



# The socio-cultural challenges to maternal and neonatal care: The views of women with disabilities receiving maternity care in the Chereponi district of the Northern Ghana



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## ABSTRACT

Persons with disabilities form a significant proportion of the global population, majority of which are women. The United Nations Convention guarantees persons with disabilities equal rights to reproduction and healthcare access. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goal 3 targets improvement of the health and well-being of individuals including persons with disabilities. However, women with disabilities have not been given close attention, particularly in developing countries. This study explored the challenges faced by women with disabilities vis-a-vis their non-disabled counterparts within the same period and in the same study setting. A qualitative design was adopted to conduct in-depth interviews involving 20 disabled women and 20 non-disabled women. The study compared the challenges faced by these two categories of women in accessing maternal and child healthcare services in the Chereponi District of the Northern Region of Ghana. Generally, women with disabilities were socially excluded within the family, society and in the health facilities based on their conditions. The disabled women encountered more challenges such as stigmatisation, discrimination, oppression and verbal abuse that translated into poor maternal clinic attendance. The socio-cultural beliefs and perceptions about disability influenced how the public and healthcare professionals related with the disabled women and resulted in poor maternity care. The implementation of the Disability Act needs to be strengthened by intensifying the disability issues in health training and practice to equip professionals with skills and ethics in handling disabled persons as well as the right of the disabled. Healthcare promotion should be channelled towards disabusing the public mind about beliefs and perceptions associated with disability and reproduction. The rights of disabled persons should be respected in the provision of public transport and healthcare services. Facility-based counselling and community health education should critically

*Abbreviations:* CD, Chereponi District; CHPS, Community-Based Health Planning and Services; DW, Disabled Woman; IDI, Individual Interview; NDW, Non-Disabled Women; SDG, Sustainable Development Goals.

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