

**SPECIAL EDITION: COVID-19**

**WBU E-BULLETIN**

**VOLUME 16, ISSUE 2**

**April 2020**

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**Changing What It Means to be Blind!**

[CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE E-BULLETIN 3](#_Toc39488246)

[PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE 4](#_Toc39488247)

[COVID-19 Global Updates 5](#_Toc39488248)

[ACCESSIBILITY CAMPAIGN - COVID19 5](#_Toc39488249)

[ZIMBABWE BROADCASTING CORPORATION AND GOVERNMENT SUED OVER LACK OF ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION ON COVID-19 6](#_Toc39488250)

[UPDATE FROM MONGOLIA 6](#_Toc39488251)

[UPDATE FROM THAILAND ASSOCIATION OF THE BLIND 8](#_Toc39488252)

[UPDATE FROM LEBANON 9](#_Toc39488253)

[UPDATE FROM GUYANA 10](#_Toc39488254)

[UPDATE FROM THE CARIBBEAN: THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 11](#_Toc39488255)

[UPDATE FROM NEW ZEALAND 13](#_Toc39488256)

[UPDATE FROM THE AFRICAN UNION OF THE BLIND: LETTER TO THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION 15](#_Toc39488257)

[UPDATE FROM EUROPEAN BLIND UNION: GLOBAL CALL FOR AN ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE RESPONSE 15](#_Toc39488258)

[UPDATES FROM WBU 16](#_Toc39488259)

[WBU CALL TO ACTION -19 ACTIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE COVID-19 RESPONSE 16](#_Toc39488260)

[WBU SURVEY ON COVID-19 16](#_Toc39488261)

[FACEBOOK LIVE SESSIONS ON COVID-19 16](#_Toc39488262)

[WBU-ICEVI JOINT GENERAL ASSEMBLIES POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19 17](#_Toc39488263)

[COVID-19 RESOURCES 17](#_Toc39488264)

[TOWARD A DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE COVID19 RESPONSE: 10 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY ALLIANCE 17](#_Toc39488265)

[A DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT HANDWASHING ADVICE CREATED FOR BLIND PEOPLE BY AUDIO DESCRIBED AOTEAROA 18](#_Toc39488266)

[GUIDELINES ON PRE-CONDITION TO INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – COVID-19 RESPONSE 20](#_Toc39488267)

[TECH UPDATES 21](#_Toc39488268)

[OVERVIEW ON ACCESSIBILITY OF VIDEO CONFERENCING APPS AND SERVICES 21](#_Toc39488269)

[ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES IN WINDOWS WEB BROWSERS FOR LOW VISION USERS 22](#_Toc39488270)

[ORBIT RESEARCH INTRODUCES THE GRAPHITI® INTERACTIVE TACTILE GRAPHIC DISPLAY 23](#_Toc39488271)

[REMINDER: CONTACT INFORMATION 24](#_Toc39488272)

[THE WBU REGIONS 24](#_Toc39488273)

[AFRICA 24](#_Toc39488274)

[ASIA 24](#_Toc39488275)

[ASIA-PACIFIC 24](#_Toc39488276)

[EUROPE 24](#_Toc39488277)

[LATIN AMERICA 24](#_Toc39488278)

[NORTH AMERICA/THE CARIBBEAN 24](#_Toc39488279)

[WBU TABLE OFFICERS 24](#_Toc39488280)

[REGIONAL PRESIDENTS 25](#_Toc39488281)

[WBU STAFF 25](#_Toc39488282)

[OUR SPONSORS 26](#_Toc39488283)

[Our Platinum Sponsors 26](#_Toc39488284)

[Our Diamond Sponsors 26](#_Toc39488285)

[Our Gold Sponsors 26](#_Toc39488286)

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE E-BULLETIN

We welcome articles from the regions and from members who wish to share their good news with the rest of the world. Our next deadline for content is **July 6th,** **2020.** We accept submissions in English, French, and Spanish in electronic format. Please note that we retain the right to edit submissions due to space limitations. Send your news to: Terry.Mutuku@wbu.ngo

# PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



Dear members of the World Blind Union,

By now, you have heard that the World Blind Union General Assembly has been postponed to May 2021. The coronavirus pandemic made it impossible to hold the general assembly this year as originally scheduled. Our general assembly will be held from May 21 through 26, 2021 in Madrid, Spain. Thanks to our local organizers, the Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE), the cost for rooms at the Madrid Marriot Auditorium will be the same as originally announced. Soon, we will release more information about the 2021 general assembly.

