



ALTERNATIVE REPORT
on the Implementation of the CEDAW Convention in the Republic of Moldova

Situation of Women and Girls with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova in 2026

Prepared by the member organizations of the Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Moldova (AOPD)

Chapter 1 – Equality and Non – Discrimination

(Articles 1, 2 and 3 of CEDAW)

The Republic of Moldova has strengthened its legislative framework on equality and the prevention of discrimination, including through the adoption of Law No. 121/2012¹ on ensuring equality and through the mandate of the Council for Equality. However, progress in implementing the legislative framework has not translated into substantive equality for women and girls with disabilities, who continue to face multiple discrimination and structural barriers to exercising the rights guaranteed under the Convention.

In its seventh periodic report², Moldova acknowledges that challenges persist in achieving gender equality and eliminating discrimination.

Intersectionality between gender and disability excludes women and girls from education, employment, healthcare, justice, safety, and public life. Despite CEDAW and CRPD obligations, this intersectional perspective remains insufficiently integrated into national public policies.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, as of 1 January 2025, approximately 160,000 persons with disabilities were registered in the Republic of Moldova – 47.8% (approximately 76,000) were women and girls with disabilities. The size of this group requires the systematic integration of a gender perspective into disability-related policies and, equally, the integration of a disability perspective into gender equality policies.³

Studies⁴ show that women with disabilities face disproportionate risks of exclusion, violence, and restricted autonomy. Institutional and communication barriers continue to limit their capacity to enjoy legally recognized rights.

This reflects a structural deficiency: gender equality and disability policies are developed fragmentedly, without effective coordination mechanisms. Consequently, the specific experiences and needs of women and girls with disabilities remain invisible.

Data from the Council for Equality confirm the persistence of discrimination in key areas of social life. In the field of employment, the sex/gender criterion accounted for 45% of discrimination findings, while in the area of access to goods and services available to the public, disability was the main ground of discrimination (33%).

However, existing data collection mechanisms do not allow for the identification and monitoring of intersectional discrimination, as information is not simultaneously disaggregated by sex and disability. This gap limits the authorities' capacity to assess the scale of discrimination, measure the impact of public policies, and develop evidence-based measures to combat multiple discrimination.⁵

¹ **Republic of Moldova.** Law No. 121 of 25 May 2012 on Ensuring Equality. State Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Moldova (Legis.md).

² **Republic of Moldova.** Seventh periodic report submitted under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/MDA/7). UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2024. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4073278>

³ **National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.** Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova in 2024. Published on 28 November 2025.

⁴ **Association of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities of the Republic of Moldova “European Abilities Without Limits” (AEFL Moldova).** Women with Disabilities in Moldova: Invisible Victims to the Law and Society. 2025. https://anpcv.gov.md/sites/default/files/2025-05/RAPORT%20Femeile%20cu%20Dizabilit%C4%83%C8%9Bi%20din%20Moldova_%20Victime%20Invizibile%20pentru%20Lege%20%C8%99i%20Societate_AEFL%20MOLDOVA.pdf

⁵ **Council for Equality.** General Report on the Situation in the Field of Preventing and Combating Discrimination in the Republic of Moldova for 2025. https://egalitate.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Consiliul_pentru_egalitate_Raport_2025-1.pdf

Effective access to anti – discrimination protection mechanisms and justice remains limited for persons with disabilities. Although legislation guarantees access to state-guaranteed legal assistance, independent monitoring has identified persistent barriers concerning the physical and communication accessibility of institutions, the lack of information in accessible formats, the limited application of reasonable accommodation, and the insufficient capacity of institutions to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities.

These barriers are also reflected in the low use of state-guaranteed legal assistance services. In 2022, persons with disabilities accounted for approximately 3% of all beneficiaries of these services,⁶ indicating the persistence of obstacles to accessing justice and the need to strengthen mechanisms for information provision, accessibility, and proactive identification of beneficiaries.

The findings of this report demonstrate that, although the Republic of Moldova has developed a normative framework on equality and non-discrimination, its implementation does not yet ensure substantive equality for women and girls with disabilities. The persistence of intersectional discrimination, the lack of disaggregated data, limited access to effective protection mechanisms, and the insufficient integration of an intersectional perspective into public policies indicate the existence of structural barriers incompatible with the State's obligations under Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Convention.

