Dear Sirs and Madams,

Call for submissions: COVID-19 and the increase of domestic violence against women was addressed also to women’s network of associations for people with disabilities by Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The women’s network of associations for people with disabilities is thanking for the possibility to reply. The network has been formed 15 years ago and today consists of 18 national associations. The basis of the work relies in CRPD article 6 women with disabilities.

Women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination. Furthermore, women and girls with disabilities are often at greater risk also at home, and the restrictions placed due to COVID-19 may have cumulated the problems.

1. According to Finnish school health questionnaire (2017) girls with functioning disabilities face many times more the threat of physical or sexual violence compared to other girls. According to the report by the Ministry of the Interior of Finland (2018) women with disabilities face 2-3 time more violence or threat of violence. The risk of sexual violence is especially high among the women with intellectual disabilities. However, the availability of data regarding influence of pandemic lockdowns on figures relating to violence against women with disabilities is unclear/not available.
2. Helplines are basically available. However, the accessibility of the helplines is crucial. Furthermore, if communication of disabled woman depends on the help of the very partner, relative or helper, who is abusive, it may be impossible to reach any helplines. In addition, based on the Vappu Viemerö’s study Violence against disabled women, the fear of calling for help is profound. The availability of data regarding number of calls by women with disabilities is unclear /not available.
3. Many women with disabilities may belong to risk group of COVID-19 virus due to functioning disability or a disease. The more severe the disability or the disease, the greater the risk. Thus, women with disabilities may need to limit their contacts and have a greater dependence on the very partner, relative or helper, who may be abusive. In addition, in care homes the restrictive measures prohibit relatives to visit. Also, some restrictions of the care homes have been limiting the liberty of movement without legal grounds. These situations put women with disabilities in vulnerable position and inhibits leaving isolation and fleeing for help.
4. The availability of accessible shelters is unclear /not available, which creates a barrier for women with disability to reach them. Similarly, the lack of timely transport to shelters and the fact that most shelters do not admit personal disability assistants can be obstacles for women with disabilities to have access to shelters.
5. The earlier studies, the results of the Finnish school health questionnaire (2017) and the report by the Ministry of the Interior of Finland (2018) clearly show the greater risks of violence that women with disabilities face in Finland. The reporting and the actions against the violence on women and girls with disability do not meet the need in general and now at time of COVID-19 crisis. Women and girls with disability are not visible in available data, in government COVID-guidelines or in media for that matter. Invisibility increases the threat of violence and domestic violence against women with disability.

Yours sincerely, Sanna Leppäjoki-Tiistola

on behalf of women’s network of associations for people with disabilities of Finland

Organization specialist and the contact person of women’s network of associations for people with disabilities of Finland

Invalidiliitto ry - The Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities

Organization activities, South East Finland

c/o Lounatuulet Yhteisötalo, Läntinen Pitkäkatu 33, 20100 Turku, Finland

tel. +358 44 765 0579, [sanna.leppajoki-tiistola@invalidiliitto.fi](mailto:sanna.leppajoki-tiistola@invalidiliitto.fi)

[www.invalidiliitto.fi](http://www.invalidiliitto.fi)