As the entire world works to combat the coronavirus pandemic, I encourage everyone to follow the health expert’s directions. Until new and effective treatment options have been found or a vaccine has been developed, the only way to limit the spread of the coronavirus is by severely limiting social contact, frequent handwashing and by implementing other recommended safety precautions.

While many people find the lack of social interaction isolating, we are fortunate that we live at a time when technology gives many of us the ability to stay in regular communication with friends and family. For people who do not have access to technology, the challenge is far more difficult; however, friends and neighbors can talk from their front porches while maintaining the minimum two meter’s separation. You may have heard about towns in Italy where people sing from their balconies to lift the spirits of others and to maintain a sense of community. All of us can do something to encourage our friends and neighbors and to help our communities as we go through this time of threat and uncertainty.

Organizations of and for the blind were created to address the needs of blind and partially sighted people. With the coronavirus, today’s needs are different, but they are no less urgent. Reach out to other blind people; help find ways to make sure blind and partially sighted people have access to food and medications; and find ways to gain the attention of the public and policymakers to include blind and partially sighted people in national and community planning.

To support national and local advocacy, the World Blind Union developed, “WBU Call to Action: 19 Actions for an inclusive Covid-19 response.” The recommended actions provide a blueprint to ensure that we are not forgotten as the world struggles to respond to the crisis.

We face challenges, but we are not helpless. We have each other and, working together, we can and will continue to fight for the full and equal inclusion of blind and partially sighted people in society.

Thank you for all you do.

**Dr. Fredric K. Schroeder, President, WBU**

# COVID-19 Global Updates

## ACCESSIBILITY CAMPAIGN - COVID19

The International Disability Alliance and the International Disability and Development Consortium have launched an Accessibility campaign to call for public health information and communications around COVID19 to be fully accessible.

**The Issue**

Persons with disabilities are unable to access vital information about COVID-19 on equal basis with others. Daily briefings by World health Organization, and the United Nations (such as those delivered by the Secretary-General) are not accessible. International Sign interpretation, closed captioning, written or audio description of graphs and videos, and documentation in plain language (easy-to-read) are not included in the daily briefings by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations.

**The Aim**

To make the WHO and United Nations daily briefings and any supporting documents on COVID-19 fully accessible to persons with disabilities. We want them to set an example and show leadership to national governments and other actors in providing a fully accessible COVID-19 response by making all information that they disseminate fully accessible to persons with disabilities, keeping in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Read more at [IDA website](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/es/node/3184)

## ZIMBABWE BROADCASTING CORPORATION AND GOVERNMENT SUED OVER LACK OF ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION ON COVID-19

Three organisations representing people who are visually impaired and Deaf have sued government and the state-run Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) demanding to be provided with information on coronavirus in a format which is accessible to them.

Development​​, Deaf Zimbabwe Trust and Zimbabwe National League Of The Blind argued that the rights of persons with disabilities have been infringed and continue to be infringed by government and ZBC during a public health emergency crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic as there is a lack of access to information in a format that is accessible to persons with disabilities, notably Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and the blind and partially sighted persons. [Read more](https://www.zlhr.org.zw/?p=2006)

## UPDATE FROM MONGOLIA

*By Gerel Dondovdorj, President of Mongolian National Federation of the Blind, 3 April 2020*

1. What us the current situation in the country?

* As of 6th April, 12 corona cases were confirmed officially - persons who travelled from abroad, and 2 of them have recovered, and no deaths so far.
* All kindergarten & schools and universities closed since mid of January.
* All public events are cancelled. And government advised citizens to stay at home, and to go out only if necessary.
* Most companies made its employees to work from home, or part time. Some companies are making employees redundant to overcome the crisis.
* The situation is affecting the economy.

2. What is the situation within the Mongolian National Federation of the Blind (MNFB)?

* MNFB office, FM radio station, braille and DAISY production center and massage centers are operating, but coffee shops, vocational training center, kindergarten have been closed. All member events are cancelled.
* Some staff are working from home as they need to look after their children since kindergartens and schools are closed.
* For the vocational training center, the teachers are trying to have an online class, but not successful so far, as the students have no computers at home & some have no possibility to access internet.
* For the over 20 massage centers, the income is going down due to reduced number of customers.

