08.02.2023

**Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
Palais Wilson - 52, rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva (Switzerland)**

**Oral Statement**

**Day of General Discussion and Call for Written Submissions on Article 11 of the Convention**

Distinguished members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

We welcome this general discussion with the Committee, United Nations agencies, other bodies and civil society organizations focusing on persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies in the context of Article 11 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) an estimated 1.3 billion people – or 16% of the global population – experience a significant disability today. Persons with disabilities are a diverse group, and factors such as sex, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, race, caste, ethnicity and their social and economic situation affect their experiences in life and their health needs. Mostly, [persons with disabilities](https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab_2) die earlier, have poorer health, and experience more limitations in everyday functioning than others. A person’s environment has a huge effect on the experience and extent of disability. Inaccessible environments create barriers that often hinder the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others. In displacement settings across the globe the needs of people with disabilities are still largely overlooked. For instance, people with disabilities who manage to reach evacuation centres, have to still suffer due to inaccessible facilities, lack of information and availability of medication.

Today, we would like to highlight some of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in India that made them extremely vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 health emergency in India laid bare two critical facts – the necessity of effective disaster management systems and the glaring gaps in the working of these systems, particularly in assessing the adverse impact on persons with disabilities. By focusing on the COVID-19 health emergency we also want to underscore existing health inequities in developing nations that affect persons with disabilities disproportionately.

Out of the numerous challenges faced by persons with disabilities during COVID-19 in India, the following left [persons with disabilities struggling to cope with the emergency](https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/locked-down-and-left-behind-covid-disrupted-lives-of-the-disabled-more-finds-study/article65996122.ece):

1. Difficulty in accessing daily medication and health facilities such as monitoring of blood pressure, therapy sessions etc.

2. Stoppage of doorstep delivery of ration and food along with limiting access to caregivers and support groups due to imposition of prolonged lockdown.

3. Failure by the government in making available information on COVID-19 in accessible formats catering to all types of disabilities as well as providing well-functioning helplines equipped to attend concerns of persons with disabilities.

4. Failure by the government to implement the [National Disaster Management Guidelines on Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction](https://ndma.gov.in/sites/default/files/IEC/Booklets/Disability%20inclusive%20DRR.pdf) which was issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi prior to the pandemic in 2019.

We believe that the Committee will take note of the abovementioned challenges that exacerbated the existing health inequities including other socioeconomic disparities that adversely affected persons with disabilities.

We are confident that the general discussion will make an important contribution to a better understanding of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, and serve as a useful tool to enhance the implementation of State parties’ obligations under the Convention.

We thank you all for your attention.

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