Recommendations for the State party:

- 1.1.** Systematically integrate an intersectional perspective into legislation, public policies, and national equality mechanisms by ensuring a coordinated approach between gender equality policies and policies concerning the rights of persons with disabilities;
- 1.2.** Establish a comprehensive system for the collection, analysis, and publication of data disaggregated by sex, age, type of disability, and place of residence, in order to monitor intersectional discrimination and inform evidence-based public policies;
- 1.3.** Ensure effective access for women and girls with disabilities to anti-discrimination protection mechanisms and justice, including by eliminating physical, informational, communication, and procedural barriers and by systematically applying reasonable accommodation;
- 1.4.** Strengthen the capacities of public authorities and relevant professionals to identify and address intersectional discrimination, including through the systematic integration of gender and disability perspectives into all relevant public policies and services;
- 1.5.** Ensure meaningful participation of women with disabilities and their organizations in developing legislation affecting them, per CRPD and the “Nothing About Us Without Us” principle.

⁶ **Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Moldova (AOPD).** *State-Guaranteed Legal Assistance for Persons with Intellectual and Psychosocial Disabilities.* 2023.
<https://aopd.md/raport-de-monitorizare-asistenta-juridica-garantata-de-stat-pentru-persoanele-cu-dizabilitati-intelectuale-si-psihosociale/>

Chapter 2 – Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities

(Article 5(a) of CEDAW; General Recommendation No. 35 of the CEDAW Committee)

The Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in strengthening the normative and institutional framework for the prevention of and response to violence against women, including through the implementation of the National Programme on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023–2027, the development of specialized services for victims, and the strengthening of protection mechanisms, in line with the obligations undertaken under the Istanbul Convention.

However, these developments have not yet ensured effective and equal protection for women and girls with disabilities, who continue to face a disproportionate risk of gender-based violence, resulting from the interaction between sex – based discrimination, disability – based discrimination, and other structural barriers that limit their effective access to protection, services, and justice.

Disproportionate Exposure of Women with Disabilities to Gender-Based Violence

Available data demonstrate the disproportionate exposure of women with disabilities to gender-based violence and highlight the systemic nature of the phenomenon. According to the study *“Women with Disabilities in Moldova: Invisible Victims to the Law and Society,”* conducted in 2025 on a sample of approximately 2,700 women with disabilities from the Republic of Moldova, 96.3% of respondents stated that they had **been victims of at least one form of gender – based violence**.

Psychological violence was the most frequently reported form of abuse (92.6%), followed by physical violence (59.3%), economic violence (55.6%), and sexual violence (25.9%). For approximately 59% of respondents, violence is not an isolated incident but a recurring phenomenon, occurring frequently or permanently, reflecting the persistence of abusive relationships and the structural difficulties faced by victims in accessing protection and leaving situations of violence.

These findings confirm that women with disabilities are affected not only by an increased individual risk of violence, but also by a combination of structural factors that increase their vulnerability and limit their ability to seek support. The national study developed by UNICEF and UNFPA Moldova highlights that the risk of violence is exacerbated by dependence on support persons, communication barriers, social stigma, and systemic discrimination.⁷

In particular, women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities face additional barriers to reporting cases of violence, including challenges to the credibility of their statements, particularly in situations involving sexual violence and exploitation. This practice reflects the existence of discriminatory stereotypes concerning the capacity of women with disabilities to make decisions, communicate their experiences of abuse, and effectively participate in protection and justice proceedings.

Barriers to Accessing Protection and Justice

Women and girls with disabilities face severe infrastructure, communication, and procedural barriers in accessing protection and justice. Support staff lack training to identify these specific cases. Consequently, the existence of services does not guarantee women with disabilities effective access to protection, as access barriers may turn mechanisms available to victims into inaccessible services for a significant proportion of them.

⁷ UNICEF Moldova and UNFPA Moldova. *National Study on the Intersections between Violence against Women and Violence against Children*.