3. Is there frequent and sufficient information being disseminated and is it accessible?

* Frequent and sufficient information has been disseminated on different media channels such as TV channels, radios, websites, Facebook, newspapers and cell phone to people.
* Information on TV channels is provided with sign language interpretation.
* Visually impaired persons are getting the government notice & information through TV & radio.
* As well, we post the preventive information through our online channels. For example, we have translated the hand washing techniques which we received through the World Blind Union and posted on Facebook and boards for the members information.
* MNFB is mainly communicating with the members through Facebook. About 300 members are active and access the information. 70 percent of the branches have been communicating through online platforms particularly Facebook.
* We are making phone calls to members as well and gathering some information in order to get updates and know if they need any support during this crisis.
* We have requested the government and the Ulaanbaatar city government to take the following actions to ensures information is accessible to the blind and partially sighted persons: to send audio message to blind persons through mobile phones, to produce some of the preventive information and notices in, braille &large print format,
* The MNFB and the Mongolian Disability Forum jointly submitted an official letter to Mongolian prime minister and Minister of Labor and Social protection to support low income families with persons with disabilities by providing them with the hygiene supplies and immunity boosting foods. We have received reply from the government yet and there are no specific measures for persons with disabilities.

## UPDATE FROM THAILAND ASSOCIATION OF THE BLIND

*By Dr. Nantanoot Suwannawut (Apple), 6 April 2020*

* Regarding the government policy for the disabled, the National board meeting on persons with disabilities last 2 weeks came up with 4 measures:
1. To give away 1000 baht for every registered person with disabilities;
2. To slow down the loan (from government fund) period for 1 year;
3. To give a loan with low interest rate of interest to persons with disabilities at 0.01% and;
4. To promote any online occupations through online training for persons with disabilities.
* In addition the lotto event has stopped for 2 rounds, resulting in the income of the blind and other group of sellers. Media provide accessible means like sign language.
* Concerning TAB (Thailand Association of the Blind) activities, there is a report that a few blind persons have been infected, all of them are masseurs.
* TAB offices have been closed; some of the staff may get in if necessary.
* All gathering activities such as trainings/meetings have stopped, except the board meeting conducted through Zoom weekly to monitor the situation.
* In progress: Set up of special page on COVID-19 with hotline and daily updates through 1414+ (e.g. telephony and web-based system) for the blind; compose songs on the crisis by TAB music academy, to raise awareness and encourage people, provide staff and volunteers to help the blind with registration for government program to receive 5000 baht for those who do not have permanent jobs.

## UPDATE FROM LEBANON

*By Amer Makarem, Youth Association of the Blind, Beirut April 2*

It's a dramatic change in our daily life. The government is applying the policy of closing all businesses and of staying home. The protection information is widely disseminated but it is almost not accessible. A group of DPOS including Youth Association of the Blind are intervening with Ministry of Health, army forces and TV stations to give them instructions on accessible information to all groups of persons with disabilities.

But, the main difficulty for blind persons is mobility because they usually rely on sighted escorts while prevention measures include social distancing. The concerns are also that the medical teams and hospital staff are not trained to cope with infected blind persons.

The blind persons are facing difficulties due to disrupted services in education and bank services. All the schools are closed but many of them trying to continue teaching online. The public schools are using WhatsApp and the public TV while the private schools are using video-based softwares. The blind students are facing difficulties to access teaching materials sent to them in image format where the support teachers or special educators are not available on the spot. Specialized schools are closed, and blind students are at home without education. Also, banks are closed and their services are limited to ATMS. No special service is provided to blind persons by banks in Lebanon.

As blind person, I have a new personal experience in this situation when the university requested me to complete online the course which I was delivering in this semester where I have to adapt with new computer programmes and with new teaching strategies and technics.

Meanwhile, we collaborated with ILO and UNICEF in preparing a recommendation document to address the government of Lebanon on ensuring inclusive Covid-19 response.

We suggest that WBU should have direct communication with WHO on our action and recommendation to ensure inclusive response by governments. As we noticed that in many countries WHO is guiding the governments and monitoring their measures. In this way WHO can have direct impact on the governments to ensure inclusive response.

## UPDATE FROM GUYANA

*By Ganesh Singh, Guyana Society for the Blind, 4 April 2020*

Here in Guyana, we have a partial lock down. Only essential businesses and offices are allowed to open. This will end on May 2. For the other Caribbean territories, I have been getting regular updates via various WhatsApp groups and things seem to be the same. Most of the territories have some form of lock down. This is either full or partial.

Lives for PWDs (Persons with Disabilities) including persons with vision disabilities have definitely been disrupted in some form or another. Most of the service providers have either closed their offices or are operating for only a few hours. In Guyana the Guyana Society for the Blind has suspended all programmes until further notice. This is the same for most of the other organisations around the region.

