

TRAINING WORKSHOP REPORT

Strengthening the
Leadership and Advocacy
Capacities of Women with
Disabilities in Rwanda to
Advance the EVAWG
Movement



4 - 5 June, 2025
Saint La Famille, Kigali Rwanda



Funded by
the European Union

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Training Objectives
- 3 Participants profile
- 4 Proceedings
Day 1
Day2
- 5 Training evaluation
- 6 Lessons Learnt, Best Practices and Recommendations
- 7 Annexes

1. INTRODUCTION

Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA), in collaboration with the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW), is implementing the UN Trust Fund-funded project, **INCLUSIVE AND EMPOWERED FEMINIST MOVEMENTS TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**. The project seeks to strengthen the leadership, collective voice and meaningful participation of women and girls with disabilities in movements and decision-making processes aimed at ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG). It also addresses the persistent exclusion of women with disabilities from mainstream feminist and EVAWG movements, despite their heightened exposure to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence.

In Rwanda, women and girls with disabilities continue to face barriers to leadership, advocacy and meaningful participation. These include stigma and discrimination, inaccessible information and meeting spaces, limited access to leadership opportunities, inadequate representation within decision-making structures, and insufficient recognition of their lived experiences in policies and programmes addressing violence against women and girls. These barriers restrict their ability to influence decisions, contribute to the EVAWG movement and hold duty-bearers accountable at grassroots, national and continental levels.

Against this background, DIWA organized a two-day capacity-strengthening workshop on 4–5 June 2025 at Saint La Famille in Kigali, Rwanda. The workshop brought together women with disabilities from diverse backgrounds and impairment groups. It aimed to strengthen their knowledge, confidence and practical skills in feminist leadership, advocacy, movement-building and engagement with relevant policy and accountability mechanisms. The workshop also created a platform for participants to share experiences, build solidarity and establish a supportive network for sustained collective advocacy beyond the project period.

TRAINING METHODOLOGY

The workshop employed a participatory, inclusive and learner-centred methodology to ensure that knowledge was not only presented but also understood, discussed and connected to participants' lived experiences. Trainers facilitated interactive presentations and group discussions, creating an open and respectful environment in which participants could raise questions, share feedback, exchange experiences and propose practical solutions to the barriers affecting women and girls with disabilities.

Pre- and post-training assessments were administered to measure changes in participants' knowledge and understanding. PowerPoint presentations and other accessible training materials supported the delivery of the sessions, while comprehensive evaluation forms gathered participants' feedback on the relevance, accessibility and effectiveness of the training.

A dedicated WhatsApp group was established to support continued communication, networking, information-sharing and mutual support after the workshop. Collectively, these methods promoted active participation, strengthened peer learning and solidarity, and enabled participants to identify practical ways of applying the knowledge and skills gained within their organisations, communities and the wider EVAWG movement.

2. TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The overall learning goal of the workshop was to strengthen participants' knowledge, confidence and practical capacity to engage in disability rights, gender equality and ending violence against women and girls within a human rights framework. The training also sought to equip participants to apply relevant national, continental and international human rights instruments in their leadership and advocacy work.

Specifically, the workshop aimed to enable participants to:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of disability as a social construct and human rights issue.
- Strengthen their understanding of gender, equality, equity and inclusion through disability and intersectionality lenses.
- Examine the different forms of violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities, including the ways in which gender, disability and other identities increase exposure to violence and discrimination.
- Analyse existing VAWG referral pathways and identify barriers that prevent women and girls with disabilities from reporting violence and accessing appropriate support services.
- Deepen their knowledge of national, continental and international women's rights, disability rights and VAWG-related instruments and their application within local and national contexts.
- Acquire practical leadership and advocacy skills for influencing policies, programmes and decisions addressing violence against women and girls with disabilities.
- Design effective and disability-inclusive advocacy campaigns that promote the rights, safety, dignity and well-being of women and girls with disabilities.
- Strengthen networking, solidarity and collective action among women with disabilities and their organisations within the wider EAWG movement.

3. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The workshop brought together 20 women with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. Participant selection intentionally reflected different impairment groups and lived experiences to ensure that the training was inclusive and informed by multiple perspectives. Participants included three women from the Deaf community, two women of short stature, two women with visual impairments, one woman with epilepsy, one woman with an intellectual disability, eight women with physical disabilities, one woman with a psychosocial disability and one woman from the refugee community.

This diverse representation enriched the discussions by enabling participants to share how disability intersects with gender, displacement and other personal and social factors to shape experiences of discrimination, exclusion and violence. The inclusive selection process demonstrated the project's commitment to reaching women who are frequently marginalised within mainstream disability, feminist and EAWG movements and ensuring that their voices inform advocacy priorities and strategies.



Photo: snapshot of some of the participants during the workshop

4. PROCEEDINGS

4.1. Day One Sessions

The first day focused on building participants' foundational knowledge of the project and the national, continental and international frameworks that can be used to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities and strengthen disability-inclusive advocacy on ending violence against women and girls.

4.1.1. OVERVIEW OF THE INCLUSIVE AND EMPOWERED FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

The opening presentation was delivered by Virginia, DIWA Programmes Manager. She introduced the Inclusive and Empowered Feminist Movements to End Violence Against Women and Girls Project, including DIWA's mission and vision, the purpose of the project, its expected results and the key strategies and activities planned for implementation.

The presentation explained that the project seeks to strengthen the meaningful participation, leadership and collective advocacy of women and girls with disabilities within the EVAWG movement in East and

Southern Africa. It also aims to address their continued exclusion from mainstream feminist, women's rights and disability movements.

This session helped participants understand the broader context of DIWA's work and how the knowledge and skills acquired through the training would contribute to achieving the project's objectives. Participants were encouraged to view themselves not only as beneficiaries of the project but also as advocates and movement leaders responsible for influencing change within their communities, organisations and decision-making spaces.

4.1.2. INTERNATIONAL AND CONTINENTAL FRAMEWORKS RELATED TO VAWG

Participants were introduced to key international and continental human rights instruments and policy frameworks relevant to women and girls with disabilities. The session demonstrated how these instruments can be used to advocate for legal and policy reforms, improved services, government accountability and the meaningful inclusion of women with disabilities in EVAWG interventions.