<https://www.unicef.org/moldova/documents/studiul-na%C8%9Bional-privind-intersec%C8%9Biile-dintre-violen%C8%9Ba-%C3%AEmpotriva-femeilor-%C8%99i-violen%C8%9Ba>

The situation is particularly serious for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Council of Europe study⁸ highlight that, in the absence of specialized and accessible community – based services, victims may be inappropriately referred to psychiatric wards, although these are not designed to provide protection from violence or specialized post – traumatic recovery services. Furthermore, their physical or financial dependency on caregivers – who are frequently the perpetrators – drastically reduces their capacity to report abuse or escape violent environments.

The lack of comprehensive and disaggregated data on violence against women with disabilities represents one of the main structural gaps in the national system for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence.

The systematic collection of disaggregated data is an obligation established under Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention⁹ and is an essential prerequisite for the development of evidence-based public policies. However, current mechanisms for collecting and analysing data on violence against women do not allow for an adequate assessment of the situation of women and girls with disabilities.

The authorities of the Republic of Moldova acknowledge the existence of deficiencies in the current system for collecting and analysing data on violence against women, including the lack of harmonized indicators and integrated statistical recording systems.¹⁰ The National Programme on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for 2023 – 2027 also provides for the strengthening of data collection and analysis mechanisms.

However, available administrative data are not collected and published systematically. Consequently, they do not reflect the situation from the perspective of disability, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, the form of violence, or the support needs of victims. This gap limits the State's capacity to identify the actual scale of the phenomenon, assess the effectiveness of existing measures, and develop services adapted to the needs of women and girls with disabilities.

This situation is incompatible with the obligations undertaken under General Recommendation No. 35 of the CEDAW Committee¹¹ and General Comment No. 3 of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which call upon States to adopt specific measures to combat multiple discrimination and ensure the effective protection of women with disabilities against violence.

Recommendations for the State party:

- 2.1.** Systematically integrate a disability rights perspective into national policies, strategies, and mechanisms by explicitly addressing multiple and intersectional discrimination;
- 2.2.** Ensure specialized, accessible, and adapted services for women and girls with disabilities who are victims of violence, including through the elimination of physical, informational, communication, and procedural barriers;

⁸ **Council of Europe.** *Assessment of the Legal Framework and Protection Mechanisms for Women with Psychosocial and Intellectual Disabilities Who Are Victims of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Moldova.*
<https://rm.coe.int/en-study-women-with-psychosocial-and-intellectual-approved/48802c4d22>

⁹ **Council of Europe.** *Ensuring Data Collection and Research on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention.*
<https://edoc.coe.int/en/violence-against-women/7138-ensuring-data-collection-and-research-on-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence-article-11-of-the-istanbul-convention.html>

¹⁰ **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova.** *Set of Measures for the Implementation of GREVIO Recommendation*
<https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Set-de-masuri-GREVIO.pdf>

¹¹ **CEDAW Committee.** *General Recommendation No. 35 on Gender-Based Violence against Women, Updating General Recommendation No. 19.*

- 2.3.** Guarantee effective access for women with disabilities who are victims of violence to protection and justice, including through the application of reasonable accommodation and the adaptation of procedures to the individual needs of victims;
- 2.4.** Strengthen the capacities of professionals involved in the prevention of and response to violence against women, including through training on a rights-based approach and responses adapted to the needs of victims;
- 2.5.** Strengthen Recommendation 1.2 in the area of violence by introducing specific indicators concerning the type of disability, the victim–perpetrator relationship, and the outcome of the intervention;
- 2.6.** Strengthen prevention and protection mechanisms for women with disabilities who are in situations of dependency or at increased risk of abuse, including in residential and care services.

Chapter 3 – Inclusive Education and Equal Access to Education for Girls and Women with Disabilities

(Article 10 of CEDAW)

The Republic of Moldova has strengthened its normative and institutional framework on inclusive education through the development of public policies aimed at eliminating access barriers and expanding support services for children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. The Education 2030 Development Strategy and the Inclusive Education Development Programme for 2024 – 2027 reflect the State's commitment to ensuring a more accessible education system adapted to the diversity of learners' needs.

However, the implementation of these policies is not accompanied by sufficient mechanisms to assess whether girls with disabilities benefit equally from the right to education. The lack of a differentiated analysis of the situation of girls and of data disaggregated by sex and disability limits the ability of authorities to identify the specific barriers they face and to demonstrate the achievement of de facto equality, as required by Article 10 of the Convention.