There is a lot of information about the Corona virus from credible sources. Here in Guyana I know for a fact that the information has been reaching PWDs. I contacted the majority of our disabled people organisations (DPOs), enquiring about them and gathering information. The Ministry of Public Health has sign language interpretation in their daily briefs and video PSAs (Public Service Announcements). Additionally, I consulted with the ministry to ensure that all their PSAs (both video and radio) are clear and detailed to enable easy comprehension by the population of persons with visual impairments. From speaking to my colleagues across the Caribbean, I know that the information has reached persons with disabilities. The internet is helping in a major way in the transmission of the information.

In some countries the various organisations have been working with the government and other agencies to prepare and distribute care packages and food hampers to vulnerable PWDs. Here in Guyana, we are hoping to do the same soon.

In summary things are not ideal for PWDs in Guyana or the Caribbean but the various organisations and individual advocates are trying with their limited resources to help those that are most vulnerable in our community. I know that this pandemic will have a significant economic impact on PWDs. This is as a result of their already challenged financial situations.

## UPDATE FROM THE CARIBBEAN: THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

*By Jessica Jacobie, St. Lucia, former IDA Fellow/ WBU Human Rights Officer*

Imagine coming from a region with a culture where shaking hands, holding hands, hugging, kissing, mostly using sighted guide, sharing, having support from an extended family or the community, visiting friends and family, being visited by friends and family, gathering as a social group to discuss issues unique to you, and earning a living through mop production, basket weaving and other projects and programs designed for persons like yourself by an organization designed to cater to your unique challenges is the norm. This is the reality for blind and partially sighted persons who live in the Caribbean, a reality that Covid-19 has altered drastically in some territories.

In fighting this pandemic, access to current and credible information is key for everyone. In a number of countries, governments are using television, radio and electronic media to convey information to the general public and have set up hotlines where persons can call for information and assistance. For example, in St. Lucia the government uses its television station and links up with other television and radio stations and goes live on its Facebook page to provide press briefings on a daily basis. Largely, this has been effective. However, sometimes persons who are blind still miss pertinent information because it is displayed on the screen and not read aloud. Persons who are hearing impaired are greatly disadvantaged when there is no sign language interpretation and so they are dependent on the interpretation of information from persons around them, if they do not live alone.

The government and the private sector in some countries need to be commended as special hours (the first hour of the day) has been reserved for persons with disabilities and the elderly to shop at the supermarkets and access banking services. However, with health officials encouraging persons to cough in their elbow and given that persons who are blind are very dependent on their sense of touch and even whilst using their white cane, many use sighted guide where they are required to use their hand to hold on to the elbow to access their guide, this is a major health risk and so, many have resorted to remaining at home. In some cases, food hampers have been distributed in an attempt to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in society. However, given the limited resources, lack of information to access these persons, alleged political interference among other factors, many persons who actually need these packages do not receive them.

Many persons with disabilities are very dependent on family and community support. Therefore, social distancing, though necessary, has placed them in a precarious situation. Most organizations that cater to their needs are closed and were already not very financially stable and are now anticipating further challenges in adequately meeting the needs of their clients and sustaining their operations. Therefore, persons with disabilities are now forced to be dependent solely on what everyone else in society is fighting for. In some cases, the services provided and support given depend on the level of sensitization and empathy of the persons on the ground.

In order to eliminate some of the aforementioned concerns, we wish to take this opportunity to encourage governments to not only put policies in place but to work alongside organizations that cater for persons with disabilities and other relevant stakeholders to develop well thought out strategies to implement these policies, encourage members to find creative means to keep in touch with and support their members and advocate on their behalf, encourage families to observe all necessary protocols as they not only are responsible for protecting themselves but also the person with a disability or disabilities in their care or household who may also have pre-existing health challenges that can complicate a positive Covid-19 diagnosis, and we would like to encourage persons with disabilities, especially those who are blind and partially sighted to wash their hands with soap and water very frequently and thoroughly because they serve as their eyes, adhere to the advice of health officials, observe all protocols for their safety and that of the persons around them, and to keep themselves meaningfully occupied to limit the possible negative psychological impact of Covid-19.

UPDATE FROM NEW ZEALAND: THRIVING IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

*By Martine Abel-Williamson, WBU Treasurer*

*"***In spite of the distance, it is the horizon that connects us***" –* Maori proverb.

As of midnight, on 25 March, New Zealand went into total lockdown (level 4) to minimise the spread of COVID-19. New Zealand exists out of 2 larger islands plus smaller ones, so, when our boarders closed, and without any neighbours a stone’s throw away, we became geographically isolated.

This meant that all were urged to stay at home, even to work from home and that only essential services are to be provided such as supermarkets to be open, medical and health and emergency home maintenance services. Your home is to be called your bubble and you shall only be in touch with your immediate family or those who live in your communal home. This situation was separating many family members from one another, which included natural supports.

The first barriers that effected blind and partially sighted persons included access to groceries, because most relied on online shopping, the overload on supermarkets chains websites, plus the fact that many members of the public who visited the outlets over purchased necessary daily items, many blind persons could not access important household and food items.

Some health and disability support services stopped providing vital services such as home help and shopping support. On the other hand, others expanded their range of services to include support such as providing communications equipment for people to stay in touch with family and friends and covering fees for online apps for entertainment purposes.

In the midst of this all, blindness service provider and advocacy agencies stepped up to the play. A national initiative commenced to reach out to all registered blind, Deafblind and partially sighted persons to check how they’re doing in terms of what support might be required during this time.

Advocacy efforts also resulted in services such as guide dogs, library and accessible format production services to be acknowledged as essential services, so, those could continue to be delivered.

Many "phone trees" and other virtual peer support programmes got ramped up to alleviate social isolation.

But not all initiatives established focussed on combatting the negative effects of the lockdown, some were inspired to realise innovative projects. One of these was The Royal New Zealand Ballet broadcasting an audio described production of Hansel and Gretel on Facebook over one weekend. Audio Described Aotearoa provided live audio description for this production by describing this Facebook feed live via Zoom.

In order to access this audio description one needed to have Facebook to stream the ballet (video and sound) on one device and another device or home phone line to access the Zoom broadcast of the description.

The words by Horris spring to mind: “Adversity has as its effect that it facilitates talents that in usual circumstances would have layed dormant.”

## UPDATE FROM THE AFRICAN UNION OF THE BLIND: LETTER TO THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

The African Union of the Blind (AFUB) wrote a letter to the Africa Union (AU) calling for urgent action to promote and protect the rights of the blind and partially sighted persons in Africa during the Covid-19 crisis.

In the letter, AFUB emphasizes that persons with disabilities particularly the blind and partially sighted face discrimination and exclusion in times of emergencies and disasters making them more vulnerable. AFUB calls on AU to ensure that blind and partially sighted persons are not ignored, excluded or discriminated during the fight against COVID-19. AFUB wants member states to provide COVID-19 information in accessible formats including braille, audio and large print. In addition, AFUB recommends that health personnel and frontline actors should be trained to mainstream disability in their interventions. The full letter can be found on our [COVID-Resources webpage](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Pages/default.aspx)

UPDATE FROM EUROPEAN BLIND UNION: GLOBAL CALL FOR AN ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE RESPONSE

As the international community finds itself in a situation of instability and turmoil, the European Blind Union (EBU) calls upon governments and authorities across the continent to design all necessary measures to stop the spread of the Corona virus in an inclusive and accessible manner. For example, the rights and needs of blind and partially sighted people must be fully taken on board, in order to guarantee that measures taken are inclusive. The most systematic way of achieving this is to ensure participation of representative organisations of persons who are blind or partially sighted when deciding upon new policies. We recall that, also during a phase of emergency, ALL rights of persons with disabilities including those who are blind or partially sighted, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, must be upheld. [Read more](http://www.euroblind.org/corona-virus-crisis-ebu-joins-global-call-accessible-and-inclusive-response)

# UPDATES FROM WBU

WBU CALL TO ACTION -19 ACTIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE COVID-19 RESPONSE

This Call for Action is produced by World Blind Union, the global organisation representing the estimated 253 million persons who are blind and partially sighted worldwide. The actions are in line with recommendations by other Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs) and reflect the urgent needs of WBUs constituency following the spread of COVID-19 and responses to the pandemic. WBU recognises the diversity of needs among persons with disabilities, especially in times of crises, and urge governments and relevant stakeholders to adopt inclusive approaches to "leave no-one behind". We encourage you to share with your networks, government, health ministries, frontline actors, and the media. [Read all the Actions](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/WBU-Call-to-Action--19-Actions-for-an-inclusive-Covid-19-response-.aspx).

WBU SURVEY ON COVID-19

The World Blind Union (WBU) has developed a short survey to identify challenges faced by blind and partially sighted persons during the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

WBU is undertaking this survey to understand how best to advocate for blind and partially sighted persons to ensure that COVID-19 response strategies are inclusive and accessible.

The survey can be completed in less than 20 minutes, we encourage you all to fill the survey. It is available in [English](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdaF3m7srGSyOcPt-csHEEYLCbS3EMNhQicZpOibfLhfuJuhw/viewform), [French](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScXXKczpu4XZAIjykEZuqsUSdXXgHr1977nVe_3bEFuZmKcqg/viewform), and [Spanish](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc4X2wziZVfkwH5mD04dz-_tgMqNtDgiUMmUBr_rCk4nLRqxw/viewform).