4.1.3 MAPUTO PROTOCOL

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, commonly known as the Maputo Protocol, was presented as a legally binding regional instrument that provides comprehensive protection for women's rights in Africa.

Particular attention was given to Article 23, which provides special protection for women with disabilities. Other relevant provisions included Article 4 on the rights to life, integrity and security of the person; Article 5 on the

elimination of harmful practices; and Article 14 on health and reproductive rights.

Participants discussed how these provisions can be used to demand protection from violence, access to justice, accessible health and support services, and the inclusion of women with disabilities in laws, policies and programmes. The session strengthened participants' understanding of the Protocol as a practical advocacy and accountability tool rather than merely a legal document.

4.1.4 CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was presented as a key international human rights treaty that defines discrimination against women and establishes obligations for states to eliminate it in all its forms.

The presentation highlighted state obligations to incorporate gender equality into national laws and policies, establish institutions that protect women's rights, eliminate discriminatory practices and ensure women's equal

participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.

Participants reflected on the importance of applying CEDAW through an intersectional disability lens. They noted that advocacy and reporting under CEDAW must make visible the specific discrimination and violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities, including barriers to justice, healthcare, education, employment and political participation.

4.1.5. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The presentation introduced the Sustainable Development Goals as a global framework for inclusive and sustainable development. Particular attention was given to Goal 5 on gender equality and the commitment to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Participants were reminded that gender equality and disability inclusion cut across the entire 2030 Agenda. The principle of leaving no

one behind requires governments and development actors to address the barriers experienced by women and girls with disabilities.

Advocates were encouraged to use the SDGs to call for disability-inclusive EAWG programmes, accessible services, meaningful participation and the collection of gender- and disability-disaggregated data to monitor progress.

4.1.6. BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was presented as a major global policy framework for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Adopted in 1995, it identifies 12 critical areas of concern, including violence against women, women's health, education, economic participation and involvement in decision-making.

The Beijing+30 review process in 2025 was highlighted as an important advocacy opportunity for assessing government progress and ensuring that the experiences and priorities

of women and girls with disabilities are reflected in national, regional and global discussions.

Participants were introduced to DIWA's regional report, *Powerful Yet Overlooked*, as an evidence-based advocacy resource that documents the leadership experiences, contributions and barriers faced by women with disabilities in Africa. They were encouraged to use the report to strengthen advocacy messages and influence the Beijing+30 review process.

4.1.7. AFRICAN UNION CONVENTION ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

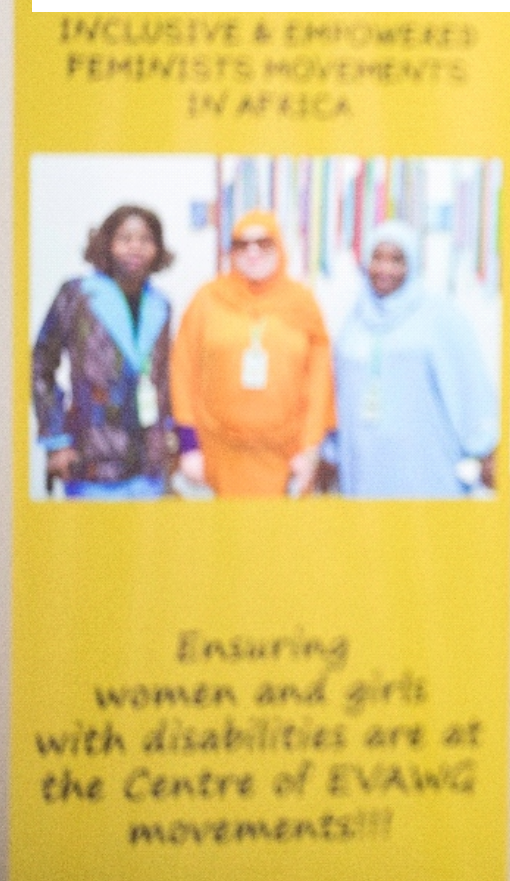


Photo: BUKOMBE Annet delivering a presentation on policy frameworks in Rwanda

Virginia facilitated a dedicated session on the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU-CEVAWG). The session aimed to strengthen the knowledge and advocacy capacity of women with disabilities and representatives of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities regarding the Convention and its potential to advance the rights and protection of women and girls with disabilities across Africa.

Participants received a detailed overview of the Convention, including its objectives, scope and relevance to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. Adopted by the African Union in February 2025, the Convention represents an important continental legal instrument for strengthening state accountability and harmonising efforts to prevent, prohibit and eliminate violence against women and girls.

The discussion examined both the opportunities presented by the Convention and the need to ensure that its interpretation and implementation adequately address the distinct and intersecting forms of violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities. Participants highlighted the

importance of accessible prevention programmes, reporting mechanisms, protection services, justice systems and survivor-centred responses.

Ratification, domestication, implementation and monitoring of the Convention were identified as important advocacy priorities. Participants recognised that the adoption of the Convention was only an initial step and that sustained advocacy would be required to encourage governments to sign and ratify it, align national laws and policies with its provisions, allocate adequate resources and establish effective accountability mechanisms.

The session also prepared participants for DIWA's planned engagement with the African Union. DIWA intended to support women with disabilities from Rwanda to participate in activities connected to the signing of the Convention's memorandum and to contribute to a side event on AU-CEVAWG. This engagement was expected to increase the visibility of women with disabilities and ensure that their experiences, priorities and recommendations informed continental dialogue on the Convention's implementation.

4.1.8. National Legal and Policy Frameworks on GBV in Rwanda

Annet Bukombe, Project Manager at the Organization of Women with Disabilities for Health Promotion and Development (OWDHD), delivered a presentation on Rwanda's legal, policy and institutional framework for preventing and responding to gender-based violence. The session helped participants understand the protections available to survivors and identify opportunities for strengthening the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in Rwanda's GBV prevention and response systems

4.1.8.1 CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE PROTECTIONS

The presentation highlighted constitutional provisions that provide a foundation for promoting gender equality and protecting women and girls from violence and discrimination. These included Article 10 on equality between women and men, Article 16 on protection from discrimination, Article 18 on the right to physical and mental integrity, and Article 26, which prohibits and penalises gender-based violence.

