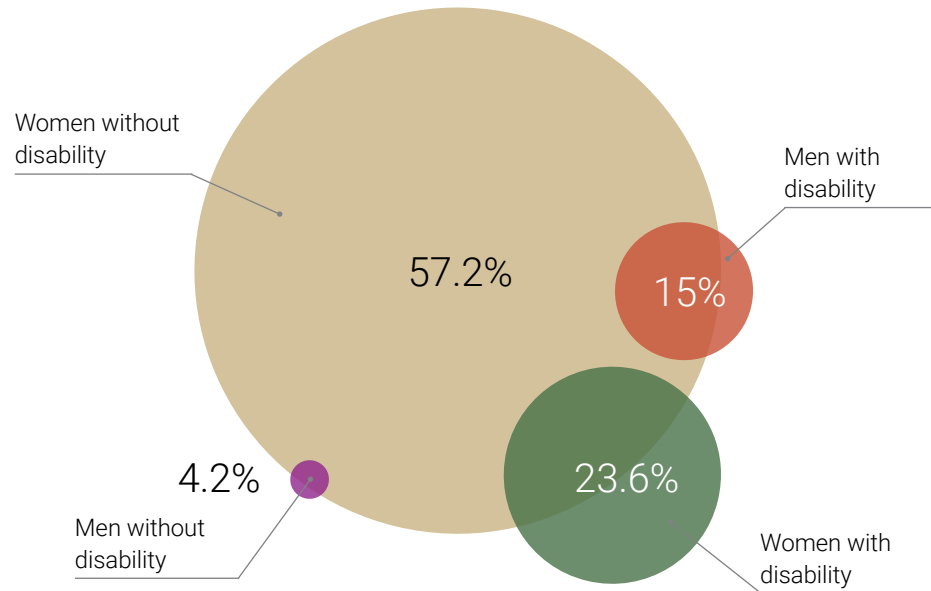


Figure 14. Representation of women and men in the highest decision making body of women's civil society organizations

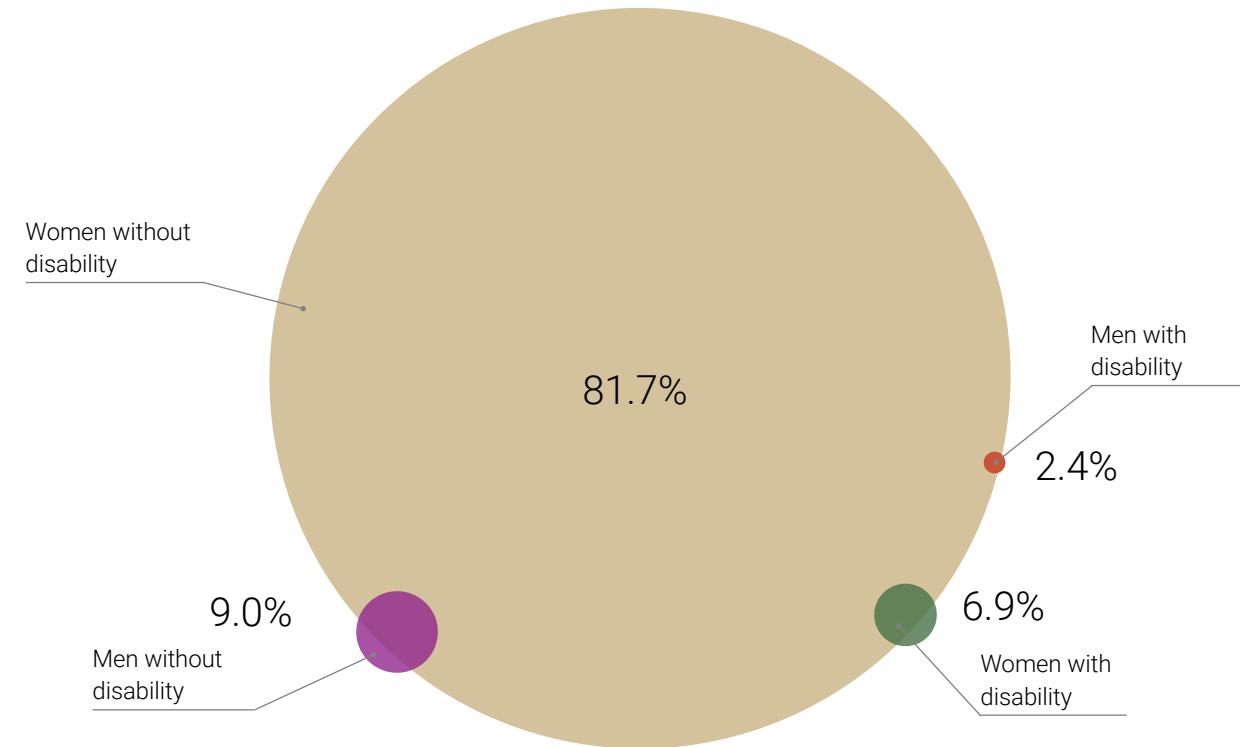


Figure 15. Representation of women and men in the executive body

As with DPOs, we also looked at two other sets of data: the percentage of women's CSOs that have or had women with disabilities in their executive or leadership bodies before, and the percentage of women's CSOs that have or had women with

disabilities in management positions *in the last five years*.

While again between 30% and 40% of organisations did not provide answers to those questions or claimed that it was not relevant for them, it is

indicative that, out of those that responded, 51.4% had no WwD in leadership or executive bodies and 57.1% had no WwD in management positions *in the last five years*.

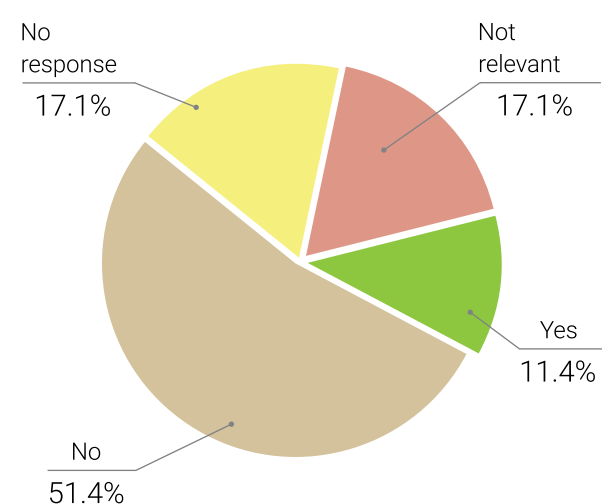


Figure 16. Percentage of women civil society organizations with women with disability in leadership bodies

