

No one left behind, not now, not ever¹

Persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 response

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The COVID-19 crisis is new. It is requiring us all to act, interact and communicate in different ways than we are used to. However, the inequalities exacerbating COVID-19's impact on persons with disabilities are not new. The risk in the response to the current crisis is that persons with disabilities will be left behind once again. The good news is that we already know what works. Fundamentally, we need social justice, effective inclusion, equality of opportunities and decent work.

Five Key Points

1) Support solutions that promote equality

For example, work-from-home policies must ensure that workers with disabilities have appropriate adjustments at home, as they should have in their regular workplace. Other measures taken in response to COVID-19, such as self-isolation, need to take into account the particular situation of persons with disabilities, including that some may need personal assistance.

2) Ensure communication is accessible and disability-inclusive

All public health, education and work-related communication on COVID-19, including on telework arrangements, must be accessible to persons with disabilities, including through the use of sign language, subtitles and accessible websites. Communication should also address the particular situation of persons with disabilities.

3) Provide adequate social protection

Social protection is essential for persons with disabilities to cover the extra costs related to disability, which may increase due to the impact of the crisis and lead to a disruption of their support system. Persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, already experience higher rates of unemployment; now, more than ever, gender-responsive social protection meas-

¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), No one left behind, not now, not ever Persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 response, Date: 8 April 2020, Copyright © International Labour Organization 2020

ures will have to be designed in a way that supports persons with disabilities to enter, remain and progress in the labour market.

4) Ensure labour rights now, labour rights always

At the core of the disability rights movement and the labour rights movement, is social dialogue and participation. This is needed more than ever during the current crisis. A multiplicity of views - from governments, workers' and employers' organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities - brings a multiplicity of solutions. For this to happen, the application of international labour standards and other human rights instruments, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is essential.

5) Change the narrative

Fundamental to all these points is including persons with disabilities as co-creators of COVID-19 responses, as champions and users, not as victims. All crises bring opportunities, and the opportunity of the moment is to make inclusion of all previously marginalized groups - including persons with disabilities - a central element of all responses. By building on our experience with disability inclusion and deepening partnerships, we can support a sustainable and inclusive response to COVID-19.

To advance social justice and meaningfully include persons with disabilities, we need to be bold. We need to be innovative. And we must act together - during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond.