Mohammed’s Talking Points

Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities official HLPF side event

"Will the SDGs Still be Relevant after the Pandemic for persons with disabilities?"

July 8, 2020, 12-1:30pm EDT

Link to register:<https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1KJdYROMSaKNIMO3HJevqw?_x_zm_rtaid=IATMUmxARIKAjniZ4xmBTg.1593533609761.4037204a496fdf1c4f42947b2ab0775f&_x_zm_rhtaid=208>

More information<http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/hlpf2020-side-event>

**The role of organizations of persons with disabilities**

We have already heard from many speakers today about the multilateralism crisis and the lack of global leadership in response to the crises. We also listened to personal testimonies, the hardship that was imposed**often not because people contracted the COVID-19 virus, but because of the situation the pandemic created around the world and subsequent effects and the speaker before me addressed how to build a better world through the SDGs.**

We have not yet heard a positive outcome from these difficult times, but I will share one example that we learned from the findings that emerged from the qualitative research study by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities on the effects of the pandemic on persons with disabilities. A positive outcome that emerged was that the role and work of organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) was significantly adapted.

DPOs adjusted to the new reality and provided vital support to members to address lack of information and other gaps in government services. Many DPOs became sources of information, raised awareness with their members and provided accessible materials in national sign languages, Braille, easy-read and other alternative formats. DPOs not only supported their members, but also supported refugees with disabilities, indigenous peoples with disabilities and women with disabilities.

Communication with members shifted via the internet or texts on cellular phones. DPOs carried out an important role for the community, checked on their members, disseminated information, and shared prevention and awareness tips in accessible formats. DPOs also distributed food and secured social benefits for members. In some countries, international organizations also assisted in providing food, masks, and other kinds of support.

It is important to emphasize that all new regulations and laws must ensure the inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society in line with CRPD Article 4.3, and that equality, human rights, sustainability, participation, inclusion and accessibilityare core principles of these policies.

Often persons with disabilities are the most left behind and can become an afterthought. Some people idealized the world before the pandemic, yet in reality it was far from perfect for persons with disabilities as well as many other marginalized groups. Even with the CRPD and SDGs, persons with disabilities were still fighting for inclusion and equality.

During the pandemic, many persons with disabilities were left to die and remained entirely invisible in statistics and data. As some parts of the world are beginning to reopen, we are learning about the new reality for many persons with disabilities. In fact, life has become even more difficult for some.

Today, life is full of insecurity, increased discrimination and inequalities, widespread unemployment and fewer services. In many cases, there is less kindness and comfort replaced with fear, aggression and physical distancing. It is not clear yet how the world will be until there is a widespread and affordable vaccine for all. Regardless, one key message needs attention: inclusion.

It is absolutely critical that persons with disabilities are key and active leaders and participants in all decision-making processes at all levels. Whatever the future holds, persons with disabilities must be key agents of change, because policies going forward are truly about whether people with disabilities live, die or are forgotten.