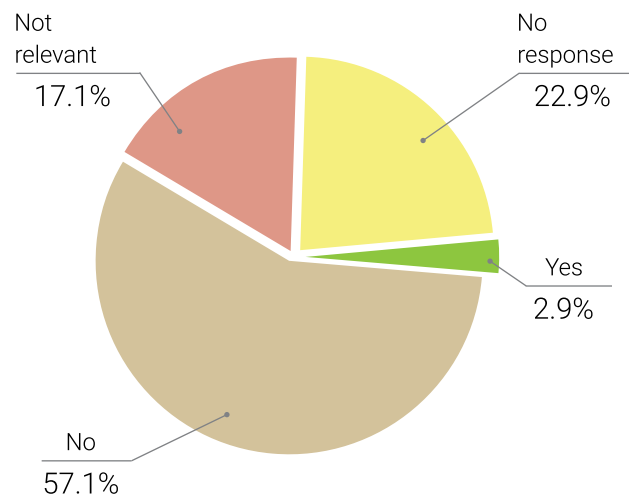


Figure 17. Percentage of women civil society organizations with women with disability in management positions

The predominant reason for not having WwD represented in management positions was lack of financial resources (11 organisations – 31.4%). Eight organisations (22.8%) stated accessibility constraints, both physical and those related to communication. The same number of organisations (22.8%) highlighted the lack of adequate qualifications of WwD, while a somewhat smaller percentage of organisations (6 organisations – 17.1%) believe that WwD are not interested in higher-ranking positions. Explaining their position, one organisation said that they had tried to get WwD employed but no one applied to their call, while another said that they had never actively tried to find any WwD to join their organisation. Another organisation claimed that they had some WwD engaged through public works,

“but after their completion none of them wanted to stay”²⁵

Some respondents believe that disability influences personal self-esteem and confidence, which they consider the reason that women with disabilities have difficulties accepting a 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 their homes”; “Women with disabilities hardly accept the responsibilities that leadership positions imply”; “We do not have any WwD as they are simply not interested in working. This is my personal experience and my personal stand.”

A very specific comment was given by one organisation that pointed out:

“Formally, we do not have WwD among us because some women do not want to declare themselves as women with disabilities and we respect it”.

It is important to note the comment coming from women with disabilities that responded to the survey which accurately reflects the relations between DPOs and other CSOs, including women's CSOs:

“The majority of other CSOs do not yet recognise the need to include WwD in various forms of social activism. WwD are still invisible to the majority of CSOs. Other CSOs talk about us but without us. I was personally invited many times by eminent CSOs to events organised in inaccessible venues. This makes me feel that WwD are invited only formally, without truly wanting to hear our voice.”

²⁵ Public works employ persons from the National Employment Office records for a short period of time (usually 4 months). After that period, these people are no longer employed and do not get any salary. If they want to stay on and work in an organisation they can do it only on a voluntary basis.

4.4. Women with Disabilities in Leadership Positions

4.4.1. Sample and general data

Data presented in the following sections are based on the answers of 58 respondents, which is 76% of the total identified number of women in leadership positions (76 WwD). Out of this number, 56 are in DPOs and only two women with disabilities are

from one-woman CSOs specifically gathering women with disabilities.

If we look at the *position*, the majority of respondents (53.5%) are serving as presidents, 17.2% as vice presidents and the same

percentage as secretaries of their organisation.²⁶ A minor percentage of women (6.9%) are directors or financial managers (3.5%). As almost all of them are from DPOs, it is important to note that the number of professional staff is still quite

limited in this type of organisations, as well as that governance and management positions are often mixed up in practice. This also means that presidents often act on a voluntary basis and yet they have broad authority. A more professional structure which involves directors is still quite rare among traditional DPOs. Persons in leadership positions in DPOs mostly work on a voluntary basis as their positions are not financed

by national or local authorities. The exceptions are national alliances of big diagnosis-related organisations (the blind, the deaf, persons with intellectual disability, muscular dystrophy, etc.) financed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans' and Social Affairs.

Looking at the age of WwD in leadership positions, it is noticeable that only 27.6% of women under 40

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

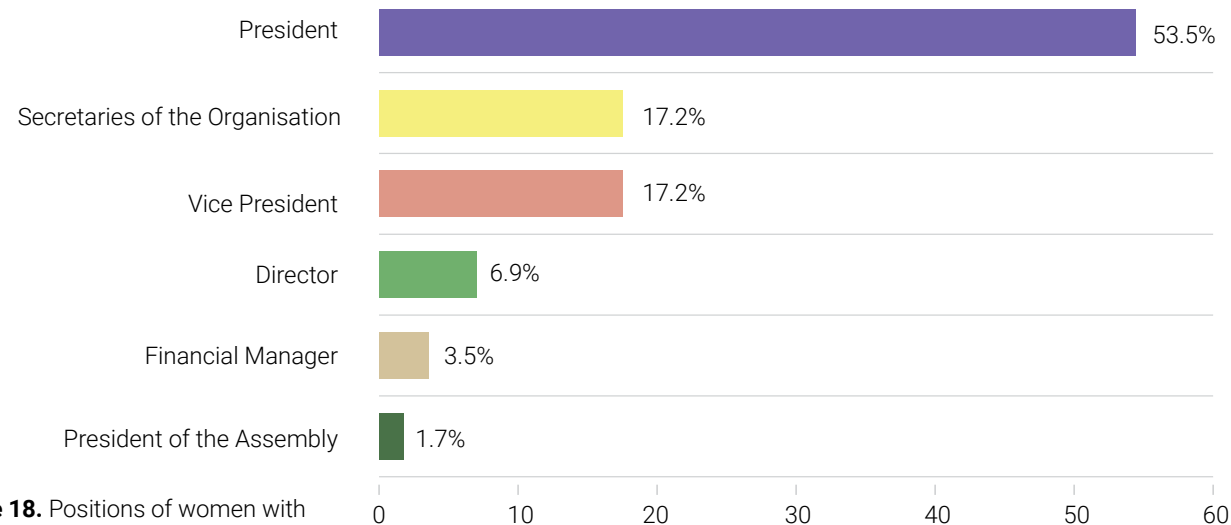


Figure 18. Positions of women with disabilities in leadership positions in civil society organizations

²⁶ While the ToR does not mention this function, it is included here because a number of DPOs still have this position as one of the major leadership positions within the organisation.