Girls consistently account for one third of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream education: 32.6% (2025/26 school year).¹²

Available data indicate gender differences in accessing services intended for children with disabilities.¹³ Within early childhood intervention services, 57% of beneficiaries are boys, while 43% are girls. Although this distribution may reflect differences in the prevalence of disability among children, the absence of a systematic gender equality analysis does not allow for an assessment of whether girls face barriers in early identification and access to services.

A similar trend is observed in educational support services.¹⁴ According to data from the Ministry of Education and Research for 2023, the records of the Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Services included 10,362 children with special educational needs and 4,219 children with disabilities. Across all support categories – including psycho – pedagogical, speech therapy, and psychological assistance – girls consistently represented a significantly smaller proportion than boys.

These differences do not demonstrate the existence of direct discrimination against girls with disabilities, but they do highlight a significant gap in monitoring gender equality. In the absence of a systematic assessment of differences in the identification of needs, referral to services, and outcomes of interventions, authorities cannot determine whether education policies and services produce equitable outcomes for girls and boys with disabilities. This information gap creates a risk that the specific needs of girls with disabilities will remain insufficiently identified and reflected in education policies.

At the same time, the implementation of inclusive education continues to be affected by structural barriers, including insufficient support services, a shortage of adequately trained staff, disparities between urban and rural areas, and the persistence of discriminatory attitudes towards children with disabilities. These barriers limit not only formal access to education, but also the full and equal participation of girls with disabilities in the educational process and in the support services necessary for their development.

¹² National Bureau of Statistics. *Situation of Children in the Republic of Moldova in 2025*. https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2025-9578_62470.html

¹³ UNICEF Moldova. *Analysis of the Situation Regarding Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) in the Republic of Moldova*. <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/11426/file/Moldova%20ECI%20Sitan%20report%20RO.pdf>

¹⁴ UNICEF Moldova. *Analysis of Gaps in Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova*. <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/19591/file/Analiza%20decalajelor%20%C3%AEn%20educa%C8%9Bia%20includiv%C4%83%20din%20Republica%20Moldova%20.pdf>

A significant structural challenge remains the limited availability of integrated education data concerning the situation of children with disabilities, including girls with disabilities. A 2024 study conducted by Keystone Moldova¹⁵ on the educational pathways of children with severe disabilities highlights that, although progress has been made in the development of inclusive education, significant barriers persist to the access and full participation of children with different types of disabilities at all levels of education. The study also finds that available statistical data are not systematically disaggregated by sex, age, type of disability, and place of residence, limiting the ability to identify specific differences between girls and boys with disabilities.

Deaf girls are structurally excluded from the upper-secondary education pathway and from access to higher education. In 2021, 161 students with hearing disabilities were enrolled in mainstream education and 73 students in Special School No. 12 (lower – secondary level), but only 34 were enrolled in vocational and higher education; sign language courses for teaching staff are organized once every three years.¹⁶ The 2025 baccalaureate examination regulations provide accommodations only for candidates with neuromotor or visual impairments, and not for deaf candidates.¹⁷

In the context of Article 10 of the CEDAW Convention, achieving substantive equality in education requires more than guaranteeing formal access to school. It requires the identification and elimination of structural barriers, the provision of accessible and adapted support services, and the integration of a gender perspective into all policies concerning inclusive education. For the Republic of Moldova, the challenge lies not only in developing the normative framework, but in ensuring that the education system produces equitable outcomes for all girls and boys, including persons affected by multiple forms of discrimination arising from gender and disability.

The lack of effective mechanisms for transition from education to vocational training and employment may disproportionately affect girls with disabilities, limiting their prospects for economic autonomy and social participation. This gap is also relevant from the perspective of Article 10 of CEDAW, which concerns not only access to education, but also equal access to vocational guidance, training, and subsequent opportunities for economic and social integration.