Participants were also introduced to key national legislation, including Law No. 59/2008 on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence. The law defines different forms of GBV and provides a legal basis for holding perpetrators accountable and protecting survivors. The Penal Code and national disability legislation were also discussed, particularly their provisions criminalising sexual violence and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities.

The National GBV Policy was presented as an important framework for coordinating prevention, protection, response and accountability. Participants discussed the importance of ensuring that the implementation of these laws and policies addresses the specific risks, communication requirements and accessibility needs of women and girls with diverse disabilities.

4.1.8.2 INSTITUTIONAL GBV RESPONSE MECHANISMS

The presentation outlined the principal institutions and mechanisms responsible for responding to GBV in Rwanda. These included Isange One Stop Centres, which provide integrated medical, psychosocial, legal and protection services to survivors of violence.

The role of Rwanda Investigation Bureau officers and specialised GBV investigation structures was explained, particularly in receiving complaints, collecting evidence and investigating reported cases. Maison d'Accès à la Justice was highlighted for providing decentralised legal information and assistance, especially to people who may otherwise struggle to access formal legal services. Gender desks within relevant institutions were also discussed as mechanisms for strengthening the responsiveness of the security and justice sectors to GBV cases.

Participants recognised the importance of clear and accessible referral pathways connecting survivors to health facilities, police and investigation services, legal assistance, psychosocial support and safe protection services. They emphasised that these mechanisms must provide reasonable accommodation and information in accessible formats to ensure that women with diverse disabilities can use them independently, safely and confidentially.

4.1.8.4 OPPORTUNITIES AND CALL TO ACTION

The session concluded with a call for disability rights to be systematically integrated into all GBV laws, policies, programmes and services. Participants emphasised the need to train police officers, investigators, healthcare workers, judicial officers, social workers and other duty-bearers on disability inclusion, accessible communication and survivor-centred approaches.

Additional priorities included strengthening disability-inclusive data collection, improving accessibility across the GBV referral pathway, expanding legal and psychosocial support in rural communities, and involving women with disabilities and their representative organisations in the design, implementation and monitoring of GBV interventions.

The presentation further highlighted the importance of investing in the feminist leadership of women with disabilities and supporting their meaningful participation in policy dialogue and accountability processes. Participants were encouraged to use the existing legal and policy framework to demand effective implementation, monitor government commitments and advocate for GBV systems that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the lived realities of all women and girls with disabilities.



Photo: Ruth Mkutumula making a presentation on the models of Disability

4.1.9. PRESENTATION ON ADVOCACY PRESENTATION: RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADVOCATES FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES: BY RUTH MKUTUMULA AND VIRGINIA MZUZU

The session emphasised advocacy as a powerful tool through which Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) can influence laws, policies, institutional practices and public attitudes. Participants

discussed how advocacy can amplify the voices of women with disabilities, increase awareness of the violence and discrimination they experience, and hold governments and other duty-bearers

Different forms of advocacy were presented, including:

Individual or self-advocacy

Supporting individuals to understand, express and defend their own rights, needs and choices.

Group or systems advocacy

Collective action aimed at influencing institutions, policies, laws and systems that affect women and girls with disabilities.

Activism

Visible public action intended to mobilise support, challenge injustice and demand social or political change.

Lobbying

Direct engagement with legislators, policymakers and other decision-makers to influence particular laws, policies, budgets or administrative decisions.

The session demonstrated that these approaches can be used independently or together, depending on the advocacy goal, intended audience and political context.

4.1.9.1 ADVOCACY METHODS AND TOOLS

Participants explored both traditional and digital advocacy methods. Traditional approaches included policy dialogue, community mobilisation, public campaigns, stakeholder meetings, petitions, media engagement, position papers and direct engagement with policymakers.

Digital advocacy strategies included using social media campaigns, targeted messages, online petitions, action alerts, click-to-call tools, legislator lookups, event-registration platforms, online fundraising, text messaging and Facebook lead advertisements. Participants discussed how digital platforms can help advocates reach wider audiences, mobilise supporters and communicate quickly with decision-makers.

The session also highlighted the need to make digital advocacy accessible to people with diverse disabilities. Online content should use clear language, captions, alternative text for images, accessible documents and formats that are compatible with assistive technologies. Advocates were also reminded to consider informed consent, confidentiality, data protection and survivor safety when sharing stories or information about violence.

Overall, the session equipped participants with a practical understanding of advocacy principles, approaches and tools that they could use to advance the rights of women and girls with disabilities and strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to violence.

4.1.9.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADVOCATES WORKING TO END VAWG

The presentation outlined the responsibilities of advocates working to end violence against women and girls with disabilities. Advocates were encouraged to:

Campaign for the enactment, review and effective implementation of laws and policies that explicitly protect women and girls with disabilities from all forms of gender-based violence.

Monitor government implementation of relevant human rights instruments and contribute to treaty-body reporting processes, including those under CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Conduct information and awareness campaigns at community and national levels to challenge stigma, harmful beliefs and discriminatory practices.

Build alliances with women's rights organisations, feminist movements, OPDs, human rights institutions, service providers and other relevant stakeholders.

Engage national governments, the African Union and regional and international human rights bodies to promote compliance with existing legal and policy commitments.

Promote disability-inclusive GBV prevention, reporting, referral, protection, justice and survivor-support systems.

Ensure that survivors receive accessible information on their rights, available services, safe reporting options and referral pathways.

Promote research and the collection of gender- and disability-disaggregated data to improve understanding of the prevalence, causes and patterns of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

Document and share promising practices in disability-inclusive GBV prevention and response.

Participants were reminded that advocacy involving survivors must follow a survivor-centred and “do no harm” approach. Survivors' dignity, safety, informed consent, confidentiality and personal choices must be respected throughout documentation, storytelling, public campaigning and engagement with authorities.

4.1.9.3 ENGAGEMENT WITH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

The session introduced participants to opportunities for engaging the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. Possible approaches included submitting complaints or communications, participating in state-reporting and review processes, engaging relevant special mechanisms, contributing information to thematic studies, advocating for the development or adoption of general comments, and supporting strategic litigation where appropriate.

Participants learned that these mechanisms can be used to draw attention to violations, seek accountability, clarify state obligations and advance legal standards protecting women and girls with disabilities. Effective engagement, however, requires strong documentation, credible evidence, knowledge of applicable procedures and collaboration with experienced human rights organisations and legal practitioners.

4.1.9.4 MOVEMENT-BUILDING AND COLLABORATION

The session concluded by emphasising that sustained change cannot be achieved by individual advocates or organisations working in isolation. Strong collaboration among organisations of women with disabilities, broader OPDs, feminist and women's rights movements, human rights organisations, government institutions and African Union bodies is essential for building collective influence.

Movement-building enables advocates to share evidence and resources, coordinate messages, reach wider constituencies and present stronger collective demands. Participants were therefore encouraged to build solidarity across movements while ensuring that women with disabilities lead and meaningfully participate in decisions affecting their rights and lives.



Photo: Virginia making a presentation on VAWG

4.1.10. BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND A STRONG PERSONAL BRAND FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

The session focused on the importance of self-confidence and personal branding in strengthening leadership and advocacy. Participants learned that confidence enables leaders to communicate their ideas clearly, make difficult decisions, engage with authority, receive feedback constructively and remain committed to their advocacy goals in the face of resistance.

The facilitator explained that confidence should be supported by knowledge, skills, experience and personal integrity. A strong personal brand was described as the clear and consistent way in which an advocate communicates her identity, values, expertise and contribution. Participants were encouraged to identify their strengths, define the issues for which they wanted to be recognised and communicate their messages with clarity and consistency.

This discussion was particularly relevant to women with disabilities, who frequently encounter stereotypes that question their competence and leadership potential. The session encouraged participants to recognise their knowledge and lived experience as valuable sources of leadership and expertise. It further emphasised that women with disabilities should not have to prove their worth

because of discriminatory attitudes; institutions and movements also have a responsibility to remove the structural barriers that undermine their participation.

Participants worked in groups to examine the factors affecting the confidence, leadership and meaningful participation of women and girls with disabilities in EVAWG spaces in Rwanda. The discussions were guided by the following questions:

1. What should be done to strengthen the confidence and leadership of women and girls with disabilities in EVAWG spaces?
2. What barriers prevent women and girls with disabilities from taking up leadership roles?
3. What barriers limit their inclusion as advocates within the EVAWG movement, and how can these barriers be addressed?
4. What personal experiences have hindered participants' progress as leaders?
- 5.

The group work enabled participants to connect the content of the presentations with their lived experiences and to develop practical recommendations for strengthening

4.1.10.1 STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING CONFIDENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Participants proposed a combination of individual, organisational and structural interventions. Mentorship was identified as a particularly important strategy. Experienced women leaders with disabilities could provide guidance, encouragement, peer support and positive role-modelling to emerging advocates.

Participants also recommended documenting and amplifying the success stories of women and girls with disabilities who are already leading change. Increased visibility would challenge negative stereotypes, demonstrate the diversity of effective leadership and encourage other women with disabilities to take up leadership roles.

Ensuring accessibility within EVAWG spaces

was identified as equally important. Participants stressed that confidence cannot be strengthened through personal development alone while meeting venues, information, communication systems and decision-making processes remain inaccessible. Leadership initiatives should therefore provide reasonable accommodation and address physical, communication, digital, financial and attitudinal barriers.

Other proposed strategies included leadership and public-speaking training, political participation support, accessible information, peer networks, economic empowerment and the deliberate inclusion of women with disabilities in committees, panels and decision-making structures.

4.1.10.2 PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP BARRIERS

The discussions created a safe space for participants to share personal experiences of exclusion and discrimination. One woman of short stature explained:

“One of my biggest leadership challenges has been how people perceive me before I even speak. Many times, people see my height before they see my ideas or abilities. I have been spoken to like a child, ignored in meetings, or asked questions that have nothing to do with my work simply because of how I look.”

She further described how inaccessible facilities affected her participation:

“From microphones placed too high to chairs or podiums that are not adjustable, I have felt invisible in spaces where I was supposed to lead. What has hurt the most is being underestimated, not only by strangers but sometimes even by people within my own advocacy circles. There is a belief that leadership 'looks' a certain way. I have had to work twice as hard to be taken seriously.”

Her experience demonstrated how attitudinal and environmental barriers reinforce one another. She also identified expensive and inaccessible transportation and the limited availability of accessible materials as barriers to sustained participation.

Another participant, a Deaf woman who contested for a parliamentary seat in 2024, shared:

“Among the challenges I faced were accessibility, lack of a sufficient budget, and inadequate support from fellow women and girls with disabilities and the wider disability movement. These challenges contributed to my not winning the position.”

Her experience highlighted the importance of accessible political processes, adequate campaign resources and solidarity within both the disability and women's rights movements. It also demonstrated that encouraging women with disabilities to seek leadership positions must be accompanied by practical, financial and institutional support.

4.1.10.3 KEY BARRIERS IDENTIFIED

Participants grouped the barriers affecting the leadership and advocacy of women and girls with disabilities into five broad categories:

- **Environmental barriers:** Inaccessible buildings, meeting venues and transportation limit access to essential services and participation in public decision-making. Participants noted that many public offices, hospitals and schools lack ramps, lifts, accessible sanitation facilities and other necessary accommodations. Public transportation also remains largely inaccessible.
- **Attitudinal barriers:** Negative stereotypes, stigma and discriminatory assumptions continue to portray women with disabilities as dependent, incapable or unsuitable for leadership and employment. Such attitudes result in women being ignored, infantilised or excluded from opportunities despite their abilities and experience.
- **Communication and information barriers:** The limited availability of sign-language interpretation in police stations, hospitals, courts and public meetings prevents Deaf women from accessing services, justice and decision-making spaces. A shortage of Braille, large-print, easy-to-read and screen-reader-compatible materials also restricts access to information, education and advocacy opportunities.
- **Institutional barriers:** Women with disabilities remain underrepresented in local councils, Parliament, committees and other governance structures. Policies and programmes are often developed without their meaningful participation and may therefore fail to respond to their specific rights, risks and support requirements.
- **Internal and psychosocial barriers:** Fear, low confidence, limited self-awareness and hesitancy to speak publicly were identified as barriers for some women with disabilities. Participants recognised that these challenges are often the result of long-term discrimination, exclusion and environments that discourage women with disabilities from pursuing leadership opportunities. They should therefore not be treated merely as individual weaknesses.