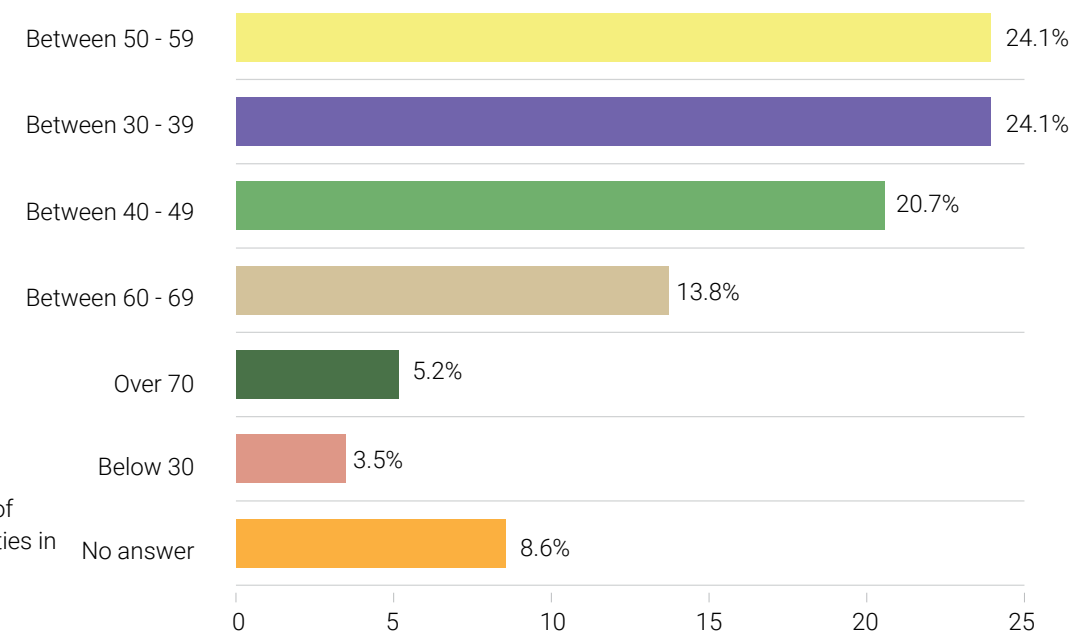


Figure 19. The age of women with disabilities in leadership positions

Regarding the type of disability of WwD leaders, the vast majority 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 largely corresponds to the existing PwD community structure in Serbia, segregated by type of disability.²⁷

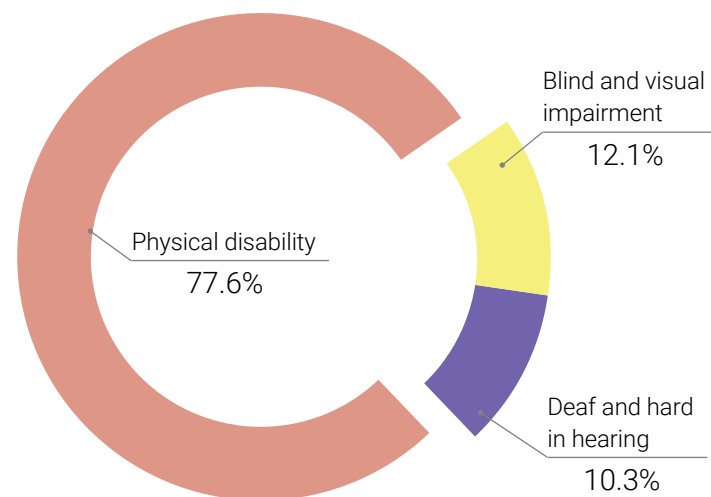


Figure 20. The type of disability among the women with disability leaders

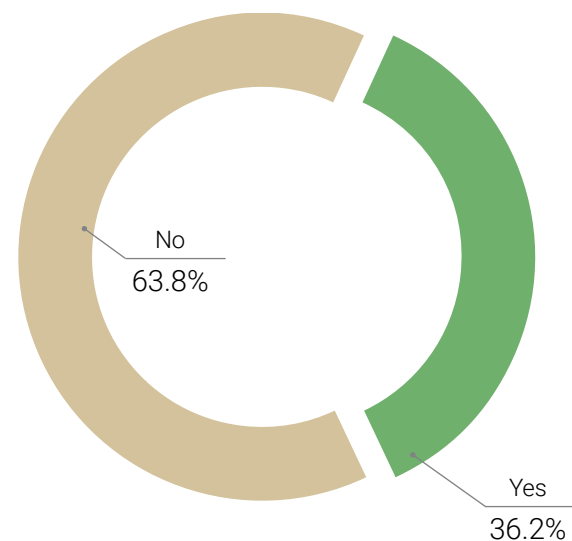


Figure 21. Percentage of women in leadership positions who are users of a wheelchair

²⁷ According to the 2011 census of the population in Serbia, 59.5 % are persons with walking and climbing difficulties, 41.9 % are persons with vision impairment and 25.3 % persons with hearing impairment. <http://popis2011.stat.rs/?p=2719>



4.4.2. Qualifications and working experience

A total of 37.9% of women with disabilities serving in leadership positions have some level of post-secondary education. A variety of professions are present among them: economists, lawyers, teachers and professors, journalists, psychologists and pedagogy experts, medical doctors, etc. Still, it is indicative that over half of the respondents actually have a secondary school degree. As for informal education, as many as 46.6% of women attended

more than 10 trainings while 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 proposal writing, public relations and communication skills, disability awareness trainings, public advocacy, social services provision trainings, human and women's rights trainings and training on upgrading particular skills such as computer literacy, English language, bookkeeping etc.

However, it is obvious that there was no systematic approach in the training practices. The importance of additional education was highlighted by almost all women, and, according to the respondents, specific, comprehensive CSO leadership and management training is much needed. 54.4% of women with disabilities who filled in the questionnaire had either not yet had any informal education or they had participated in very few such activities.

