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# **المنظمة العربية للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة**

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**Call to Action:**

***Inclusion of Women with Disabilities and***

***Migrant Women Workers in Covid-19 Response and Recovery Plans***

**We should cooperate to improve the inclusion and participation of women with disabilities and migrant women workers, giving due attention to those with disabilities, throughout the Arab Region in the COVID-19 response and recovery measures.**

**The Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD) calls on National and Local Governments, UN Agencies, the International Media and Civil Society to give women with disabilities and migrant women workers, with a focus on those with disabilities, priority in all actions and interventions that would protect them against the current pandemic.**

**About the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD):**

The Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities (AOPD) is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1998 in Cairo, Egypt. AOPD aims to represent, empower, and promote the rights of Arab people with disabilities, as a regional organization composed of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) operating in Arab countries. In 2006, AOPD launched the Arab Forum of Women with Disabilities (AFOWD) a network of women representatives with different types of disabilities from 16 member countries, aimed at educating women and girls with disabilities on their rights and ensuring their equal participation in society.

**Arab States Regional Dialogue:** DIVERSITY INCLUSION BY WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND MIGRANT WOMEN WORKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

On the 15th of June 2020, UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States in partnership with the AOPD, the Arab Forum of Women with Disabilities (AFOWD), the Cross Regional Centre for Refugees and Migrants (CRCRM), hosted a Dialogue of women with disabilities and other representatives from civil society including women migrant and domestic workers with a focus on women with disabilities to share their experiences, challenges, priorities and solutions for the COVID-19 Response and Recovery plans across the Arab States region.

The Dialogue included testimonies from women with disabilities, women migrant workers, caregivers of persons with disabilities and women leaders within civil society.

***Conclusions from the Dialogue***

The COVID-19 pandemic has a disproportional impact on women with disabilities who now have to endure the multi-layered oppression related to gender, disability, poverty, vulnerability to violence and invisibility in COVID-19 public policies and budgets and post COVID-19 public plans. As such the recommendations from the discussion reflect the priorities of action needed to address the differential impact of the pandemic.

**Key Recommendations**

**Recognizing the complex crisis taking place in our region and the world, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to draw immediate attention to the importance of ensuring that disability and migrant women workers are fully included in the COVID-19 response and recovery plans, policies and budgets. We call on key stakeholders to initiate, lead and collaborate with the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities on the following actions:**

1. ***Policy Recommendations***

* Accelerate efforts at all levels to amplify the narrative on the unique and specific situation of women with disabilities in the present and future COVID-19 context in the Arab States region.
* Prioritize the development of COVID-19 related studies, research and data collection that is sex and disability disaggregated.
* Emphasize the critical situation of unpaid care work and paid care by women, including women migrant workers for persons with disabilities and call for their full inclusion in the COVID-19 national response and recovery plans and budgets.
* Adopt the full inclusion of disability in COVID-19 response and recovery policies along the United Arab Emirates’ policy on inclusion, modelled on the World Disability Union recommendation, to ensure that no one is left behind, better services for everyone and building back better.
* All service providers ensure that people with disabilities, including migrant women workers, are treated with respect, dignity and without discrimination, and migrant women workers should have free access to COVID-19 testing and treatment services.
* In line with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 19, great importance should be placed on home support services and other services to persons with disabilities, through the use of information technology and personal support services.
* The Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities to work with the League of Arab States to set the required standards to ensure disability is included in the Member States’ COVID-19 response and recovery policies and plans.

1. ***Protection from Gender-Based Violence***

* Respond to the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities and migrant women workers who are increasingly subject to gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19.

1. ***Access to Education***

* Adapt virtual education plans to accommodate modified technology for use by students with disabilities including students with accessibility constraints to internet and/or mobile devices.
* Online education applications such as Zoom or Teams used by universities and schools, should not exclude those who need special communication modes, such as sign language, subtitles, etc.

1. ***Access to Health Services***

* Introduce and increase training for regular medical staff to respond positively to COVID-19 treatment for women and girls with disabilities and women migrant workers with disabilities.
* Ensure that the lives of women and men with disabilities are not undervalued when choosing a ventilation device or other equipment. Consequently, the lives of patients with disabilities should not be ignored and are to be treated on an equal basis with others.

1. ***Inclusive Media and Communication***

* Advocate for an inclusive media, to ensure public COVID-19 messages are delivered to and accessed by everyone, therefore the need for a sign language interpreter in all media channels and accessible information to women migrant workers.
* Cease to discriminate against women with disabilities and migrant women workers, by enacting gender and disability responsive laws that protect them and advance their human rights.
* Adopt pressure and advocacy campaigns to counter discriminatory behavior and stigmatization, especially when receiving health services in hospitals or sterilization materials and protective masks.
* Make additional efforts to reach women and girls with disabilities in villages and hard -to -reach areas where there is no access to the Internet and provide connectivity for free or at an acceptable price.