

# GLAD CO-CHAIRS CALL TO ACTION

## A CALL TO REBUILD A FUTURE INCLUSIVE OF ALL

The Co-Chairs of the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network (the UK Department of International Development (DFID); the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the International Disability Alliance) are issuing this Call to Action to all stakeholders to include persons with disabilities in the response and recovery phases of the Covid-19.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation of persons with disabilities and the lack of a clear roadmap to tackle inequality and discrimination during the COVID-19 response and recovery processes. Despite continued effort and collective advocacy by persons with disabilities and their representative organizations for inclusive and accessible prevention and response, there is still a significant gap when it comes to the human rights, and indeed the lives, of persons with disabilities.

With the entry into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the subsequent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the overarching principle of “*Leave no one behind*”, we have agreed on global commitments to eradicate poverty and to improve the quality of people’s lives, including persons with disabilities. Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis must be used as an opportunity to rethink the value we attach to all humans and to deconstruct systemic inequalities, to rebuild inclusively and to strive to achieve transformative equality for each and every human being.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

COVID-19 can only be tackled by the joint effort of governments, international and regional intergovernmental organizations, foundations, civil society organizations, the private sector and individuals. Both COVID-19 response and recovery need to be disability inclusive and based on the rights of persons with disabilities. To this end, we urge all actors to: (a) take into

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consideration the ten recommendations on disability-inclusive COVID-19 prevention and response developed by the International Disability Alliance and through close consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations; (b) implement the UN Secretary-General's Policy Brief on "A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19"; (c) make information, prevention and intervention measures fully inclusive of and accessible to all persons with disabilities regardless of their gender, age, migration status or any other status; (d) collect and disaggregate data on COVID-19 by disability using the Washington Group short set of questions, as well as by gender, age, income, race, ethnicity, migratory status, geographic location, and other characteristics; and (e) address the pandemic and the economic crisis in line with the "*leave no one behind*" overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This all will require close consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at all levels in designing and implementing as well as monitoring response and recovery roadmaps.

## **To Governments:**

While the virus does not discriminate, we have witnessed that State responses to the pandemic have been discriminatory in many instances, and existing discrimination makes some people with disabilities more likely to contract the virus and/or experience worse consequences. We are calling on governments to review their responses to the pandemic and to examine them through a human rights lens:

- Put in place structures with the necessary resources to include persons with disabilities and their families in COVID-19 prevention, intervention, and recovery processes in both development and humanitarian settings in each country.
- Allocate and use funds on COVID-19 including Overseas Development Assistance in a disability inclusive manner and in line with Article 32 of the UNCRPD and avoid diverting funds allocated for persons with disabilities to other uses.
- In line with the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action take action in order to effectively identify and respond to the needs, and rights and priorities of persons with disabilities, including women and girls with

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disabilities, impacted by humanitarian emergencies, who face compounding risks and barriers.

- Increase funding to disability-inclusive SDG implementation and sustain commitments of donor governments to truly leave no one behind during the crisis and in the recovery process.

## **To International and Regional Intergovernmental Organizations:**

COVID-19 and the accompanying economic crisis are global challenges requiring international co-operation and human solidarity, which need to be led by international and regional intergovernmental organizations including the UN. It is therefore crucial that international and regional intergovernmental organizations recognize and respond to the vulnerability and marginalization of persons with disabilities and their families to COVID-19 and the accompanying unprecedented socioeconomic crisis. We urge international and regional intergovernmental organizations to:

- Ensure that the UN funds on COVID-19 are measured against indicators targeting most marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. If persons with disabilities are excluded, the funds risk exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and threaten our shared responsibility to everyone's safety.
- Investigate violations of the rights of persons with disabilities during COVID-19 and hold duty bearers accountable to their obligations.

## **To Foundations and Mainstream Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):**

A crucial role of foundations and civil society organizations is to identify and serve to lift up voices of those most marginalized so they can be addressed by emergency preparedness and response measures. We urge foundations and CSOs to:

- Adjust grant making requirements for persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, including converting project-based funding to unrestricted/core support grants.

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- Recognize the effects of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities and introduce new windows for funding to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities and their families.
- Ensuring that COVID-19 response programming and grant making is disability inclusive by investing in the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities at different levels and meaningfully engaging them in decision-making as well as monitoring of initiatives on COVID-19.

## **To the Private Sector:**

The private sector can act to secure the employment of persons with disabilities, ensure accessibility of information and products for preventing and treating COVID-19 and bridge the gap between consumers and producers. In particular:

- Prohibit the expulsion of and/or discrimination against workers with disabilities and those families caring for a family member with a disability during and after this pandemic and ensure the provision of reasonable accommodation as well as removal of all barriers impeding the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work force.
- Ensure workplaces are disability inclusive and that voices of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations have a role in the crisis taskforces and response teams and are represented and involved in decisions about COVID-19 and its impact.
- Proactively support persons with disabilities and their families in accessing personal protective equipment products.
- Ensure availability, affordability and accessibility of the COVID-19 vaccine for persons with disabilities when developed.

## **To Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families:**

Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) are the best experts to guide on COVID-19 prevention and response activities. In line with “*Nothing about us, without us*”, we invite OPD participation at all levels and in all stages of COVID-19 prevention and response processes, including in the early stages of planning and in the re-opening phase.

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- Ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities including those underrepresented groups including women and girls with disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities, persons with deaf blindness, children and older persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples with disabilities, and refugees, migrants and persons with disabilities affected by humanitarian emergencies.
- Hold duty bearers accountable and continuously monitor the situation of the rights of all persons with disabilities.