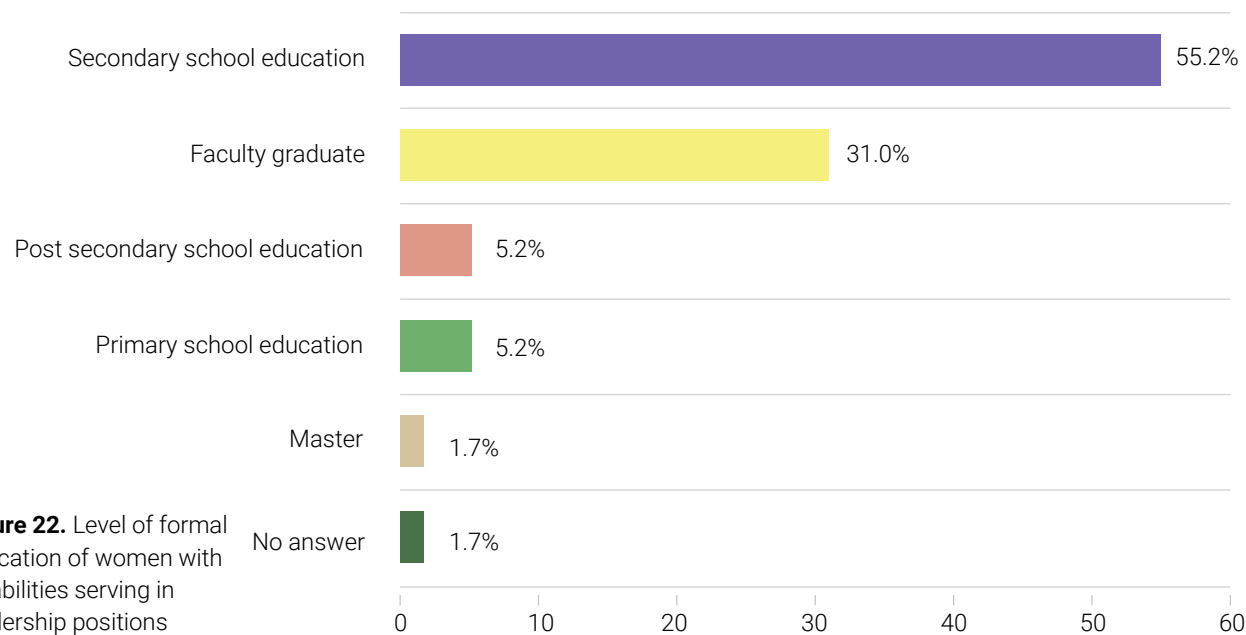


Figure 22. Level of formal education of women with disabilities serving in leadership positions

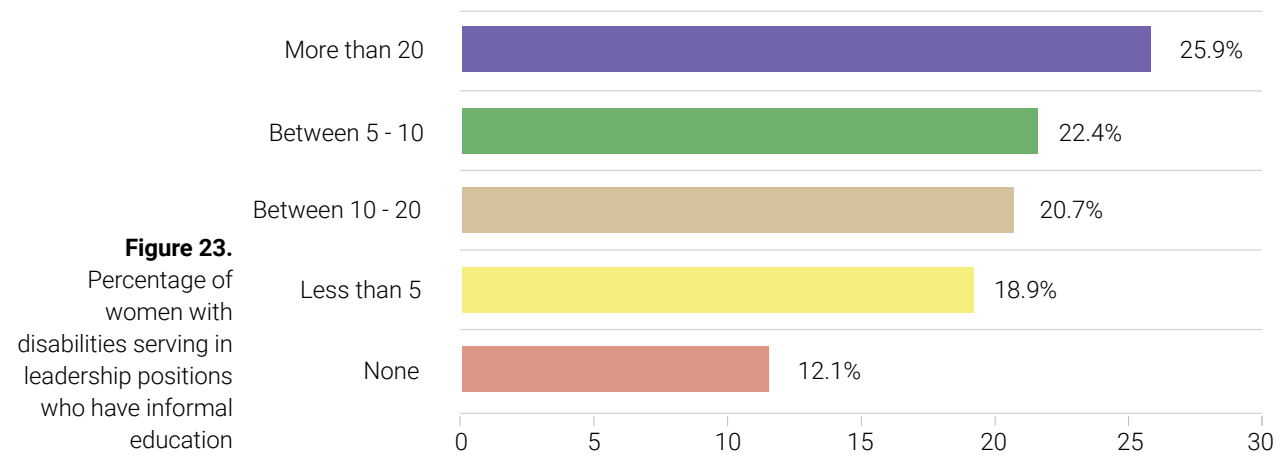


Figure 23. Percentage of women with disabilities serving in leadership positions who have informal education

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 languages. In terms of computer literacy, 20.7% of women

do not use computers, while 53.4% have basic knowledge, and only about one in four (25.9%) has advanced computer skills. Social networks are much more used (74.1% claim that they use social networks as a

communication channel). However, it would be interesting to explore further if social networks are also used for professional purposes.

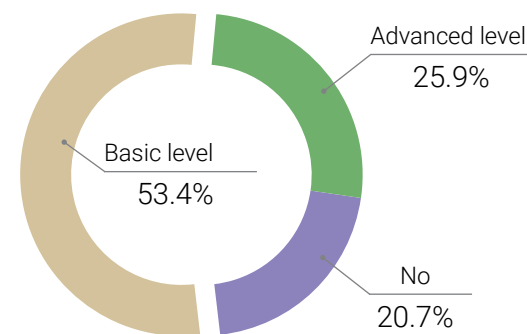


Figure 24. Computer skills of the women with disabilities serving in leadership positions

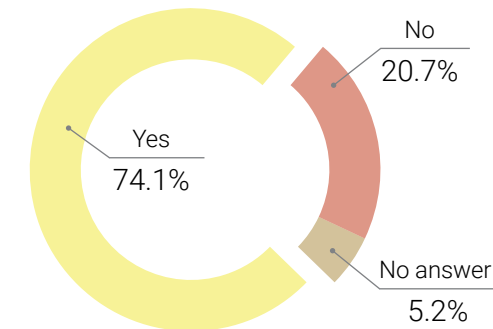


Figure 25. Percentage of women leaders with disabilities who use social networks

The assessment demonstrates that women with disabilities in leadership positions in general have an extensive working experience. The majority (25.9%) have between 10 and 20 years of experience, closely followed by those who have been working for

between 5 and 10 years (24.1) and those that have been working for 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.

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

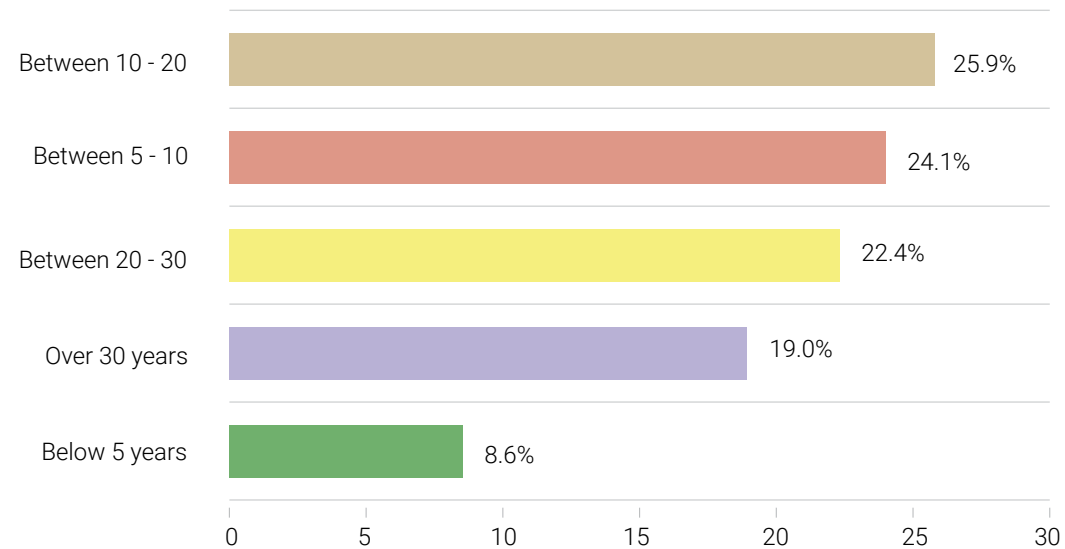


Figure 26. Total working experience of the women with disabilities serving in leadership positions

4.4.3. Career development – contributing factors and challenges

The CIL explored the main challenges of women with disabilities on 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 reached the leadership position. In 50% of the cases they responded that personal engagement and activism enabled their advancement.