Recommendations for the State party:

- 3.1.** Integrate an intersectional gender and disability perspective into inclusive education policies by identifying and eliminating specific barriers affecting the access, participation, and educational outcomes of girls with disabilities;
- 3.2.** Mandate the collection of education data disaggregated by sex and disability type to inform inclusive policies.
- 3.3.** Ensure equal and effective access of girls with disabilities to quality inclusive education by guaranteeing access to adequate educational support services, reasonable accommodation, specialized resources, and interventions adapted to individual needs, including for children in rural communities and underserved groups;
- 3.4.** Strengthen the capacity of the education system to respond to the diversity of the needs of learners with disabilities, including through continuous training of teaching staff, the development of mechanisms for transitions between educational levels, and the provision of person-centred services;

¹⁵ **Keystone Moldova.** *Educational Pathways of Children with Severe Disabilities: Constraints and Opportunities*. 2024. <https://www.keystonemoldova.md/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2024/03/Evaluarea-serviciilor-educationale-de-suport.p>

¹⁶ **Office of the People's Advocate.** *Ensuring the Right to Education of Children with Sensory Impairments*. 2023. <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/asigurarea-dreptului-la-educatie-a-copilor-cu-deficiente-senzoriale.pdf>

¹⁷ **Ministry of Education and Research.** *Statement on the 2025 National Baccalaureate Examinations (Candidates Requiring Special Examination Conditions)*. <https://www.edu.gov.md/ro/content/3138-de-elevi-vor-lua-10-din-oficiu-la-limba-straina-si-397-la-informatica-fara-sa-sustina>

- 3.5. Regulate normative amendments and accommodations for deaf students and ensure an upper-secondary education pathway supported by sign language interpreters;
- 3.6. Ensure the effective and meaningful participation of girls with disabilities, their families, and representative organizations of persons with disabilities in the development, implementation, and monitoring of inclusive education policies.

Chapter 4 – Employment, Economic Independence and Social Protection of Women with Disabilities

(Article 11 of CEDAW)

Although the Republic of Moldova has established legal guarantees concerning the professional inclusion of persons with disabilities,¹⁸ women with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the labour market. Available data indicate that they are at the intersection of several forms of vulnerability – gender – based discrimination, disability – related barriers, and limited access to economic opportunities – which hinders the achievement of de facto equality provided for under Article 11 of CEDAW.

From the perspective of the CEDAW Convention, access to work is not merely an economic right, but a fundamental condition for personal autonomy, financial independence, and full participation in society. For women with disabilities, exclusion from the labour market generates cumulative effects, increasing the risk of poverty, economic dependency, and social marginalization.

The economic participation of persons with disabilities remains significantly lower compared to the population without disabilities. According to data from the Labour Force Survey for 2024¹⁹ the labour force participation rate of persons with disabilities was only 18.4%, compared to 48.1% among persons without disabilities. In the case of women with disabilities, economic participation was even lower – 16.9%, confirming the existence of additional barriers to their access to the labour market.

The gap is even more pronounced with regard to the employment rate. Only 17.5% of persons with disabilities were employed, compared to 46.2% of persons without disabilities, while the employment rate among women with disabilities was 16.2%²⁰ In rural areas, the rate was 11.5%, compared to 18.5% in urban areas.²¹

Disability remains a structural factor of economic exclusion, causing double marginalization for women with disabilities who face persistent labour market inequalities and severe accessibility barriers. This low employment rate critically undermines their economic autonomy, decision-making capacity, and full societal participation, leaving them dependent on social benefits.

Economic exclusion is also reflected in higher levels of poverty among persons with disabilities.²² The poverty rate for this group is 38.7%, compared to 30.6% among persons without disabilities, highlighting the direct link between limited access to employment, lower incomes, and an increased risk of social exclusion.

At the same time, the lack of data disaggregated simultaneously by sex and disability represents a significant barrier to assessing progress. Available data on persons with disabilities do not allow for a complete identification of the specific experiences of women with disabilities, nor for an assessment of the impact of public policies on this group.

The absence of comprehensive data on the participation of women with disabilities in the labour market limits the State's ability to identify forms of intersectional discrimination and to develop targeted interventions to reduce existing gaps.

In conclusion, women with disabilities continue to be one of the least integrated groups in the labour market in the Republic of Moldova. Persistent barriers to employment, economic vulnerability, and insufficient inclusion mechanisms reflect the unequal situation of women with disabilities.

¹⁸ Law No. 60 of 30 March 2012 on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

¹⁹ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. *Labour Force, Employment and Unemployment in 2024*. https://statistica.gov.md/ro/forta-de-munca-ocuparea-si-somajul-in-anul-2024-9430_61728.htm

²⁰ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. *Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova in 2024*.

²¹ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. *Labour Force, Employment and Unemployment in 2025*.

