

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk

Evidence Digest

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SIGHTSAVERS

Latest evidence January – March 2020

This digest was written in March 2020 but publishing was delayed, therefore more recent evidence is not featured here.

COVID-19/Coronavirus

The Disability Inclusion Helpdesk has also published an [evidence digest on the situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). **Some people with disabilities are more likely to develop serious illness from COVID-19**, and some people with disabilities are encountering particular barriers and challenges in the pandemic response. For example, disabled peoples' organisations and advocates have highlighted that **it may not be possible for some people with disabilities to self-isolate or maintain distance from carers providing essential care**. They have also highlighted that **media and public messaging of COVID-19 has often implicitly devalued people with disabilities** by framing the issue as presenting a serious risk *only* for people with chronic illnesses and older people. **People with disabilities living in residential institutions have been particularly at risk**; for example in South Korea, 11 residents and 5 staff members with disabilities in a private care centre and 100 patients in a psychiatric ward contracted COVID-19. Furthermore, **official communications about COVID-19 have**

sometimes not been accessible to deaf and blind persons; for example in Germany; and food, medical supplies and medications have reportedly become inaccessible for some people with disabilities in the UK and China.

Recommendations for the pandemic response to be disability-inclusive have been shared from the [Special Rapporteur for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the [World Health Organisation](#), the [International Disability Alliance \(IDA\)](#), the [IASC Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Reference Group](#), [European Disability Forum](#), and [Disability Rights UK](#).

Please do not hesitate to contact the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk if you have a query about disability inclusion and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental health and development

K4D Topic Guide (January 2020)
Knowledge for Development (K4D) recently published "[Mental Health for Sustainable Development: A Topic Guide for Development Professionals](#)". The guide reviews the current

evidence base and provides: an overview of key concepts and definitions; a discussion of why mental health has emerged as a development priority; an overview of the state of mental health in low and middle-income countries (LMICs); and links to other areas of development. The global prevalence of mental health conditions is high with one in four people developing a mental health condition during their lifetime. Prevalence is expected to increase dramatically as population sizes and life expectancies rise. The cyclical relationship between poverty and mental health is well-established and is a further contributing factor. However, many people with mental health conditions in Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs) face stigma, discrimination and abuse as well as exclusion from the disability movement, development programmes and policies. There has been very little investment in rights-based approaches to mental health, and limited research on mental health from a human rights perspective in most LMICs.

Employment

Quota schemes for promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (December 2019)

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) issued two publications on quota schemes for promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. [Volume 1](#), a review of quota systems in 103 countries, summarises published information on quota schemes and elements of existing systems that are effective. Only a few countries have publicly available information on the effectiveness of their quota schemes, but based on the available information the review found that compliance with quota obligations is patchy or incomplete. The report provides several recommendations for improving quota schemes' effectiveness. [Volume 2](#) provides key information about specific quota schemes in 103 countries and the extent to which they are in place alongside anti-discrimination legislation.

Education, children and disability

Access to education for children with visual impairments in Sub-Saharan Africa (January 2020)

UNESCO and Sightsavers published a report

on access to education for children with visual impairments in sub-Saharan Africa, based on data and information analysed from a survey of representatives of Ministries of Education, a literature review, a focus group discussion with members of the disabled people's movement in sub-Saharan Africa, and information from Sightsavers projects. The report finds that while there has been an increase in children with visual impairments enrolling in and completing primary education, children with visual impairments still experience disproportionate educational disadvantage and discrimination and a range of barriers to inclusion. Barriers include: teachers that are unable or unwilling to adapt to accommodate children's needs; lack of access to specialist tuition or training; little or no access to assistive technology; poorly lit and/or inaccessible schools; a lack of functional and clinical assessments; and inadequate advice to parents and teachers. Good practices highlighted include: promoting good quality early childhood development for children with disabilities; strengthening Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) to collect disability- and sex-disaggregated data; encouraging special schools to provide outreach and play a broader role in education systems; and government participation in inclusive education initiatives.

Estimated prevalence of disability and developmental delay among preschool children in rural Malawi (January 2020)

Findings of a cross-sectional survey by Sightsavers, in collaboration with the University of Malawi and the University of Birmingham, were published in *Child: Care, Health and Development*. The study, partly funded by DFID, highlights that disability and developmental delay are common among children attending preschool in Malawi (10.7% of children were identified as having a disability). It also recommends that preschools must be responsive to include children with a variety of impairments to ensure they can participate fully in preschool education.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

Abortion and Disability: Towards an

[Intersectional Human Rights-Based Approach](#) (February 2020)

Women Enabled International published findings from global consultations with persons with disabilities about their perspectives on abortion and disability. Key findings highlight that people with disabilities believe pregnant people with and without disabilities must be able to exercise reproductive autonomy, and that laws, policies, and the medical community should respect their decisions. The report notes the broader barriers to SRHR that women with disabilities encounter, including systemic disability discrimination, and conscious and subconscious bias by medical providers. The findings emphasise the essential need to dismantle stigma and discrimination at the societal level to ensure the possibility of meaningful reproductive decision-making by persons with disabilities.

Transport

[Disability, Mobility and Transport in LMICs: A Thematic Review](#) (January 2020)

The academic journal *Sustainability* published a thematic review of the available evidence on disability inclusion, mobility and transport in LMICs. The literature review found very little published research on what constitutes inclusive transport from the perspective of adults and children with a range of disabilities in LMICs. The research found positive examples of policies and services that facilitate access to transport. It recommends a twin-track approach of mainstreaming disability into services and providing specialist targeted services for those that need them. It

also advocates greater engagement with people with disabilities and disabled people's organisations (DPOs) when planning, monitoring and evaluating transport services.