4.2

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Based on the barriers identified, participants recommended:

- Establishing mentorship and peer-support programmes led by experienced women leaders with disabilities.
- Providing accessible leadership, advocacy, public-speaking and political-participation training.
- Ensuring that EVAWG platforms, information, meetings and services are accessible to women with diverse disabilities.
- Providing reasonable accommodation, including sign-language interpretation, accessible materials, adjustable furniture and disability-inclusive transportation support.
- Increasing the representation of women with disabilities in public institutions, political structures and EVAWG decision-making bodies.
- Allocating adequate financial and technical resources to women with disabilities seeking leadership or political positions.
- Challenging discriminatory beliefs through sustained public awareness and positive representation of women with disabilities as leaders.
- Strengthening solidarity among organisations of women with disabilities, the wider disability movement and feminist and women's rights organisations.
- Creating safe spaces in which women with disabilities can share experiences, build confidence and develop collective advocacy strategies.

The session concluded that confidence and personal leadership development are important, but they must be accompanied by structural change. Meaningful leadership will be achieved when women with disabilities have confidence and skills while institutions, movements and communities remove the barriers that prevent them from participating and influencing decisions on an equal basis.



5.

ACTION PLANNING



The two-day training concluded with an action-planning session through which participants translated the knowledge and skills gained into practical commitments. Using a structured action-planning form provided by the facilitators, each participant identified the activities she intended to undertake, including what would be done, when it would be implemented, where it would take place and the stakeholders or groups to be engaged.

Participants committed to conducting training sessions, community awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives targeting women and girls with disabilities, community members and relevant duty-bearers. They planned to use existing platforms, including local women's groups, organisations of persons with disabilities, disability advocacy networks, community centres and social media groups. Participants also recognised the importance of establishing or strengthening partnerships with organisations working on EAWG to expand their reach and increase the effectiveness of their advocacy.

Specific planned actions included organising community workshops on disability-inclusive leadership through local women's centres and establishing monthly peer-support meetings for women and girls with disabilities. These meetings would provide safe spaces for sharing experiences, strengthening confidence, exchanging advocacy information and supporting women with disabilities to participate more meaningfully in EAWG initiatives.

The action-planning session reinforced that the training was not an end in itself, but a foundation for continued advocacy and collective action. Participants were encouraged to document their activities, identify emerging results and challenges, and share progress through the WhatsApp group established during the workshop.

6.1 LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY

Language was a significant challenge during the workshop because most participants were more comfortable communicating in Kinyarwanda than in English. Although sign-language interpretation was provided, differences in spoken-language preference affected the ease with which some participants followed presentations and contributed to discussions.

This experience demonstrated that accessibility requires attention to both disability-related communication needs and participants' preferred spoken languages. Providing sign-language interpretation alone may not ensure full participation if the

main spoken language remains inaccessible to most participants.

For future workshops in Rwanda, DIWA should engage professional Kinyarwanda–English interpreters and determine participants' language and communication requirements during registration. Where most participants communicate in Kinyarwanda, sessions should be conducted primarily in Kinyarwanda, with English interpretation provided where necessary. Training materials should also be translated and made available in accessible formats before the workshop.

6.2 PUNCTUALITY, TRANSPORTATION AND ACCOMMODATION

The workshop experienced delayed starting times because participants travelled from different locations to reach the venue. Long distances, transport arrangements and the accessibility of available transportation affected punctuality and reduced the time available for some sessions.

The experience highlighted the importance of considering disability-inclusive logistics as an essential component of participation.

Future workshops should assess participants' travel requirements in advance and provide appropriate transport support. Where resources permit, participants should be accommodated at one accessible location close to the training venue. This would reduce travel-related delays, support punctuality and enable participants to participate fully without experiencing unnecessary fatigue.

6.3 NEED FOR CONTINUOUS CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

A key lesson from the workshop was that a single training cannot adequately address the deeply rooted structural, institutional, attitudinal and personal barriers affecting the leadership of women with disabilities and their participation in EVAWG movements.

Participants emphasised the need for sustained engagement, mentorship, practical learning and opportunities to apply the knowledge gained. Continuous capacity strengthening would enable participants to consolidate their skills, reflect on emerging

challenges and maintain the networks established during the workshop.

DIWA should therefore organise periodic follow-up meetings, mentorship sessions or webinars through which participants can report on their action plans, share achievements and challenges, and receive additional technical support. The WhatsApp group should also be used strategically to circulate advocacy opportunities, policy updates, accessible learning resources and information on relevant national and continental processes.

6.4 DEMAND FOR PRACTICAL TRAINING ON SHADOW REPORTING

Participants specifically requested practical training on shadow or alternative reporting. While the workshop introduced relevant human rights frameworks, participants expressed a need to understand how to document violations, collect credible evidence, assess government compliance and prepare submissions to human rights monitoring bodies.

DIWA should organise a dedicated, practice-oriented training on shadow reporting under mechanisms such as CEDAW, the CRPD and relevant African human rights instruments. The training should take participants through the complete reporting process, including identifying priority issues, gathering disability-disaggregated evidence, analysing state reports, drafting recommendations, forming reporting coalitions and engaging treaty bodies before and after a review.

6.5 MONITORING PARTICIPANTS' ACTION PLANS

The action-planning process demonstrated strong commitment among participants. However, effective follow-up will be necessary to ensure that planned activities are implemented and that emerging results are documented.

DIWA and its partners should establish a simple monitoring mechanism for participants' action plans. This could include periodic progress updates, peer-learning meetings, short activity reports and documentation of advocacy outcomes. Where possible, participants should receive technical guidance and small-scale logistical support to implement community awareness, peer-support and advocacy activities.



The two-day workshop provided women with disabilities in Rwanda with a comprehensive and participatory learning opportunity to strengthen their leadership and advocacy within the EVAWG movement. Through presentations, group discussions, personal testimonies and action planning, participants deepened their understanding of disability, gender, intersectionality and the different forms of violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities.