Some of the answers from focus groups and interviews clarified this as follows:

“Without a personal attitude, activism and dedication, I would never have reached 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 man in order to be treated equally. As we take on a leading position, we usually have to apply men’s principles in order to get supported and accepted by them”.

Interestingly, 46.6% of women claimed that they had 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 a governance or executive body appoints or confirms the decision on someone’s advancement. This interpretation brings us back 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 organisation, while they usually retain positions that are more highly regarded and visible and have a higher level of decision-making authority.”

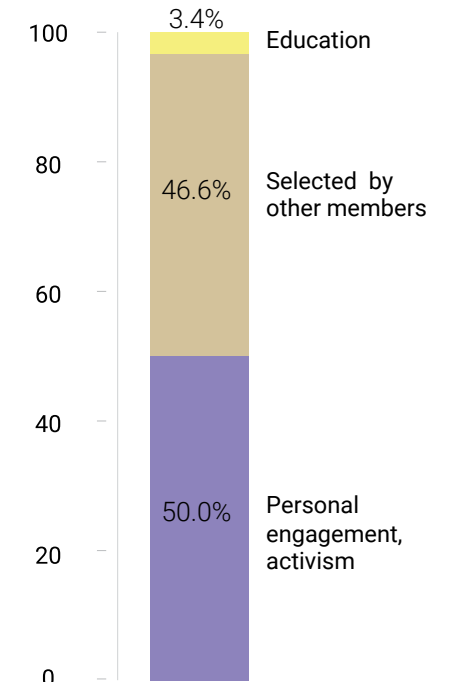


Figure 27. How women with disabilities reached the leadership position

It has to be also kept in mind that usually some of the leadership positions are unpaid or underpaid, so the situations in which women are “pushed” to accept them are not rare.

It is also indicative that education and qualifications are recognised as paths to advancement in only 3.4% of interviewed women. When this issue was raised in the group discussion, it was obvious that, while women do not question the importance of education and qualification, they do not find it crucial for career advancement.

Comments from the group discussion and interviews illustrate and clarify this position:

“We may lack top-level education, but we can’t take any recognised role in the organisation without a proven history of activism. Activism makes a difference. We need to be women-warriors in order to succeed.”

It seems that a combination of strong activism, acceptance and recognition by other organisation members and education are recognised 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 which factors contributed or helped them reach leadership positions,²⁸ women again identified:

- activism (32 answers);
- knowledge and experience (25 answers);
- professionalism and hard work (22 answers);
- perseverance (19 answers);
- cooperation or ability to cooperate well with others (8 answers);
- communication skills (3).

When identifying challenges or obstacles they faced on their personal path to advancement, with a possibility of identifying multiple factors, women pointed out the following challenges:

■ **atmosphere within the organisation** (34.5%), this was described as lack of trust, unsupportive internal relations, lack of interest and responsibility of other members, poor teamwork etc. The balance between individual career goals and relations among people in the organisation was pointed out as crucial for effective acting in the leadership position.

■ **Physical and other communication barriers** are noted as a challenge faced by 20.7% WwD. Women commented:

“getting from point A to point B; accessible transport is not available; inaccessible office and public space; I live out of town; our office is not fully functional from the perspective of its adjustment to my needs; due to the type of disability I have, people cannot understand what I am saying.”

²⁸ Allowing multiple answers.

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 the focus group, this was confirmed and clarified by a comment of one of the participants:

“We are, unconsciously ignoring constrains in order to normalise them”.

In other words, women do acknowledge this as a challenge, but they do not expect the society’s help in resolving it - they are trying to overcome that by themselves. Once they have solved the problems, they no longer count them as a challenge for other women who were not in a position to overcome the physical and communication barriers.

■ **Discrimination and stereotypes** were recognised as challenges personally faced by 17.2% of women. Comments on discrimination they faced were quite general, without specific illustrations or examples. Women in

focus groups and interviews noted this might be a consequence of the low level of self-confidence and self-esteem. They commented that

“Women with disabilities still blame themselves for many things they face, not recognising 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 unable to recognise discrimination.”

■ **Lack of qualifications** was recognised by 10.3% of women, which corresponds to the earlier finding that they do not consider it as a crucial factor for advancement.

■ **Lack of support services** was recognised by only 6.9% of women, which was quite surprising and interesting, given that support services assist in overcoming physical, communication and other barriers.

Women that participated in the group discussion or in-depth interviews stated that the ‘independent living’ concept had not yet become a dominant approach. Consequently, PwD, including women, still believe that they have to rely on themselves and families, instead of counting on (or demanding) support from the society and the state. Among them, services, including the most important one - personal assistance - were recognised as one of the crucial for everyday functioning of the WwD:

“Personal assistance is the starting point for all of us. I would not be able to function and do anything without it”; “The use of the speaking programme and assistance tools for the blind and people with visual impairment, as well as psychological support programmes for PwD and their families are crucial for us.”²⁹

Not seeing the bigger picture might be the reason why only 6.9% women with disabilities recognise the lack of support services as a one of the barriers to taking senior positions in organisations.

²⁹ Participants in the group discussion were WwD who were wheelchair users or blind and they all came to the focus group with their personal assistants. In spite of that, they said that they did not list the lack of support services as a problem in the questionnaire because they had already resolved it, as they had their personal assistants. It was only during the discussion that they recognised this as one of the main barriers to being an active leader and taking a leadership position.

Yet another approach was used as women were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements which describe their attitude towards various factors that might cause challenges or obstacles to their advancement. In answering these statements, 58.6% of women stated that they **disagreed** that their disability made achieving leadership position more difficult and 67.2% stated they **disagreed** that gender made achieving leadership positions more difficult. It must be noted that responses presented in

the table were intensively discussed in the focus group and women who participated commented on the answers in different ways. One of the explanations offered was that:

“Disability itself is not necessarily an 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 the social model of disability and were not focusing on their disability, but on the barriers and challenges in their environment and the society. We should bear in mind that many other WwD are not aware of the social model of disability and see their disability as the main obstacle to being active. It is also interesting that 81.0% women do not recognise discrimination on the ground of gender.