FACEBOOK LIVE SESSIONS ON COVID-19

WBU has been hosting a series of Facebook live sessions to advocate for inclusive response to COVID-19. The Sessions are recorded and available for wide distribution.

A session on "Orientation and mobility, personal safety in time of Covid-19" was led by Colin Wong, an O&M Instructor and Staff trainer currently working at Saavi Services for the Blind in Phoenix, Arizona. He holds a Masters in Guidance and Counseling with a National Orientation and Mobility Certification (NOMC). The Session is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/BlindUnion/videos/635697946986957/>

A session on "Home schooling, how to help our children in time of Covid-19" was led by Melissa Riccobono, a school counseling expert. Melissa has a BA in Psychology and a Masters in Counseling Psychology, with an emphasis on school counseling. She has worked as an elementary school counselor and is currently the First Lady of the National Federation of the Blind, USA and a board member for the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. The session is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/BlindUnion/videos/713268792813878/>

You can download transcripts from our [COVID-19 special webpage](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Pages/default.aspx)

**WBU-ICEVI JOINT GENERAL ASSEMBLIES POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19**

The World Blind Union (WBU), the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), and the Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) postponed the joint WBU and ICEVI general assemblies.

The WBU/ICEVI joint general assemblies will be held from May 21 through 26, 2021 in Madrid.

The International Organizing Committee felt it necessary to postpone the WBU/ICEVI general assemblies to protect the health and safety of all delegates and other attendees as the world works to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/WBU-ICEVI-Joint-General-Assemblies-Postponed-to-May-21-26%2C-2021.aspx)

# COVID-19 RESOURCES

## TOWARD A DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE COVID19 RESPONSE: 10 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY ALLIANCE

In the light of the COVID19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, the International Disability Alliance (IDA) has compiled the following list of the main barriers that persons with disabilities face in this emergency situation along with some practical solutions and recommendations. This document is based on inputs received from our members around the world aiming to assist global, regional, national and local advocacy to more efficiently address the range of risks persons with disabilities face. If you have any updates on how COVID 19 is affecting persons with disabilities in your area of work, or want to share any good practices or lessons learnt, please contact IDA Inclusive Humanitarian Adviser Ms Elham Youssefian via emailing eyoussefian@ida-secretariat.org

**IDA Key Recommendations**

* Persons with disabilities must receive information about infection mitigating tips, public restriction plans, and the services offered, in a diversity of accessible formats with use of accessible technologies.
* Additional protective measures must be taken for people with certain types of impairment.
* All preparedness and response plans must be inclusive of and accessible to women with disabilities.
* No disability-based institutionalization and abandonment is acceptable.
* During quarantine, support services, personal assistance, physical and communication accessibility must be ensured.
* Measures of public restrictions must consider persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.
* Persons with disabilities in need of health services due to COVID19 cannot be deprioritized on the ground of their disability
* OPDs can and should play a key role in raising awareness of persons with disabilities and their families.
* OPDs can and should play a key role in advocating for disability inclusive response to the COVID19 crisis.

Download full document from the [IDA COVID-19 webpage](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/covid-19-and-disability-movement)

A DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT HANDWASHING ADVICE CREATED FOR BLIND PEOPLE BY AUDIO DESCRIBED AOTEAROA

*With assistance from the Auckland branch of Blind Citizens New Zealand and individual blind contributors*.

*Written by Kevin Keys, Nicola Owen and Paul Brown with assistance from lots of blind people who now have lovely clean hands!*

There’s been lots of advice recently reminding people to wash their hands properly. The internet is full of videos showing you how to do it. We’ve struggled to find one that is audio described, so we’ve put together these guidelines based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) information and a video made by NZ’s Dr Michelle Dickinson AKA Nanogirl that shows you how to do it. Please note that we are not medical professionals so this information should be used in conjunction with the official advice available from the World Health Organisation and relevant country authorities.

You should wash your hands after going to the toilet, before preparing food and before and after eating, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, after touching animals, before touching your face, and when you return home after being out.

Basically you want to wash your hands thoroughly using either liquid or bar soap - they both work just as well – for around 20 seconds or as long as it would take to sing Happy Birthday through twice (other songs are available!).