The sessions on national, continental and international human rights frameworks equipped participants with important legal and policy tools for advocacy and accountability. Participants strengthened their understanding of the Maputo Protocol, CEDAW, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, AU-CEVAWG, and Rwanda's legal and policy framework on gender-based violence. They also examined how these instruments can be used to influence laws, policies, services and institutional practices at community, national and continental levels.

The workshop further strengthened participants' understanding of advocacy approaches, digital and traditional advocacy tools, engagement with African human rights mechanisms, movement-building, confidence and personal leadership. Personal experiences shared during the group discussions illustrated

how environmental, communication, institutional, attitudinal and socio-economic barriers continue to limit the leadership and meaningful participation of women with disabilities.

The participatory methodology created opportunities for participants to ask questions, share lived experiences, reflect on their leadership journeys and learn from one another. The establishment of a WhatsApp group provided a platform for continued networking, information-sharing and peer support beyond the formal workshop.

Most importantly, participants developed individual action plans to apply the knowledge and skills acquired through training, awareness-raising, peer support and advocacy within their communities and organisations. Sustained follow-up, mentorship, accessible communication and further practical training—particularly on shadow reporting—will be essential to maintain the momentum generated by the workshop and translate participants' commitments into measurable advocacy outcomes.

Overall, the workshop contributed to building a stronger network of informed and confident women with disabilities who are better positioned to advocate for disability-inclusive EVAWG policies, programmes and accountability mechanisms in Rwanda and across Africa.

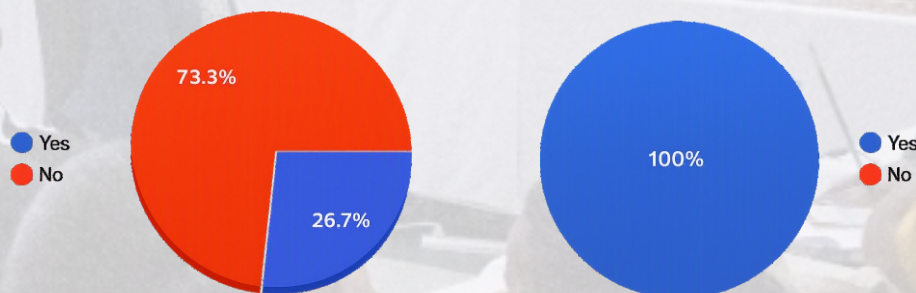
● Pre- and Post-Test Analysis: Assessing Knowledge

To evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop in enhancing participants' knowledge on key areas related to the training, a pre- and post-test was administered using Google Forms. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VlunjWRbU9ujeir6HCaUfKjzzYie4ZCUp_fFV4cpMw0/edit#response=ACYDBNi6_U9XjwG7_IDH6Wf3SMV-puZ0edrfJQj_KwWyyqSvRwjXWGnd3xJTtRSBKki2Zn8

Participants were asked to self-assess their knowledge level on five specific questions. The pre- and post-test results overwhelmingly demonstrate the positive impact of the workshop on participants' knowledge. Across all questions, there was a clear trend of participants moving from lower knowledge categories to higher ones, signifying a substantial increase in their understanding of VAWG referral pathways, leadership confidence strategies, advocate roles, engagement with human rights bodies, and the relevance of the AU-CEVAWG. This data strongly suggests that the workshop was highly effective in equipping participants with valuable knowledge and skills relevant to their work in ending violence against women and girls with disabilities. See below graphics detailing some of the changes.

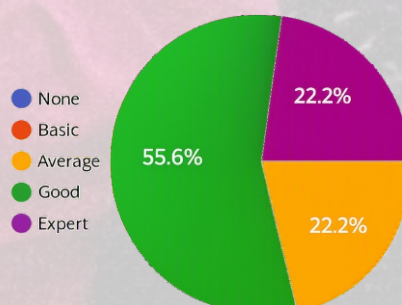
Question : I know the AU-CEVAWG and its relevance to ending violence against women and girls with disabilities

- **Pre-test:** Only 26.7% reported knowing about the AU-CEVAWG and its relevance. Post-test: Following the workshop, 100% of participants indicated they now know about the AU-CEVAWG and its relevance to ending violence against women and girls with disabilities.



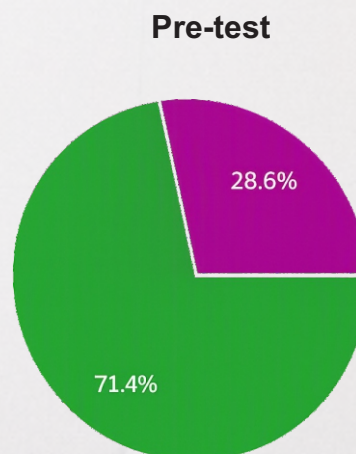
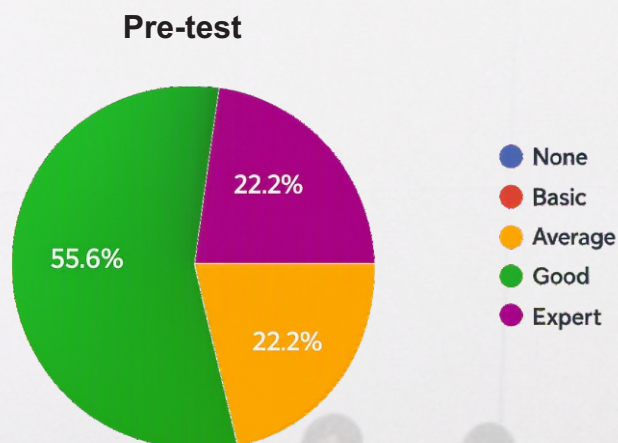
Question : I know how to effectively engage with human rights committees and treaty bodies like the Banjul commission and Arusha court regarding ending violence against women and girls with disabilities

- Only 17.6% reported having good knowledge in the pretest. After the training, a significant shift occurred, with 55.6% of participants reporting good knowledge in this area. The training demonstrably increased participants' understanding of how to engage with key human rights mechanisms like the Banjul Commission and the Arusha Court to address violence against women and girls with disabilities.