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

Table 3. The attitudes of women with disabilities serving in leadership positions towards various factors that might cause challenges or obstacles to their advancement

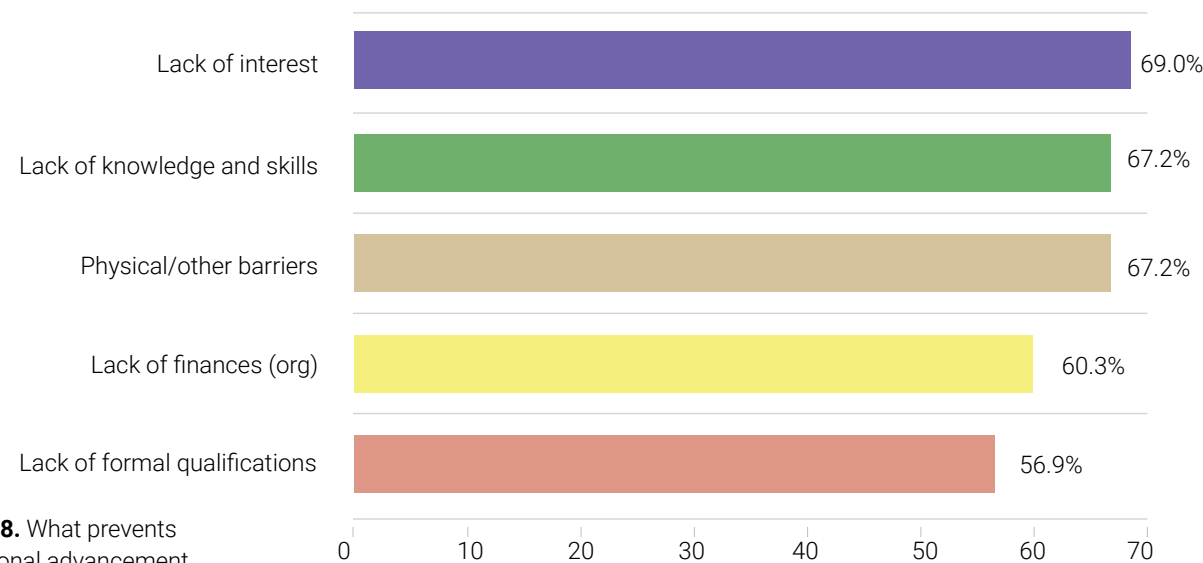


Figure 28. What prevents professional advancement of women with disabilities

At the same time, when asked about attitudes in the organisations, 67.2% said that they recognised disability-based discrimination and 53.4% said that they recognised the gender-based one.

Additionally, when asked what prevents professional advancement of women with disabilities, a large percentage of women checked almost all the offered answers, with minor variations. While the lack of interest was recognised as an important obstacle, as well as the lack of knowledge and skills, it is interesting that physical or other barriers were generally recognised as an obstacle by

67.2% of women, while only 20.7% of them recognised that as an obstacle in their own professional advancement.

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

themselves rather than the society and (or) the environment.

The interviewed women commented that:

“Women with disabilities demand the impossible of themselves. Some of us have never fully accepted our own disability, as well as the consequences that disability brings to our lives. We are used to living with numerous barriers, even ignoring the existence of discrimination just in order to keep going forward.”

4.4.4. Capacity development and training needs

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

Women with disabilities already in leadership positions were asked what could help in their professional advancement, with multiple answers allowed.

Their answers can be grouped into three main areas:

■ Motivation, active engagement, perseverance

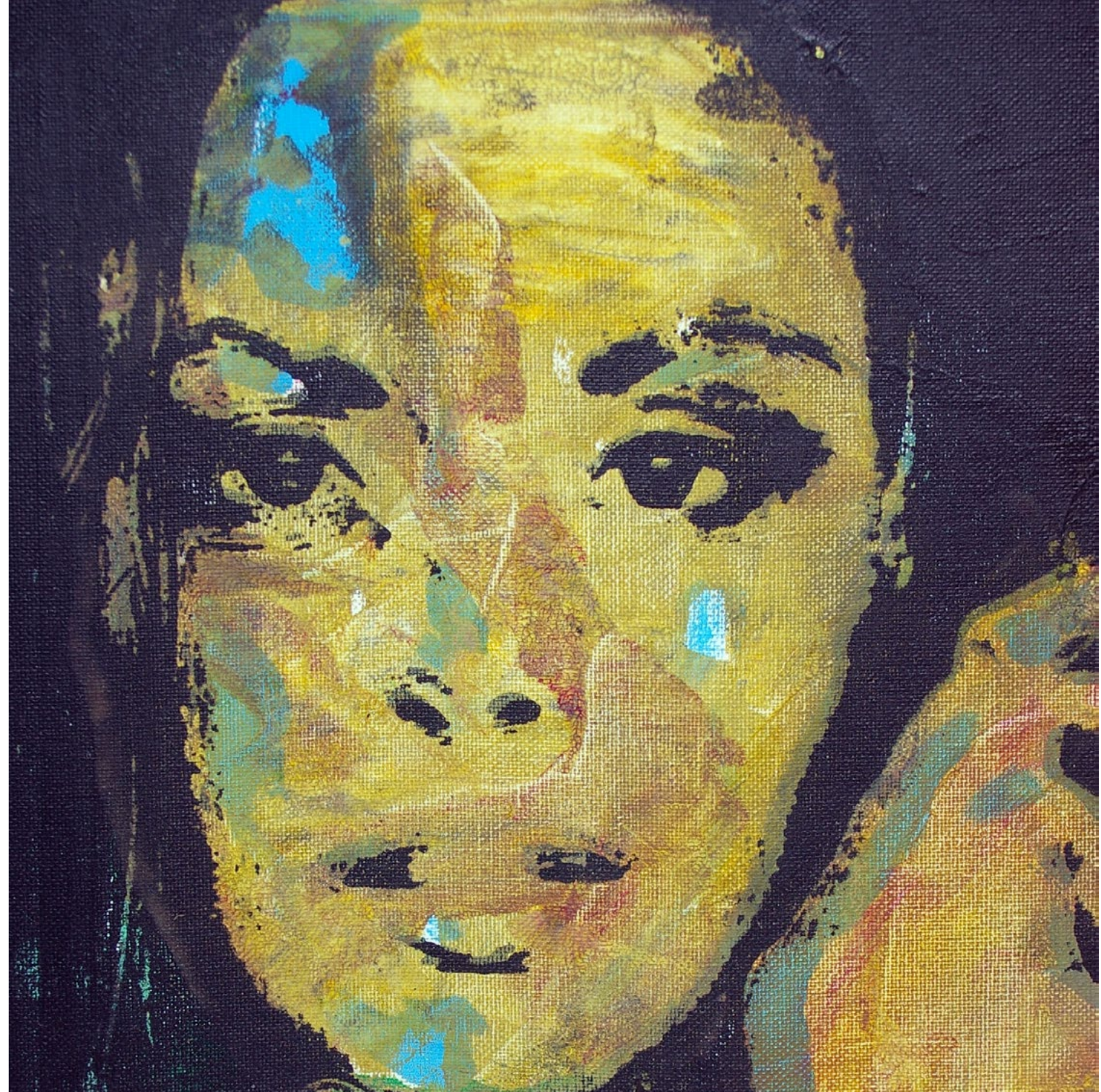
36.2% chose one or two of these answers; while slightly different, they all point in the similar direction, which is actually building a base of motivated and persistent activists, whose motivation will come from believing in themselves, their abilities and their right to be treated equally and having their values recognised.

■ 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 (external services and those in the family)

31% chose one of these two answers, which again slightly differs from the individual answers on what the obstacles achieving leadership position were (6.9%); in this part, women pointed out the need for having 'a support network' both in the environment (society) as well as in their families.



In terms of specific knowledge and skills that they need, the graph below shows all the identified areas. While organisational management is the topic that was recognised by

the largest percentage of women (86.2%), it is interesting to note that knowledge on the rights of people with disabilities (74.1%); speaking in public 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.

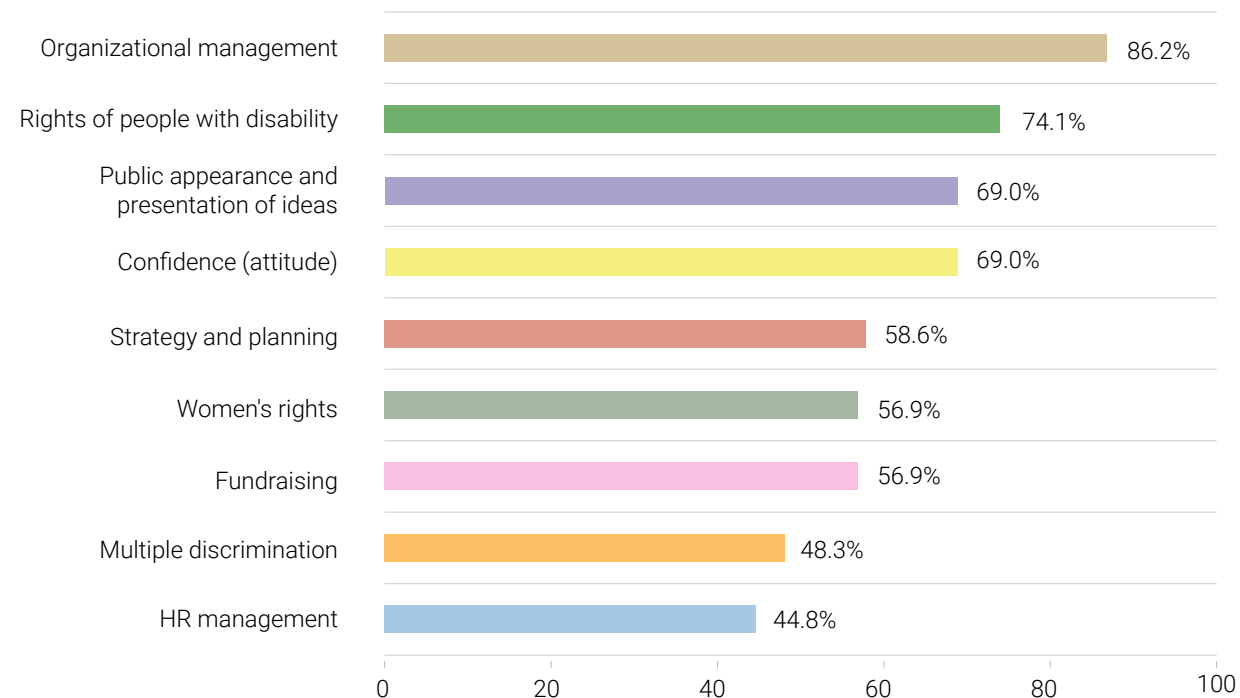


Figure 29. What knowledge or skills are missing and could help in professional advancement of women with disabilities

These results (both the answers on what can help and identifying specific areas) actually confirm a number of findings and observations presented in the previous sections,

pointing out that there are three different directions in which a systematic capacity building should be designed:

1

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

2

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

3

Organisational management skills. This includes skills from general management to strategy, planning, HR, fundraising. However, this should be viewed as the third and final layer, because, if undertaken without the 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 for and achieve leadership positions.