**Here are the ten steps to follow:**

1. Turn on the tap and wet your hands. Turn off the tap.
2. Apply enough soap to cover your hands.
3. Rub your hands together lengthways palm to palm.
4. Interlace your fingers and rub your palms together from side to side.
5. Place your right palm on the back of your left hand, interlacing your fingers and rub your hands up and down against each other lengthways. Repeat with your left palm on the back of your right hand.
6. To clean your fingertips and nails: point your elbows out to the sides. Hold your left hand in front of you across your body with the palm facing up. Place your right hand palm down on top of your left in the opposite direction. With palms together, slide your hands slowly apart until the tips of your fingers touch the bottom finger joints on the other hand. Roll your fingers in together to make opposite facing interlocking fists, knuckles fitting snugly into the palm of the other hand. Rub the tips and nails of your fingers firmly into the palm and fingers of the other hand.
7. Clasp your left thumb in your right fist and rotate to clean the thumb including the nail. Repeat with the other thumb.
8. Clasp your left wrist in your right hand and rotate to wash the whole wrist. Repeat with the other wrist.
9. Turn the tap back on and rub your hands together firmly under the running water. The friction helps to remove oils and therefore viruses and bacteria.
10. Shake off excess water and dry your hands on a clean single use towel using firm lengthwise towel strokes. Use the towel to turn off the tap.

You can also to listen to an [audio (mp3) file](http://www.euroblind.org/sites/default/files/media/handwashing_advice_for_blind_people.mp3) on this topic. Email your feedback to audiodescribedaotearoa@gmail.com. Find more Covid-19 resources from our EU members on [EBU website](http://www.euroblind.org/publications-and-resources/guidelines#_covid)

## GUIDELINES ON PRE-CONDITION TO INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – COVID-19 RESPONSE

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) is urging authorities and partners to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities, their families, carers and support persons in the COVID-19 response and recovery work to follow. Realising the pre-condition to inclusion of persons with disabilities is required to guarantee that they are not left behind in the COVID-19 response. The pre-condition to inclusion can be referred to as the pre-requisite for disability inclusion. If the pre-conditions are not realized, it will seriously undermine the inclusion of all persons with disabilities across the COVID-19 response and recovery actions.

There are six different themes which are pre-conditions for inclusion. These are accessibility, assistive device, support services, social protection, community based inclusive development (CBID) and non-discrimination. These measures/actions need to be in place first before inclusion for persons with disabilities can be achieved.

With social distancing being one of the major mechanisms in place to reduce the spread of the virus, there is a need to ensure that these pre-conditions are in place in health facilities and communities to minimise human contact. However, limiting human contact to those with high support needs is a challenge.

This document serves to guide responders in the COVID-19 pandemic on how to ensure that the pre-conditions to inclusion are integrated within the COVID-19 response efforts, guaranteeing that all persons with disabilities benefit and access essential health services on an equal basis with others without discrimination. Integrating the pre-conditions into the COVID-19 response and recovery mechanisms will promote and ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities and guarantee that no one is left behind in such efforts. Read full document on the [Pacific Disability Forum website](http://www.pacificdisability.org/News/Guideline-on-Pre-Condition-to-Inclusion-Persons-wi.aspx)

More resources are available on our special [COVID-19 Resources webpage](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Pages/default.aspx)

# TECH UPDATES

## OVERVIEW ON ACCESSIBILITY OF VIDEO CONFERENCING APPS AND SERVICES

The purpose of this document is for United Nations staff and partners to make their video conferences as inclusive as possible for all persons with disabilities. The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities gathered the following information from representative organizations of persons with disabilities, in particular from the International Disability Alliance and its members, and from additional research. This list is by no means exhaustive, but rather attempts to provide an accessibility overview. This document is a living document and will be periodically updated as relevant.

**General points**

* Online platforms are not fully accessible for blind facilitators, although can be for blind participants.
* In general, desktop versions are less accessible than using mobile versions for blind users.
* For most online platforms, captioning needs to be ordered separately for hard of hearing participants. This creates a complex process with two separate systems. This process is awkward and creates a disadvantage for the participant.

**General recommendations**

* Review online instructions offered by the platform for video layout options and any specific settings for interpreters and/or speech-to-text professionals.
* Contact the platform’s technical support specialists or knowledge base.
* Work with the IT department on integrations or other solutions.
* When further research is undertaken to develop an inclusive online system, the aforementioned points and additional points below need to be taken into consideration in consultation with representative organizations of persons with disabilities.