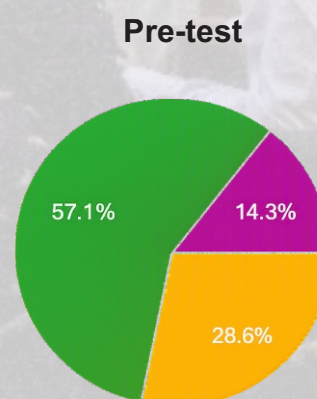
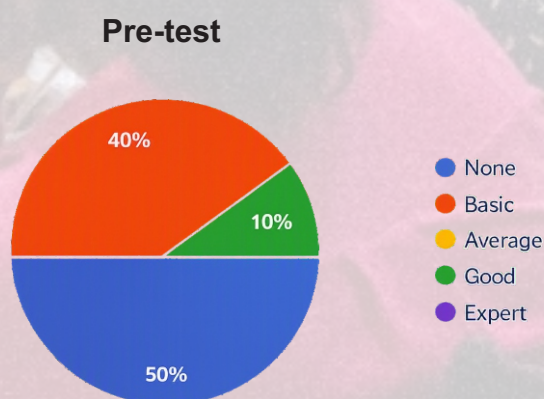
Question : I know the roles and the responsibilities of advocates for violence against women and girls with disabilities within the regional EVAWG movement

- **Pre-test:** Participants showed varying levels of understanding, with 29.4% reporting basic knowledge, 17.6% indicating good knowledge. Post-test: Following the training, there was a clear improvement in understanding roles and responsibilities. 66.7% of participants reported good knowledge, and an impressive 33.3% now considered themselves experts. Notably, the "basic" knowledge category dropped to 0%, highlighting the training's effectiveness in empowering participants in this crucial aspect of advocacy.

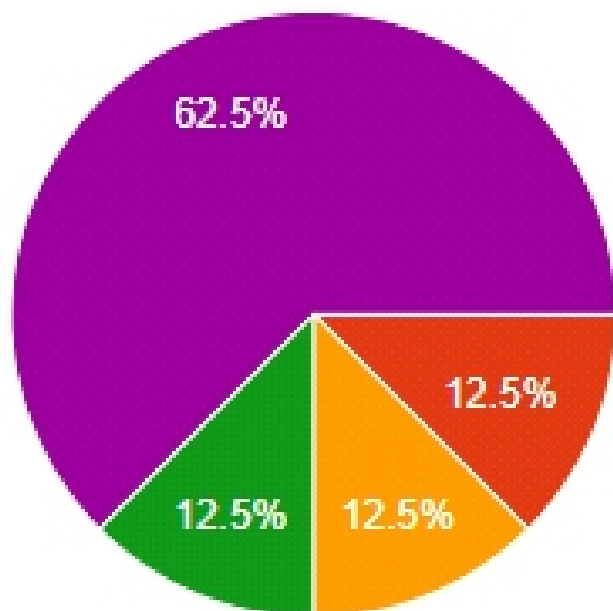


Question : I Know the VAWG referral pathways and guiding frameworks at sub-regional level

- In the Pre-test, a significant proportion of participants (50%) indicated they had no knowledge of VAWG referral pathways and guiding frameworks at the sub-regional level. 10% reported good knowledge, while 40% had basic understanding. Notably, after the training, 0% of participants reported having no knowledge in this area. There was a substantial increase in those reporting good knowledge (57.1%) and expert knowledge (14.3%). The complete elimination of the "none" category signifies that the workshop successfully provided participants with foundational knowledge of sub-regional VAWG referral pathways and guiding frameworks. The significant increase in the "good" and "expert" categories further indicates a substantial gain in understanding for a majority of the participants.



WORKSHOP EVALUATION



- Not at all useful, informative relevant or helpful to my learning
- Somewhat useful informative relevant or helpful to my learning
- Reasonably useful, informative relevant or helpful to my learning
- Useful informative, relevant or helpful to my learning
- Very useful, informative relevant or helpful to my learning

At the close of the workshop, participants evaluated the training's relevance, effectiveness of delivery, and how well it met their objectives and expectations. The feedback gathered offers valuable insights for refining future sessions and strengthening the network of women, girls, and organizations.

Overall, participants found the content relevant, timely, and empowering, noting it equipped them with practical skills and knowledge to advocate for the rights of women and girls with disabilities. The facilitators received high praise for their expertise, engaging presentation style, and for fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.

Specifically, 62.5% of participants reported the training content was very useful, informative, relevant, and helpful to their learning. Many highlighted their enjoyment of the interactive discussions and the value of hearing diverse perspectives, particularly stories from women with disabilities, which they found inspiring and relatable. Participants particularly appreciated the segment on crafting an "elevator pitch" to effectively convey advocacy messages.

Looking ahead, participants suggested improvements for future workshops, including incorporating more interactive sessions, real-life case studies, and accessible materials. This would involve providing resources such as sign language interpreters, braille, and easy-to-read formats to ensure full participation and deeper engagement for all attendees.

COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY

The workshop received substantial communications and visibility, with features on online websites as well as national radio and TV stations, ensuring broad reach within and outside Rwanda. A featured story about the workshop can be found at <https://rwandainspirer.com/diwa-empowers-women-with-disabilities-in-the-fight-against-gender-based-violence/>. Additionally, [training highlights are available at https://youtu.be/Oi4yJuPbDoc?si=FQmAJDGnuWdbefCand](https://youtu.be/Oi4yJuPbDoc?si=FQmAJDGnuWdbefCand), and participant testimonials can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/DzMvtMrAfMI?si=KpCMDwjLmeRGURCy>.





