
8 March, International Women's Day: "Women with Disabilities and Volunteering"

Active volunteering of women with disabilities, as an essential element of the new social governance, manifests solidarity of this group of active citizens and their commitment to the community.

Volunteering is one of the essential dimensions of active citizenship and democracy, embodying in practice such values as solidarity and non-discrimination, thus contributing to harmonious development of societies. The voluntary work carried out by women with disabilities is an important and indispensable agent of social change, directed to full inclusion and social non-discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. Hence the urgent need to ensure effective support measures to support the social volunteering towards women with disabilities, to allow a greater number of people, particularly women with disabilities, should be involved in such activities, encouraging interchange and establishment of good practices at local, regional, national, European and international levels.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states in its articles the necessity of active cooperation of women and girls with disabilities in the development and implementation of legislation and policies, and other decision-making processes on the related issues not only for Spain but also for the European Union, but it is still far from compliance.

To encourage active volunteering of women with disabilities, allowing them an active and committed participation in the life of society as social change agents, the Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (CERMI) claims that:

1. It should be recognized the selfless work, solidarity and social transformation undertaken by women with disabilities and their representative organizations, aimed at achieving visibility, non-discrimination and full inclusion of this part of the community.

2. The basic activities of taking care of people in the situation of dependency, to which a number of women with disabilities are relegated as a result of the concept still deeply rooted in our society that perpetuates the invisibility and allows greater discrimination against these women, should not be confused with voluntary actions. The CERMI strongly denounces these situations, which have to be corrected by applying appropriate measures to develop the promotion of personal autonomy declared by the legislation.

- 3.** It should be established mechanisms and structures that enable organizations of the Third sector working with persons with disability to encourage active volunteering among women with disabilities and contribute to its promotion and development, thus encouraging the existing networks in this area, as now the National Network of Women with Disabilities of the CERMI.
- 4.** It should be enhanced the scope of voluntary social actions in the field of disability by representative organizations in their strategies concerning gender and disability to understand contribution of volunteering to the welfare, to improve living conditions and social inclusion of women and girls with disabilities.
- 5.** It should be encouraged collaboration between the entities of the Third sector, especially among those representing women and those that represent women with disabilities to achieve synergies in terms of social volunteering that encourage volunteering among the groups at risk of social exclusion, such as girls and women with disabilities.
- 6.** The new National Volunteer Strategy 2010-2014, relating to its inspiring principles, should take into consideration the perspective of disability applied to the genre to deepen this concept, inform and raise awareness on volunteering, improve qualifications of the people working with volunteers and volunteers themselves, strengthen collaboration between all the actors involved, promote the study of new forms of volunteering and encourage their development.
- 7.** It should be promoted permanent mechanisms of cooperation between businesses and the Third sector to include corporate volunteer programs from the viewpoint of gender and disability.

The CERMI recognizes the ability and authority to represent the interests of girls and women with disabilities at the state level and encourages all its member organizations to disseminate this Manifesto and to act proactively to promote active volunteering of this sector of the population, which currently represents 60% of all people with disabilities in our country.