²² National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. *Measuring Poverty in the Republic of Moldova in 2025*. https://statistica.gov.md/ro/masurarea-saraciei-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2025-10102_62467.html

Fulfilment of the obligations undertaken under Article 11 of CEDAW requires a shift from general inclusion measures towards specific policies that recognize women with disabilities as a group affected by intersectional discrimination and ensure their equal participation in the economy and society of the Republic of Moldova.

In the absence of genuine employment opportunities and sufficient support mechanisms, social benefits remain the main source of income for many women with disabilities, without, however, ensuring economic independence and full participation in society.

Recommendations for the State party:

- 4.1.** Apply Recommendation 1.2, with specific indicators concerning type of disability, place of residence, employment, and income, in order to monitor intersectional discrimination;
- 4.2.** Develop active employment measures dedicated to women with disabilities, including individualized vocational guidance, training, employment support, and job – retention services;
- 4.3.** Ensure the effective implementation of reasonable accommodation and workplace accessibility, as well as strengthen mechanisms for preventing and combating discrimination in employment;
- 4.4.** Guarantee equal access for women with disabilities to employment and vocational training services, with particular attention to women living in rural areas and those in situations of heightened vulnerability;
- 4.5.** Integrate a gender perspective into policies concerning the professional inclusion of persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal economic participation and the autonomy of women with disabilities.

Chapter 5 – Health of Women and Girls with Disabilities

(Article 12 of CEDAW)

Despite the formal availability of healthcare, women with disabilities face persistent structural barriers driven by the interaction of gender and disability. This lack of adapted mechanisms prevents effective, equal access to quality services, particularly in sexual and reproductive health.

Statistical data on access to healthcare services for women with disabilities are limited, while information disaggregated simultaneously by sex and disability does not currently allow for an adequate assessment of the situation of this group. Under these circumstances, authorities face difficulties in identifying specific forms of discrimination, assessing the impact of existing policies, and developing measures adapted to the needs of women and girls with disabilities. At the same time, the lack of a sufficient information base limits the possibility of assessing the extent to which health policies effectively and differentially respond to their need.

Access of Women with Disabilities to Sexual and Reproductive Health

Women with disabilities face specific barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health services that go beyond the physical accessibility of medical institutions. These include a lack of adapted equipment, insufficient training of medical personnel, a lack of accessible information, and communication that is insufficiently adapted to the individual needs of patients.

An assessment conducted by UNFPA²³ highlights that women with disabilities in the Republic of Moldova face multiple discrimination, including with regard to sexual and reproductive health. The report finds that their access to healthcare services is limited by inaccessible infrastructure and insufficient training of medical professionals on the provision of services in an inclusive and human rights-based manner.

Institutional Barriers and Stereotypes Regarding Reproductive Health

An Institute for Human Rights of Moldova (IDOM)²⁴ report on residential centres and psychiatric hospitals highlights critical deficiencies in sexual and reproductive healthcare. Institutional barriers and paternalistic attitudes severely compromise free, informed consent, restricting the reproductive autonomy of women and girls with disabilities.

In this context, respect for the right to health of women with disabilities requires guaranteeing decision-making autonomy and the right to free and informed consent in all matters related to their health, including sexual and reproductive health. Medical or institutional practices based on the assumption that disability affects women's capacity to make autonomous decisions may result in violations of their fundamental rights and perpetuate discrimination based on gender and disability.

The problems identified include the lack of accessible information on sexual and reproductive rights, the lack of reasonable accommodation of medical procedures, the absence of adapted gynaecological equipment for women with physical disabilities, as well as insufficient communication between medical personnel and beneficiaries.

The report also highlights the persistence of discriminatory and paternalistic attitudes concerning the capacity of women with disabilities to make autonomous decisions regarding their family and reproductive lives.

The Rural Dimension and Continuity of Access to Healthcare Services

For women with disabilities living in rural areas, existing barriers are exacerbated by limited access to specialized medical services, the reduced availability of specialists, and difficulties in travelling to medical institutions. In many cases, access to services depends on the availability of family support, which may affect the person's independence and autonomy in accessing healthcare services.

²³ UNFPA. *Country Programme Evaluation: Republic of Moldova 2018–2022 Report*.

