

# Toolkit for National COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign for Persons with Disabilities

International Disability Alliance (IDA)

International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)

Below you will find some ideas and recommendations for successful advocacy at national level towards the prioritization, inclusion and accessibility of COVID-19 vaccination for persons with disabilities.

Also included is a template letter you can adapt and use to write to your national Ministry of Health, as well as a press release that can be contextualized to your national circumstance.

Obviously, each context is different, therefore you are advised to adapt these suggestions to your specific context.

If you would like support or guidance in implementing the campaign in your country, please get in touch with any of us:

- International Disability Alliance: Camila Petzoldt: [cpetzoldt@ida-secretariat.org](mailto:cpetzoldt@ida-secretariat.org)
- Sightsavers: Tessa Murphy [tmurphy@sightsavers.org](mailto:tmurphy@sightsavers.org)
- Light for the World: Flora Messerklinger: [f.messerklinger@light-for-the-world.org](mailto:f.messerklinger@light-for-the-world.org)

If you decide to implement the campaign in your country, please send us an email to advise us of this so we can coordinate the campaign within and across countries.

Please also send us any feedback you have on how useful you find the toolkit, and keep us informed on any developments, as well as learnings that we could share with others working on the campaign.

We wish you great success with this campaign, and look forward to hearing from you,

The International Disability Alliance and International Disability and Development Consortium

## Recommendations for a Successful National Advocacy Campaign:

### A. Preparation phase

- Time is precious in any advocacy work: the earlier you start preparing, the higher chances your advocacy will be successful.
- Since some of the suggested preparation steps may take quite some time, we recommend you prepare and implement in parallel. For example, you can start your social media activities while you are preparing for direct advocacy.
- Identify your advocacy targets and collect information about them (their background, any records about disability rights and disability inclusion and any opinion publicly expressed on relevant subjects). Advocacy targets are different in different countries: in some countries a specific body under the Presidency is governing national action against COVID-19, in other countries it remains under the Ministry of Health.
- Identify advocacy partners including organizations of persons with disabilities, NGOs working on disability, access to health or other groups campaigning for equity and inclusion in vaccination in your country. It is very crucial to avoid duplication so speak to each other and coordinate.
- Organize preparation and strategizing meetings with interested stakeholders;
- Review and get familiar with any available qualitative or quantitative research or evidence on impact of covid-19 on persons with disabilities in your country.

### B. Direct Advocacy

Based on the political situation and openness in your country, you may choose to start media campaigning first and then ask for meetings with responsible authorities. You can also choose to meet with authorities first, then send the letter in follow-up, or send the letter first followed by meeting request or media campaigning.

### Recommendations for advocacy meetings with authorities:

- Choose a diverse and small group for meeting. Make sure that you have women with disabilities and other under-represented groups in your team. Make sure that the team is not big as this may cause difficulties managing the conversation.
- Prepare well for the meeting. Divide the presentation among members and coordinate who is going to say what. Do a few mock meetings and get prepared for different questions or feedback;
- Keep your presentation short.

- Start with some positive reflection about good steps government has taken specially the people you are meeting.
- Then give a brief overview on why persons with disabilities are at higher risk of covid-19 (you can refer to the IDA-IDDC [call to action for this](#)).
- Then stop for any questions or feedback.
- At next steps, clearly mention what you want them to do. Based on the situation in your country, you may ask to be consulted in vaccination planning, or request revision of plans already in place.
- Try to leave the meeting with some action points even if it is just planning another meeting;
- Offer to support their measures by providing further information or joining potential meetings with other decision-makers.
- Send a “thank you” note summarizing what was discussed and the action points;
- Follow-up with them and try in parallel reaching to other authorities.

### C. Media campaign

- Discuss with mainstream media to publish articles and stories about impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities
- Issue a joint press release with other interested stakeholder (template below)
- Launch social media campaigns calling for priority access, and accessibility of vaccination for persons with disabilities. For examples of social media content, you can find example social posts [here](#), or [here](#).
- Ask persons with disabilities and their organizations to advocate within the disability movement and bring other DPOs on board.

## PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [INSERT TODAY'S DATE]**

**Persons with disabilities must be prioritised in vaccination rollout, says [insert name]**

[Insert organisation] are calling on the government of [insert country] to ensure people with disabilities are prioritised in the country's upcoming vaccination rollout. The call comes as the World Health Organization [publishes advice](#) about people with disabilities, who are particularly exposed to the risks of COVID-19.

Evidence shows [the majority of COVID-19 deaths have been persons with disabilities](#). People with intellectual disabilities have been [up to six times more likely to die than others](#).

[Insert name], [insert job title] of [insert organisation] says "With the rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine gaining momentum – and with limited initial vaccine supplies – it is vital that persons with disabilities are not left behind. We are campaigning to ensure vaccination plans and pandemic recovery strategies involve them, are accessible to them and reach them."

[Insert name], [insert job title] of [insert organisation] says "Since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, people with disabilities have had to shoulder some of the worst effects of this disease in [insert country] and around the world."

"For example, we are seeing [insert what you are seeing people with disabilities go through right now, mentioning partners if you wish]."

The World Health Organization identified persons with disabilities as a priority group for vaccination. This inclusion means that people with disabilities are particularly exposed to the risks of COVID-19 and require specific measures to mitigate these risks and their impact.

(Please insert here a brief paragraph on the impact of COVID on persons with disabilities in your country and include any national survey results or studies. Please also include here any positive steps the government may have taken with regards to people with disabilities in response to the pandemic)

[Insert name], [insert job title] of [insert organisation] "The disability rights movement is calling for these measures around the world.

This cannot be put on the backburner. We are in an international crisis and there are up to 1 billion people with disabilities who are trying to survive without the recognition or support they need."

### **Ends**

**For further details, interviews, and case studies contact [insert name], [job title] at [insert organisation] on [email] / [phone number].**

### **Notes to Editor**

**About [insert organisation name]**

## NATIONAL LETTER TEMPLATE

Dear,

We are writing on behalf of [please insert name or organisation/OPD]

As the world faces a historic moment to test existing commitments to equity, equality and universal health care, we call on you for political leadership to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities are fully considered and prioritized in the development of your national COVID-19 vaccination program and pandemic recovery strategy.

[Please insert here a brief paragraph on the impact of covid on persons with disabilities in your country and include any national survey results or studies. Please also include here any positive steps the government may have taken with regards to people with disabilities in response to the pandemic]

As you will know, the World Health Organization has identified persons with disabilities as a priority group for vaccinations (through its Strategic Advisory Group of Experts Prioritization roadmap of COVID-19 vaccines). This inclusion as a priority group emphasizes that people with disabilities are particularly exposed to the risks of COVID-19, and as such, require specific measures to be taken to mitigate these risks and their impact.

We are aware that each government is responsible for the COVID-19 vaccinations at national level. We would like to urge you to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in your plans, and to guarantee that:

- The national vaccination plan of [please insert country] will prioritize reaching persons with disabilities, particularly persons with intellectual disabilities and high support needs, persons living in congregate settings, older persons, and persons with health conditions that put them most at risk.
- Health information campaigns and vaccination delivery sites will be inclusive and accessible to all persons with disabilities. For example, information related to vaccination must be provided in all accessible formats including captioning, sign language, audio formats, and plain language.
- Organisations of persons with disabilities will be meaningfully involved in the development of COVID-19-related planning and policymaking, and vaccinations will

only happen with the free and informed consent of persons with disabilities and their families.

- Data collected on vaccination programs will be disaggregated by age, gender and disability using internationally comparable tools and shared in accessible formats.

We would welcome a meeting with you to discuss the above, including any ways in which we can support you to ensure that people with disabilities are prioritised.

Sincerely,