[Download full document (Word)](http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/resources/Pages/General-Documents.aspx)

For further information, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Lockwood at elizabeth.lockwood@cbm-global.org

## ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES IN WINDOWS WEB BROWSERS FOR LOW VISION USERS

*By Steve Kelley*

For many years, Web browsers have had varying degrees of built-in accessibility, but it’s been a pretty bumpy road for the user with low vision. By 2006 Internet Explorer 7 added magnification to Web browsing, but this first version often changed the page formatting so that users would need to use the horizontal scroll bar as they read the page. At the same time, Firefox 2 had a free add-in that didn’t require the horizontal scrolling but didn’t enlarge the page images. As a result, some of us just gave up and used a commercial screen magnifier, like ZoomText, that provided screen magnification to everything, including the Web browser.

Built-in Web browser accessibility—magnification, contrast, colors, and text-to-speech has improved since those original webpage magnifiers. The browser landscape has certainly changed in recent years and there are some great built-in accessibility features available on popular Windows-based web browsers like Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Microsoft Edge. Read more on the latest issue of [AFB AccessWorld](https://www.afb.org/aw/21/4/16975?utm_source=AFB&utm_campaign=8c2041b777-AW-December-2019_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ec813cd965-8c2041b777-167439329)

ORBIT RESEARCH INTRODUCES THE GRAPHITI® INTERACTIVE TACTILE GRAPHIC DISPLAY

Orbit Research announced the launch of the Graphiti® Interactive Tactile Graphic Display today at the 35th annual CSUN Assistive Technology Conference. Based on revolutionary Tactuator™ technology from Orbit Research, the Graphiti® represents a breakthrough in non-visual access to graphical information such as charts, drawings, flowcharts, floorplans, images and photographs, through an array of moving pins. The most unique feature of the technology is the ability to set each pin to different heights, which enables the display of topographical maps and other graphical elements such as shades and color represented as varying heights of pins that can be readily sensed by the user’s fingers.

Connectable to computers, tablets, smartphones, or the Orion TI-84 Plus Talking Graphing Calculator via a USB port or Bluetooth, its open API allows developers to create apps on any platform to work with the Graphiti. Additionally, an HDMI port allows connection to any device with a video display output, making Graphiti an external tactile display monitor. This enables any device to connect seamlessly to Graphiti. The unit also includes a cursor pad for navigation, and an SD-card slot and USB port to load files for reading and editing in a standalone mode.

Graphiti also features a touch interface to enable the user to "draw" on the display; tracing a shape with a fingertip raises the pins along the path traced. The touch interface allows traditional forms of touch gesture commands such as swipe to scroll. In addition, it enables novel uses such as "pushing" or "nudging" an object on the display to physically move it. Multiple Graphiti units can be connected together to provide complete and immersive interactivity through touch - what is drawn on one unit appears instantly on the other units in tactile form. For more info and to place your order visit the [Orbit Research website](http://www.orbitresearch.com/product/graphiti/)

REMINDER: CONTACT INFORMATION

Friendly reminder to members: Please check your contact information on our website to ensure that it is up to date at: Member Regions and Organizations: <http://www.worldblindunion.org/English/about-wbu/membership/Pages/Member-Regions-and-Organizations.aspx>

Should you change your contact information any time please update us. You can contact Ianina at ianina.rodriguez@wbu.ngo

# THE WBU REGIONS

Our regions are the bridge between the international level of work and the local level. Policies and treaties constructed at global levels are then carried out by our members in their own countries. Most of the regions have their own websites where they post updates on their work, member activities, and upcoming events in their area.

##

## AFRICA

<http://www.afub-uafa.org>

## ASIA

Website is currently unavailable

## ASIA-PACIFIC

<http://wbuap.org/index/>

## EUROPE

<http://www.euroblind.org>

## LATIN AMERICA

<http://ulacdigital.org>

## NORTH AMERICA/THE CARIBBEAN

Website is currently unavailable

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* Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) <http://www.once.es/new/>
* [National Federation of the Blind](https://www.nfb.org/) (NFB), USA
* Sightsavers International [http://www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org/)
* Vision Australia <http://www.visionaustralia.org/>
* Vanda <http://www.vandapharma.com/index.html>

## Our Diamond Sponsors

* Lighthouse San Francisco <http://openhub.ch/en/content/swiss-federation-blind-and-visually-impaired>
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* Norwegian Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted (NABP) <https://www.blindeforbundet.no>

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* National Industries for the Blind (NIB) <http://www.nib.org/about-us/mission>
* Danish Association of the Blind (DAB) <https://blind.dk/internationalt>
* German Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted (DBSV). <https://www.dbsv.org/dbsv-in-english.html>

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The World Blind Union is registered in Canada as a charitable organization in order to raise funds for our work. Donations from individuals or groups are always appreciated and can be made via the “[Donate Now](https://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/15825)” button on [our website](http://www.wbu.ngo).