**International Disability Alliance (IDA)**

Member Organisations:

Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Disabled Peoples' International,

Down Syndrome International, European Disability Forum,

Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People,

Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families, Pacific Disability Forum World Federation of the Deaf, World Blind Union,

World Federation of the DeafBlind, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry

**IDA intervention to the CEDAW Committee’s General Discussion on Rural Women**

**7 October 2013, 56th session**

The International Disability Alliance (IDA) welcomes the initiative of the Committee to elaborate a General Recommendation on rural women.

According to the World Bank and WHO's 2011 World Report on Disability, it is estimated that approximately 15% of the world’s population is made up of persons with disabilities, most of whom live in rural areas of developing countries where women make up three quarters of that population.

Rural women and girls with disabilities face multiple discrimination on account of their gender, disability and living in a rural setting which may also intersect with other identities such as indigenous background given that most indigenous populations live in rural and remote communities.

As a result, they are subjected to multiple violations of their rights such as the right to family, education, employment, political participation, birth registration, social protection, health and access to justice, which render them vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and non-consensual harmful practices.

In rural areas, there is often preference for male children leading to stigma and discrimination manifesting in higher incidents of female infanticide, absence of birth registration, higher malnutrition amongst girls, preferential access to healthcare and education for boys, all which adversely impact on women and girls with disabilities. They face a lack of support for basic life necessities, assistive devices, mobility aids and health and rehabilitation services which result in poorer health, lower education qualifications and fewer economic opportunities.

Women with disabilities living in rural areas are three times less likely to be employed than other rural women. Studies in the Asia Pacific region have found that more than 80% of women with disabilities have no independent means of livelihood. Land ownership and subsistence cultivation are restricted to women with disabilities on account of the fact that they are not considered credit worthy.

The rolelessness of rural women with disabilities in political and economic decision-making within their communities entrenches their marginalisation.

Women living in rural areas throughout the world have commonly been, and continue to be, subjected to forced sterilisation and the forcible removal of their children, having been deemed unfit to be mothers on the basis of stereotypes and negative attitudes related to poverty, lack of education, indigenous background and disability. Women living in rural and remote communities, in particular indigenous women, are disproportionately victims of sexual violence. For example in New Zealand, nearly 20% of Maori women are reported as being assaulted or threatened by an intimate partner, which is three times the national average, while it has been documented that in Australia, indigenous women are 45 times more likely to experience family violence than non-indigenous women and far more likely to be killed by their partner than non-indigenous women.

While the intersections of multiple discrimination have generally been recognised as a significant barrier to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights by the CEDAW Committee and other treaty bodies, to date there has been limited recognition of the intersections between gender, disability and rural background and a lack of concrete recommendations which target this group.

We request the Committee to increase its attention and to target responses to better confront the intersectional barriers impeding the full inclusion and participation of women and girls with disabilities living in rural environments and to be guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to ensure that the rights of rural women and girls with disabilities are upheld on an equal basis with others.

In particular, to call on States to ensure the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices which exclude rural women and girls from disabilities in exercising their rights and to take positive steps to ensure accessibility of rural environments, services, communications and information including the provision of reasonable accommodation across all sectors including education, employment, healthcare, poverty reduction, political and public life, family, protection from violence, access to justice, and to actively engage in awareness raising and training of the public, government and private interlocutors, the systematic collection of data across all spheres disaggregated by disability, rural and indigenous background, and other categories, and last but not least, to closely consult with and actively involve the diverse range of rural women and girls with disabilities in the development, implementation and monitoring of all initiatives relating to them.