



# Quality Assurance in COVID-19 Crisis Response: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

## What are the impacts of the COVID-19 on persons with disabilities?

15% of the world population has a disability. COVID-19 therefore inevitably also affects persons with disabilities, which is a heterogeneous group with different access or health needs. As persons with disabilities often rely on some sort of support structure from family, friends or others, many, but not all, are at a **greater risk for contracting or transmitting COVID-19**. With all governments currently engaging in awareness and emergency response activities, it is **crucial to ensure the inclusion of all persons with disabilities** therein in line with Article 11 of the UN CRPD.

## What measures can we take to ensure adequate consideration and inclusion of persons with disabilities in response efforts?

**Concerning communication**, it is vital to ensure that persons with disabilities receive all communication.

- Provision of gender-sensitive and disability-sensitive language to ensure that women and men, girls and boys with disabilities feel addressed by public health announcements.
- Provision of live sign language interpretation for all COVID-19 related press conferences and televised news media reports.
- Provision of digital information in accessible formats, including easy-to-read language for persons with intellectual disabilities and audio formats for visually impaired persons.

Provision of accessible radio information, including for persons with intellectual disabilities.

**Concerning health services**, it is essential that persons with disabilities can access relevant health services. This requires:

- Health-centres curing COVID-19 patients must be fully accessible for persons with mobility impairments.
- Training for medical staff to ensure that COVID-19 testing and treatment is available and accessible on equal basis for all persons with disabilities.
- Creation of fully accessible points of distribution of medical equipment such as disinfectant or face masks, or creation of specific points of distribution for persons with disabilities. This also applies to other relevant and potentially limited goods such as clean water or food stuffs.

**Concerning equal and meaningful participation** during the emergency response it is even more necessary to ensure that Disabled Persons Organisations (DPO) are included and consulted during national planning.

- Representation of DPOs in emergency committees on the national, regional or local level.
- Collaboration with DPOs, especially on the local level, to identify persons with disabilities and ensure their access to communication about COVID-19 and required health services.
- Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in national contingency planning.

### **Some key resources:**

[European Disability Forum \(2020\): COVID-19 Disability-Inclusive Response](#)

[Light for the World \(2019\): Recommendations for Humanitarian Response](#)

[Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights COVID-19 and the human rights of persons with disabilities](#)