**Background**

**The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)** and **the International Disability Alliance (IDA)** are networks of organisations that represent people with disabilities across the world.

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) are working together to look at how COVID-19 is effecting people with disabilities.

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA)  believe people with disabilities are not being included in the ways governments are helping people to cope during this difficult time.

**The** [**World Health Assembly**](https://www.who.int/about/governance/world-health-assembly/seventy-third-world-health-assembly)

The [73rd World Health Assembly](https://www.who.int/about/governance/world-health-assembly/seventy-third-world-health-assembly) took place in Geneva, Switzerland from 17 – 21 May 2020. This is a meeting for countries that are members of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) wrote a message to the World Health Assembly to explain why it is important that people with disabilities are included in work on COVID-19.

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) hope that they will read our message during this big meeting and all the people attending from the different World Health Organisation member countries will listen to what it says.

**What has happened so far**

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) believe The United Nations & World Health Organization (WHO) have done good work so far.

* We are pleased that the World Health Organization is publishing a summary paper (often called a 'brief') on Disability Considerations During the COVID-19 Outbreak.
* The World Health Organization has started to make their public briefings more accessible by using live captioning. These means that everything they say out loud is written down on the screen and can help us follow the discussions.
* We are happy to help work together to make health information and services more inclusive. This is our right under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**The Message**

Some groups of people with disabilities are at higher risk of getting COVID-19 and having more serious symptoms.

This is because many people with disabilities -

* have health conditions already.
* are not given important health information in a way they understand.
* have support needs that are not properly thought about when designing the protective guidelines.

Many countries' health services are not prepared to cope with the COVID-19 crisis. They do not have the staff or resources to treat so many new patients and keep up all their normal services as well. This means that many people with disabilities who depend on these services are not able to access them.

People with disabilities face even more barriers to healthcare in low and middle income countries. Health staff are not trained to support people with disabilities and stigma and discrimination still exist. These issues become worse during the stress of the COVID19 crisis.

All of these factors mean people with disabilities are treated unfairly .

We are very worried that people with disabilities are not being treated equally. Sometimes health workers decide who to treat first and we feel people with disabilities are being left behind.

During this health crisis, everyone is very stressed and uncertain. This is affecting peoples mental health. People who are treated unfairly feel even more lonely and afraid. This includes people with disabilities.

**What we are asking for**

We call on governments, health providers, United Nations agencies, and all actors to ask you to make sure:

* People with disabilities are not discriminated against in any way so that no one is left behind;
* All information related to COVID-19 is available in an accessible version;
* Important health services for people with disabilities are changed to prevent the spread of the virus;
* Healthcare staff are trained on the rights and needs of people with disabilities to make sure everyone understands their treatment and to stop discrimination;
* People living in institutions have equal access to testing, medical treatment, and protection;
* Women and girls with disabilities have access to health information and services related to sex and having children;
* People with disabilities and their organizations are asked their opinion when plans of how we will get over the crisis are being made
* Data is collected and shared about the number of deaths in institutions, so that we can see the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities.