**2020 Virtual UN World Data Forum High level plenary session**

 ***Thematic area 3: Leaving no one behind in data for Covid-19 and the 2030 Agenda***

Wednesday, 21 October 2020 | 11:30am (75 min)

**Ana Lucía Arellano**, the International Disability Alliance, Chair (5 minutes)

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Disability Alliance, we congratulate the organizers of the World Data Forum for hosting such an important event during these unprecedent times. We recognize and applaud the efforts of Member States, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and the UN system. In particular, we applaud the efforts to implement the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, the steps to strengthen the collection and disaggregation of data by disability and the commitment to raise the standard of the inclusion of persons with disabilities across all levels. Despite exceptional work, challenges remain that require additional attention, commitment and investment from all of us at all levels, all countries, and all regions.

Around the world, persons with disabilities and their families have been adversely affected by the COVID pandemic, exacerbating existing inequalities and marginalization within the society and economically. To understand the situation of persons with disabilities around the world and how they were affected by the pandemic, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities carried out research. The most critical findings indicated that myriad barriers exist for persons with disabilities as a result of the pandemic, including new and exacerbated barriers. The most common barriers that emerged from the findings include:

1. lack of access to COVID-related information for all persons with disabilities;
2. barriers in receiving social protection measures and employment; and
3. lack of disability inclusion in COVID recovery and response efforts at all governmental levels, creating significant disconnections between national and local actions as persons with disabilities were not consulted in those decision-making processes.

Moreover, the study found that there is a lack of official COVID data on persons with disabilities worldwide and that out of 93 respondents, no governments were disaggregating COVID data by disability. Consequently, persons with disabilities stay invisible, are not counted and will be left even further behind.

Another outcome of the pandemic has been the increased dialogue around disaggregated data. Data are needed to adequately address response and recovery measures, and to recalibrate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The roadmap out of the pandemic is via the 2030 Agenda. If we truly want to leave no one behind, then everyone must be counted and included, with a 2030 Agenda that is recalibrated, inclusive and fully funded.

Monitoring and reporting on further progress is key, and it is a straightforward process thanks to the Washington Group short set of questions and the WG/UNICEF Child Functioning Module to disaggregate data by disability. These tools are designed to be included in other data collections, and are internationally comparable, well tested, efficient, and easy to incorporate into ongoing data collection of national statistical systems. The question sets are also well-positioned to address the growing need for information on COVID-19 and disability. Disaggregation can identify areas where intervention is needed to address the marginalization of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities.

Also important is that civil society can provide knowledge gaps in SDG monitoring through the use of community-driven data as a complementary local source of information and the representation of the people most left behind. Community-driven data can inform policies to ensure that the most marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities are included and counted and thereby fostering inclusive national SDG implementation.

**Concluding recommendations:**

* Citizen-driven disability data needs to be recognized and utilized by National Statistical Offices to fill data gaps in SDG monitoring for persons with disabilities. In addition, local authorities need to be partners in the data collection process and informed by the data.
* Statisticians, policymakers, organizations of persons with disabilities, and allies need to learn from each other and use available data to address challenges and gaps in policies to realize international commitments for women and girls with disabilities.
* The Washington Group short set of questions and UNICEF/Washington Group Child Functioning Module should be used to disaggregate disability and monitor progress in attaining the SDGs and to identify areas where intervention is needed to address the marginalization of COVID on persons with disabilities.
* Disability data advocacy efforts led by the disability movement should be strengthened with the development of tools and investment to build capacity in stakeholders, especially organizations of persons with disabilities.

The International Disability Alliance will continue to promote practical steps toward evidence-based policymaking to achieve the global, regional and national transformation we need to realize the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the 2030 Agenda and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Thank you.

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