

Women with disabilities understand their health needs better than anyone else . . .

My friend Rosie from Fiji has scars from burns. People laughed at her when she tried to get condoms at an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign.

Beatriz from Colombia has a speech impairment and missing fingers from a birth defect. Nurses always seem afraid of her and act as though her disability is contagious.

Sana in Lebanon is blind. She gets embarrassed because she always has to ask someone to read sexual and reproductive health information to her. It's never available in Braille.

Yulia in Russia has a spinal-cord injury. Doctors won't say if her injury will affect her sexuality or ability to have children.

Meldah in Uganda has paralysed legs from polio. Doctors always ask her about her disability, even when she's sick with malaria.

Jessica from Malaysia is deaf. She almost died because no one at the hospital could understand her when she was sick.

. . . so why aren't they full and equal participants in all health and development programmes?