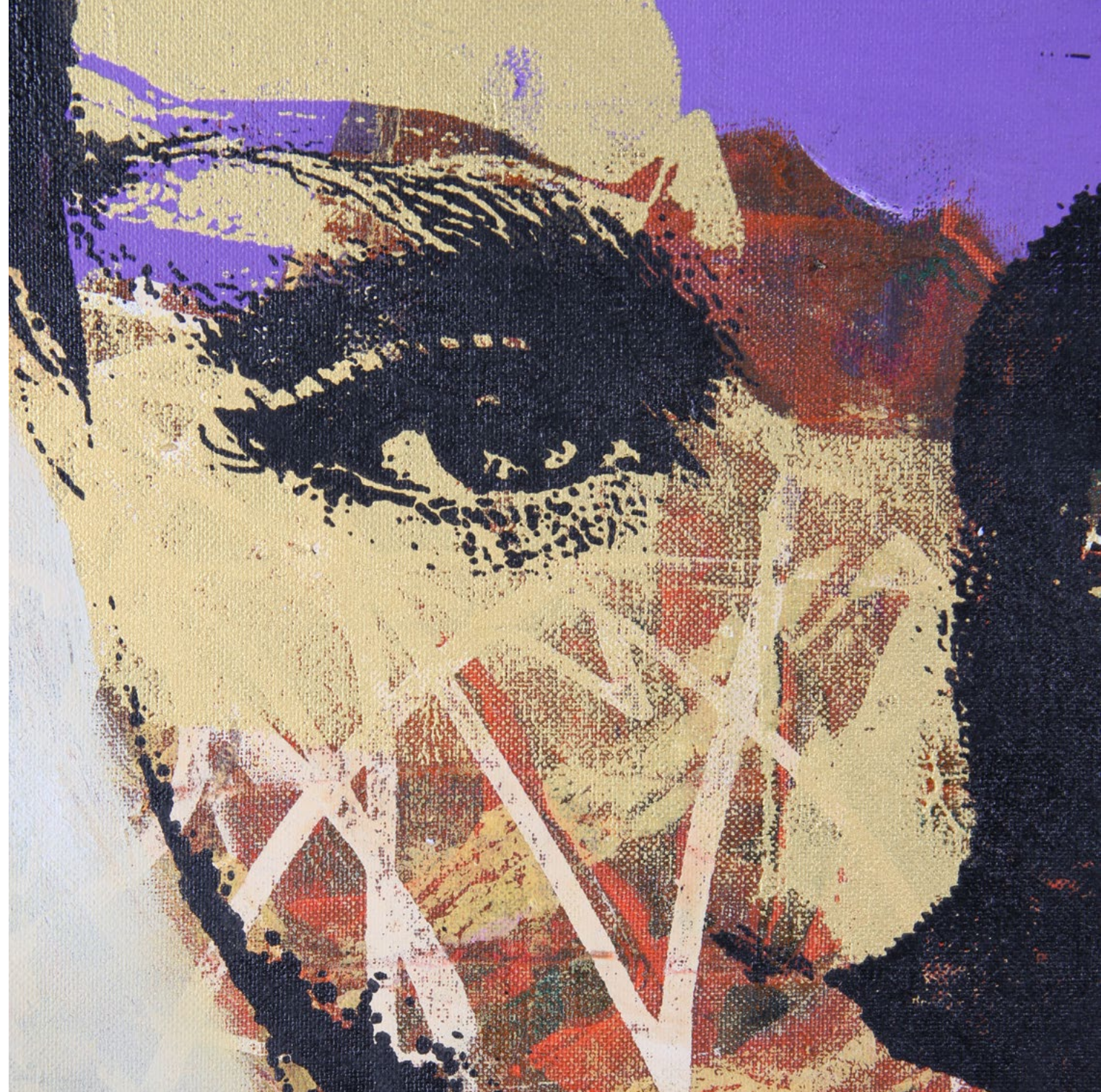
5 CONCLUSIONS

» Interest, readiness and openness of identified DPOs and women's CSOs to deal with the mapping of the position of women with disabilities in top management positions was expressed, but to a much lower degree than expected. The stereotype on "who has the right to hold the power" might be among other factors that could have influenced this. Even some prominent civil society organisations hardly recognised the topic of the research as a priority and a high importance one. On the other hand, however, the majority of women with disabilities in leadership positions were eager to share their experiences and, on top of that, were interested in supporting the actions in that regard.

» Due to the fact that the majority of DPOs were established over 20 years ago, there are indications that the traditional approach is still the dominant style of operation, structuring and decision-making. These organisations are usually established according to the type of disability, being more focused on helping their disabled members rather than implementing the 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 organisations is still very poorly recognised, both in their organisation's constitutional documents (articles of associations, or mission statements and (or) strategic

goals), but in practice as well. The transition process to becoming modern, effective and efficient organisations appears to be a huge challenge for the majority of them. More capacity building interventions on the governance, management, operational and gender-mainstreaming level are required. In addition to that, there are indications that the organisation databases are not always accurate, so they do not give a true picture of the situation in the organisations.

» Social services are still the dominant type of activities provided by the DPOs. The most frequent services mostly include humanitarian and health support, economic empowerment, informal



education, while providing services for protection of 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 solitary attempts at putting the women with disabilities specifically in the focus, have been identified as a growing group of activities. Nonetheless, both the service provision and advocacy actions need improvements related to the scope, practice and effects achieved.

- » The representation of women with disabilities in the DPOs' governance and executive bodies is rather low and unequal compared to that of men. The DPOs' top decision-making bodies (assembly) include 38% of women with disabilities, while in the executive bodies (the board of trustees, the executive board, the presidency) women make up 31% of the total number of participating persons. Explaining the rationale for this situation, many of respondents stated that the disabled women were not interested in such positions. This might mean that, again, stereotypes are in place, as well as "blaming" women without an insight into the deeper causes

of such behaviour. Nevertheless, this research clearly identified that women with disabilities needed much more initial support, encouragement, education and appropriate services in order to be able to reach senior management positions.

- » Within the practices of women's CSOs, women with disabilities are recognised as a target group in their documents in a slightly higher percentage than within DPOs. At the same time, however, more than half of these organisations do not have the information on the percentage of women with disabilities as their beneficiaries. These results might give a wrong impression as the questionnaire was filled in by a very small number of women's CSOs (27.1%), usually dealing with women from other vulnerable groups. The representation of women with disabilities is very poor and, specifically in management positions, it is less than 3%. Although financial and accessibility constraints were noted, it would be worth finding out more on the reasons why the women's CSOs in their current practices do not recognise women with disabilities as a specific group and explore opportunities for their closer

cooperation with DPOs on the topic of WwD, or support their promotion to management positions.

- » A total of 76 women with disabilities were identified as holders of senior positions in DPOs and women's CSOs. A vast majority of them are active in DPOs, with only two in women's CSOs. Out of the sample of 58 women with disabilities who responded to the individual questionnaire, over 70% are serving as presidents and vice presidents and a minor percentage of them are professional directors and financial managers. In general, the number of professional staff is still quite limited and, in practice, governance and management positions are often mixed up with a lot of volunteering.
- » The WwD leadership structure makeup is rather misbalanced from the age perspective. Women under 30 are included in a negligible percentage; while, on the other hand, more than 60% of women are over 40 years old. Therefore, it is clear that active measures aiming at encouraging new, younger women are needed, including motivation, additional skills and knowledge and support services. The extensive working experience that a vast majority

of women have could serve as an opportunity for a mentorship programme for the 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 from secondary schools. Informal education plays a very important role in capacity building of WwD in leadership positions. A 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. A comprehensive and focused, tailored training programme could considerably help there.
- » While looking at career development and the factors that enabled women with disabilities to reach leadership and management positions, some specifics are clearly identified. A combination of strong activism and acceptance and recognition by other organisation members were identified by the majority of respondents as ways to reach leadership positions. A special

emphasis is put on activism and dedication as highly valued factors within DPOs.

- » Challenges and obstacles that WwD faced on their personal path to advancement primarily relate to the type of organisational culture, the system of internal shared support, teamwork standards and working atmosphere. The need for balancing work with internal relations within the organisation is strongly emphasized. Other interesting factors, such as cases of discrimination, physical and other barriers, level of support services and adequacy of qualifications have been identified as well, but their importance has not been valued as the most critical.
- » Based on the current status of deficient capacities of WwD in leadership and management positions and the needs to strengthen the existing and future WwD leaders, a systematic capacity-building programme should focus on:
 - a) awareness of the 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 speaking and presentation skills in combination with psychological support in building confidence; c) organisational management skills that include skills from general management to strategy, planning, HR, fundraising.

Building the 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 only way of helping women with disabilities achieve leadership positions.

- » Finally, there is a strong need to motivate women with disabilities to be actively involved in the their organisations' operation and to develop their will and ambition to take up senior leadership positions.