[https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/MOLDOVA_CPE_Report_final_Nov15%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/MOLDOVA_CPE_Report_final_Nov15%20(2).pdf)

²⁴ Institute for Human Rights of Moldova. *Report on the Practical Realization of the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women and Girls in Temporary Residential Centres for Persons with Disabilities (Adults) and Psychiatric Hospitals*. Chisinau, 2020.

https://idom.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/raport-reprorights-wwd-md_dis-2.pdf

he experience of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of continuity of healthcare services for persons with disabilities. A study²⁵ on access to healthcare services during the pandemic shows that 79% of persons with disabilities accessed family doctor services, compared to 67% of the general population, reflecting the increased need for consultations and medical monitoring among this group.

Thus, for women with disabilities living in rural areas, equality of access requires not only the existence of healthcare services, but also the elimination of geographical, economic, and institutional barriers that prevent their effective use.

Overall, the available assessments and studies demonstrate that the barriers faced by women with disabilities in accessing healthcare services are structural in nature. In particular, the *Study on the Analysis of the Normative Framework and Accessibility of Services for Women with Disabilities Affected by Violence*²⁶ finds that deficiencies concerning service accessibility, accessible communication, reasonable accommodation, and the training of professionals continue to limit the effective exercise of the right to health. These findings demonstrate that formal equality has not yet been translated into de facto equality.

In accordance with Article 12 of CEDAW, the Republic of Moldova must move from formally guaranteeing access to healthcare services towards ensuring effective, equal, and non – discriminatory access for women with disabilities. This requires accessible, inclusive, and needs-adapted healthcare services provided with respect for the autonomy, dignity, and right of women with disabilities to make informed decisions concerning their own health and reproductive lives.

Recommendations for the State party:

- 5.1. Ensure effective and equal access for women and girls with disabilities to quality healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive health services, by eliminating physical, informational, communication, and institutional barriers;
- 5.2. Apply Recommendation 1.2, with specific indicators concerning the type of disability and type of service used;
- 5.3. Guarantee respect for the autonomy, integrity, and dignity of women with disabilities in all healthcare services, including by ensuring free and informed consent, providing information in accessible formats, and eliminating practices based on stereotypes concerning their capacity to make autonomous decisions;
- 5.4. Strengthen the capacities of health professionals and ensure the application of reasonable accommodation, including by adapting infrastructure, medical equipment, and communication procedures to the individual needs of women with disabilities;
- 5.5. Develop specific measures to reduce disparities in access to healthcare services for women with disabilities living in rural areas and for those in situations of heightened vulnerability.

²⁵ **Keystone Moldova.** *Access of the General Population and Vulnerable Groups to Healthcare Services during the Pandemic.* https://soros.md/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Acces-la-servicii-de-sanatate-in-perioada-pandemica_compressed.pdf

²⁶ **Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities of the Republic of Moldova (AOPD).** *Report on the Analysis of the Normative Framework and Access to Social Services for Girls and Women with Disabilities Affected by Domestic Violence.* Chisinau, 2025. <https://aopd.md/raport-de-analiza-a-cadrului-normativ-si-accesului-la-servicii-sociale-a-fetelor-si-femeilor-cu-dizabilitati-afectate-de-violenta-in-familie-2025/>

Chapter 6 – Participation of Women with Disabilities in Public and Political Life and Decision-Making Processes

(Article 7 of CEDAW)

Article 7 of the CEDAW Convention requires States parties to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and to guarantee their equal participation in electoral processes, the exercise of public functions, and the development of policies that affect their lives. For women with disabilities, the realization of this right requires not only the elimination of formal

discrimination, but also the creation of conditions that enable their effective and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making.

The Republic of Moldova has a legal framework that recognizes the political rights of persons with disabilities. However, the formal recognition of these rights has not translated into equal participation of women in political and public life.

Women with disabilities remain underrepresented in decision – making structures, and their absence from political and institutional spaces perpetuates public policies developed without the direct participation of the persons who are most familiar with the existing barriers.

For women with disabilities, political participation is affected by a form of intersectional discrimination resulting from the overlap between gender – based discrimination and discrimination associated with disability. This interaction generates additional barriers to access to elective office, electoral processes, consultative mechanisms, and leadership positions.