Displacement

[These Rights are Mine: disability rights among refugees and the host community in Tanzania](#) (February 2020)

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) published baseline survey findings on the needs and barriers for persons with disabilities in Nyarugusu refugee camp and the surrounding host community in Kasulu district, Tanzania. Key findings include: 75% refugees and 87% host community members with disabilities do not know about frameworks and instruments that ensure their rights; 37% refugees and 55% host community members with disabilities do not know where to seek redress for rights violations; 60% refugees and 40% host community members with disabilities have experienced violence or discrimination; 69% refugees and 30% host community members experience barriers in accessing services, with refugees with disabilities less likely to be satisfied with services. The report recommends strengthening the capacity of DPOs, civil society organisations, service providers, community and religious leaders, activists and caregivers to monitor and report on rights violations; to deliver relevant information to persons with disabilities; to identify persons with disability using the Washington Group Questions; and to advocate on disability rights.

Policy and News

On 10th January 2020 the [Islamabad Capital Territory Rights of Persons with Disability Act](#) was approved in Pakistan, to protect and promote the rights of people with disabilities in Islamabad. Pakistan has been a party to the UNCRPD since 2011.

In January 2020, the European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, confirmed a [new European Union \(EU\) disability strategy post-2020](#) and Members of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs

Committee debated a [proposed draft resolution on the strategy](#). Some of the members' shared demands included: full involvement of persons with disabilities and their organisations in the drafting of the strategy; full alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); and assurance that EU funds are not used for projects that do not ensure the rights of persons with disabilities (for example, residential institutions or inaccessible infrastructure).

The Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network (currently co-chaired by DFID) held its [fourth annual meeting](#) in February to discuss strengthening the capacity of organisations in international development and humanitarian action to serve and engage persons with disabilities, and to track progress against the *GLAD Strategic Plan 2018-2020*. During the meeting, donors discussed their work on disability inclusive development, for example the [Danish Disability Fund](#) for organisations of persons with disabilities in Denmark and their partners in the Global South.

Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities [submitted a report](#) to the UN Human Rights Council focusing on the impact of ‘ableism’ that is reflected in medical and scientific legislation, policies, customs and practices. The report recommends the adoption of measures to raise awareness; implementation of rights-based prevention policies; respect for and protection of personal autonomy, the right to life and the right to personal integrity of persons with disabilities; and promotion of their participation in decision-making. In a similar vein, Devandas-Aguilar gave a [TED talk](#) in which she shared her personal experiences of disability; gave a summary of the rights of persons with disabilities under the CRPD; outlined governments’ responsibilities to remove barriers to inclusion and engage more effectively with persons with disabilities; and emphasised the need to celebrate disability as part of human diversity.

The [Zero Project Conference](#) in Vienna highlighted [75 innovative practices](#) for better access to education for persons with disabilities, and [11 innovative policies](#) for disability inclusive education, including

policies from [Samoa](#), [Nepal](#), [Namibia](#) and [Dominican Republic](#).

A delegation of persons with disabilities, including members of IDA, participated in the [World Urban Forum](#) in February 2020. They delivered training on “*Cities celebrating diversity: Effective engagement of persons with disabilities in New Urban Agenda implementation*”, and contributed to the development of the [Abu Dhabi Declared Actions](#) to promote the full, effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the New Urban Agenda.

The World Bank issued a guidebook on [Disability Measurement in Household Surveys](#) using the Washington Group sets of questions.

In November 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) published a [package of training and guidance materials](#) on how to implement a human rights and recovery approach to mental health in line with the UN CRPD.

The [13th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the UN CRPD](#) is, rescheduled for the second week of December 2020 in New York. The conference will focus on implementing the CRPD and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development for all persons with disabilities, with a cross-cutting theme of strengthening capacity-building for implementation – with a particular focus on women and girls with disabilities. There will be three roundtable sessions on:

- Disability and business: realizing the right to work for persons with disabilities;
- Addressing the rights and needs of older person with disabilities;
- Promoting inclusive environments for the full implementation of the CRPD.

Helpdesk Updates

The Helpdesk has recently published the following queries. Please do read these on [our website page](#) where you will find all published queries to date.

| <u>Query Number</u> | <u>Query Title</u> |
|---------------------|--|
| 30 | Climate resilience and disability inclusion: mapping and rapid evidence review |
| 35 | The impacts of COVID-19 on people with disabilities: a rapid review |
| 39 | Disability and Child Marriage |
| 41 | Addressing barriers to employment for people with disabilities: evidence and lessons learned |
| 42 | The financial and economic impacts of COVID-19 on people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries |
| 43 | Guidance note: disability inclusion, COVID-19 and adaptations to the LEAP programme |
| 44 | The likely impacts and risks of COVID-19 for people with disabilities in humanitarian contexts, and mitigation measures. |
| 46 | Trade and Disability Inclusion |
| 50 | Evidence of the impacts on and risks to people with disabilities from the COVID-19 pandemic, May – July 2020 |
| 51 | Disability inclusion in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries |
| 52 | Disability rights in North Africa and engaging with DPOs in the region |

WANT TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE HELPDESK?

Send us an email and we can discuss your request further:

enquiries@disabilityinclusion.org.uk