

# Sexuality, reproductive rights and disability



World Health  
Organization



## **Sex and reproduction are human rights**

- UN Standard Rules “Persons with disabilities must not be denied the opportunity to experience their sexuality, have sexual relationships and experience parenthood.”
- CRPD Article 23 “States parties shall take effective and appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities in all matters relating to marriage, family, parenthood and relationships, on an equal basis with others”.



## What do we know?

- Social issue, not a medical issue
- People with disabilities are not asexual
  - Malawi study 76% had been sexually active
  - Sierra Leone sex in last year for 71% “moderate”, 58% “severe” (92% non-disabled)
  - Uganda study 77% women with disabilities had been pregnant.
- Same needs: sex education, contraception and abortion, pregnancy and childbirth, protection from HIV/STDs



## **Problems and barriers**

- Attitudes and assumptions
- Families overprotective, infantilising
- Body image: medical examination, negativity
- Fear, risk avoidance, lack of knowledge
- Communication skills, barriers
- Poverty and isolation
- Access barriers



## Overcoming problems and barriers

- Legal reform
- Policy and practice change
- Training of professionals
- Vigilance about abuse
- Attitudinal change
- Enabling people to feel positive about themselves
- Facilitating social lives
- Facilitating sex?



## Examples of projects

- **CREA**, New Delhi: research, training (also online)
- **Biruh Tesfa**, Ethiopia: teach girls (7-24) literacy, life, sex and social skills to build self-confidence, inclusive of girls with disabilities
- **BEMFAM** “Que legal saber!”, Brazil: SRH programme for young people with visual impairment and their teachers.
- **Kenyan Association of the Intellectually Handicapped**: knowledge on SRH to people with ID and their families, via workshops, peer support.