Sightsavers makes this statement as a member of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC).

This statement focuses on health emergencies as one area covered in our written submission.

We strongly encourage the CRPD Committee to consider the full breadth of situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies in preparing the General Comment, including epidemics, pandemics and other public health emergencies.

A 2020 Joint Statement: Persons with Disabilities and COVID-19 by the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, on behalf of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Envoy of the UNSG on Disability and Accessibilityset out States Parties’ obligations under Article 11 to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in the pandemic response, which we hope the Committee will consider in preparing its General Comment.

The Joint Statement advises that States should continue providing to persons with disabilities the health services required specifically because of their disabilities; they should prevent discriminatory denial of health care or life-saving services on the basis of disability; they must ensure that persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, are closely consulted with and actively involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of disease prevention and containment measures; they should safeguard the provision of food, medicine, and other supplies for persons with disabilities during situations of isolation and quarantine and ensure the continuation of support in the community and accelerate deinstitutionalisation; and all services should be accessible for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. States should also give consideration to diversity among persons with disabilities, including gender, age and deprivation.

It will be important for the Committee to consider States Parties’ duties under Article 11 and international human rights law to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in pandemics and other public health emergencies, including their duties to respect, protect and fulfil the right to health and all associated rights including non-discrimination and the right to food, an adequate standard of living, education, social security and a healthy environment.