ANNEX 2. PARTICIPANTS LIST

No.	Name	Type of disability	District	Contacts	Organization
1	UWAMARIYA Djovine	Visual impairment	female	udjovine@gmail.com	UNABU
2	IRAKOZE Kevine	Assistance	female		UNABU
3	Uwanyirigira Marie Claire	Physical disability	female	mcuwanyirigira@gmail.com	UNABU
4	Tuyishimire Honorine	Little /short	female	honorinetuyishimire@gmail.com	RULP
5	Umutesi Rose	Mental	female	Rosemutesi11@gmail.com	NOUSPR
6	BAZIRISA Uwishyaka	Short stature	Kicukiro	Uwishyakabasilisa499@gmail.com 785881936	
8	DUKUZE Marie Aimee	Wheelchair User	Kicukiro	dukuzaimée1998@gmail.com 788745074	OWDHD
9	Clarisse Mushimiyimana	PA	Kicukiro	734133783	OWDHD
10	KAMPIRE Liliane	Physical	Kicukiro	kampirelyi93@gmail.com 788318537	ONDHD
11	AKADATA Liliane	Physical	Kicukiro	liliane.akadata@undp.org 782233290	
12	MUKOBWANKAWE Liliane	Physical	Bugesera	mukobwankaweliliane@gmail.com 783160605	NPC Rwanda
13	NYINAWUMUNTU Anise	Deaf	Gasabo	anesienyinaumuntu457@gmail.com 785591253	RNUD
14	NKAKA Eza	Deaf	Kicukiro	nkakeza2015@gmail.com 786677124	RNUD
15	UMUHOZA Sandrine	Cerebral Palsy	Gasabo	sandrineumuhoza96@gmail.com 786376218	HSMD
16	UWIKUNDA Francoise	Physical	Gasabo	uwikundafanny6@gmail.com 723763337	
17	IRAKOZE Valentine	Albinism	Nyarugenge	valantineirakoze@gmail.com 785758874	UNABU
18	BUKOMBE Annet	Physical	Gasabo	bukombea16@gmail.com 781090158	OWDHD
19	UMUTONIWASE Fausta	Physical	Gasabo	5faustaumutoniwase@gmail.com 788313921	HSMD
20	Iriza Marie Claire	physical	Gasabo	788454893	RWBF
21	Tumwine Winnie	physical	Gasabo	788848044	HSMD
22	Gisele Emerusenge	-	Kigali	784525659	Hands Talk
23	Uwinyama Beata	-	Kigali	078877818	RNUSL
24	Owamahop Gloria	None	Kigali	785591253	RNUSL
25	Umuhoza Regine	None	Kigali	78045069	UNABU
26	Dumisani Muyaba	None	Malawi		DIWA
27	Virginia Mzungu	None	Malawi		DIWA
28	Ruth Mkutumula	Low Visual	Malawi	+265999808031	DIWA
29	Samuel ngendahi	None	Kigali	0788458630	Isurape media
30	Emmanuel Dushimimawa	None	Kigali	0785354852	Isurape media
31	Cyubahiro Prince	None	Kigali	078241290	The Inspirer

ANNEX 3. WORKSHOP AGENDA

Increasing the Engagement and Leadership of Women with Disabilities within the EAWG Movement Workshop		
Amaryllis Hotel , Blantyre, 5-6 March 2025		
Time: 8:30am-4:30 pm		
DAY 1: 4 June ,2025		
Time	Activity	Responsible Person
8:30-9:00	Introductions and registration	Virginia
9:05-9:20	Overview of the Inclusive and Empowered Feminists Movement in Africa Project ,and training objectives	Virginia Program manager,DIWA
9:20-10:30	Violence against women and girls with disabilities in the context of Continental and international human rights instruments: - Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) - The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action - The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Virginia Program manager,DIWA
10:30 -11:00	Health Break and group Photo	All
11:00:-12:00	The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ADP),Maputo protocol,	Virginia
12:00-13:00	AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, and Other important African Union frameworks	Virginia
	Rwanda frameworks	Bukombo Annet
13:00-14:00	Networking Lunch	
14:00-15:30	Plenary discussion(question and answers, sharing experiences) How can we ensure that women with disabilities are engaging in key platforms Tea - Wrap Up Day 1	All
DAY 2: 6 March - 2024		
Time	Activity	Responsible
9:00-9:30	Recap of Day 1	all
9:30-10:00	Disability as a social construct; models of disability and VAWG: The Charity ,medical ,social, and Human rights approach	Ruth
10:00-10:30	Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities: - Understanding VAWG -VAWG Referral Pathways and barriers to reporting - Understanding power in relation to VAWG	Virginia
10:30-10:45	Health Break	
10:45-11:45	<u>BARRIERS TO INCLUSION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE EAWG MOVEMENT</u> (Group work and plenary) What are the different barriers to inclusion of women and girls with disabilities as advocates in the EAWG movement How can these barriers be addressed What are your experiences(using lived experiences through story telling)	Virginia
11:45-12:30	Confident Leadership Tips for Building your Self-Confidence as a Leader Strengthening my Personal Brand as a leader(elevator pitch exercise)	
12:30-13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30-14:30	Advocacy -Types of advocacy -Responsibilities of advocates for violence against women and girls with disabilities	Ruth
14.30-15:30	Action Planning (Group work and plenary) What is it they can do, When and where Existing platforms that they can utilize to do the planned activity Resources Needed/support (where to get) Post test and Workshop evaluation forms	Group leaders
15:30-15:35	Conclusions and Way Forward	Virginia
15:35-15:40	Closing Remarks	Ministry of Disability
15:40	Tea and Coffee – End of workshop	

ANNEX 4. POST WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

Increasing the Engagement and Leadership of Women with Disabilities within the EVAWG Movements Training Workshop

Country: _____

Name(optional) _____

Date: _____

The information you provide in this evaluation is one of the most important parts of our learning and development review process and informs the further development of this training. What you say today can make a difference to the training experience of the participants who come after you. Please take the time to answer each question thoughtfully and honestly.

Module Number (1-7): _____

OVERALL TRAINING FEEDBACK

Fill in the blank spaces below with numbers 1-5 to indicate your rating.

Please provide comments / suggestions to provide details:

	1	2	3	4	5
Scoring	Not at all useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Somewhat useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Reasonably useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning	Very useful, informative, relevant or helpful to my learning

*Please enter your score below

1. The entire training was: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

2. The supplied tools and resources were: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

3. The planning of the training and support I was given during the trainings was: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

ANNEX 4. POST WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

4. The training facilitation was: _____

Comments/Suggestions:

5. Training was accessible and my reasonable accommodation requirements were met:

Comments/Suggestions:

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. What three things did you enjoy most about the training?

2. What three things did you enjoy least about the training?

3. Please describe the benefits you gained from this training module and how it will be useful to your work?

4. Which new ideas, skills or knowledge are you planning to apply in your work as a result of this training? How? When?

5. Would you recommend this training to other colleagues? Why? Why not?

6. Please provide any other feedback which may be relevant to the Facilitators.



UN TRUST FUND
TO END
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN AND
GIRLS

UN WOMEN



Funded by
the European Union