Underrepresentation of Women with Disabilities in Electoral Processes and Decision-Making Structures

Despite the fact that persons with disabilities account for approximately 7% of the population of the Republic of Moldova, their representation in electoral processes and elective positions remains very low.

According to data from the monitoring of the 2023 electoral process, only 28 persons with disabilities stood as candidates for elective positions.²⁷ Although the available data do not allow for a comprehensive analysis of participation from a gender perspective, the low number of candidates with disabilities indicates the existence of structural barriers to the effective exercise of the right to participate in political and public life.

The low level of candidacies demonstrates that access to political competition is determined not only by the existence of the right to stand for election, but also by the existence of genuine conditions that enable the exercise of this right.

For women with disabilities, these obstacles are amplified by the interaction between gender-based discrimination and disability-related barriers, including stereotypes concerning their leadership capacity, lack of accessibility of electoral processes, limited access to information, and the absence of support mechanisms for political participation.

The situation highlighted during the 2025 parliamentary elections confirms the persistence of these barriers. The participation of persons with disabilities in electoral campaigns remained limited, while the results of the elections indicated the absence of representation of persons with disabilities in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova.²⁸

This lack of political representation is not merely an issue of electoral participation, but also a democratic gap, as the experiences and priorities of women with disabilities remain insufficiently reflected in the public agenda and legislative process.

Structural Barriers to Public Participation and Decision-Making

Physical, informational, and institutional barriers exclude women with disabilities from elective, civic, and policy – making processes. In practice, they remain passive beneficiaries rather than equal

²⁷ **CICDE.** *Candidate's Guide to the General Local Elections of 5 November 2023.*
https://cicde.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ghid_candidat_final.pdf

²⁸ **Infonet.** *Monitoring Report on the Parliamentary Elections of 28 September 2025 from the Perspective of Disability.*
<https://www.infonet.md/storage/files/fSm5CmMlBBXhztN4GiMLmfqAeElyuCDHRMQnseHy.pdf>

participants in policy development, violating the principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us”. Achieving their meaningful participation is a binding legal obligation and a vital requirement for de facto gender equality, ensuring public policies accurately reflect the diverse experiences of all women.

Gaps in Data Collection and Monitoring of Participation

The lack of data disaggregated by sex and disability prevents the State from monitoring the representation of women with disabilities in elective positions, public administration, and consultative structures. Without specific indicators, authorities cannot assess underrepresentation barriers or develop evidence – based policies to promote their political participation.

This gap limits the State’s ability to develop evidence-based public policies and to monitor progress in implementing Article 7 of CEDAW concerning the equal participation of women in political and public life. Ensuring the effective and meaningful participation of women with disabilities must be achieved in accordance with the principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us”, as enshrined in the CRPD.

A study²⁹ on the participation of persons with disabilities in democratic processes and decision – making mechanisms highlights that they continue to face barriers to the full exercise of their right to public participation, including informational and institutional barriers and barriers related to the accessibility of consultation and representation processes. These obstacles disproportionately affect women with disabilities, who face the intersection of gender-based and disability-based discrimination.

In the absence of genuine and meaningful participation of women with disabilities, gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities remain only partially achieved objectives. Ensuring their representation in decision-making processes is not only a legal obligation of the State, but also an essential condition for a democratic society based on equality, diversity, and respect for the rights of all women.

Recommendations for the State party:

- 6.1.** Apply Recommendation 1.2, with specific indicators concerning the type of disability, elective positions, and consultative structures;
- 6.2.** Eliminate physical, informational, communication, and institutional barriers that limit the participation of women with disabilities in electoral processes and public participation mechanisms;
- 6.3.** Adopt specific measures to promote the leadership and representation of women with disabilities in public and political life, including through the development of capacity – building programmes and support for their political participation;
- 6.4.** Establish permanent mechanisms for the meaningful participation and consultation of women with disabilities and their representative organizations in the development, implementation, and monitoring of public policies that affect them;
- 6.5.** Integrate an intersectional gender and disability perspective into policies on gender equality and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, with a view to achieving de facto equality.

²⁹ **Partnership for Every Child / Centre Partnership for Development (CPD).** *Political Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Moldova: Barriers, Gaps and Directions for Reform.* 2026. https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Nota-CPD_participarea-p.-dizabil.pdf

