COVID-19, Inequalities and Persons with Disabilities

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Background: $I \times B = D$

**Impairment (I)**
Limited or total loss of functioning in parts of the body or organs of the body:
- Physical
- Sensorial
- Intellectual
- Mental Conditions

**Barriers (B)**
Aspects that intentionally or unintentionally exclude people with disabilities from full and equal participation in society:
- Physical,
- Legal
- Institutional
- Environmental
- Attitudinal
Background: Relevance and Urgency

- Persons with disabilities = 15% of world population
- More than half of them live in cities and towns that are not accessible to them
- 6.25 billion people predicted to inhabit urban centres by 2050
  - Nearly 1 billion urban dwellers with disabilities by 2050 and sustainability challenge for adequate infrastructure
The Impact of COVID-19

Exacerbate  Create  Transform
Impact: Exacerbate Inequalities

- Access to WASH
- Access to information
- Experience of violence

→ Example: Public health information by local governments inaccessible
Impact: Create New Inequalities

- Restrictions on personal assistance
- Access to health services
- Food security and nutrition

→ Example: Regular rehabilitation appointments cancelled
Impact: Transform Situation

Education and Work:
Shift to digital, home-based processes
• Create new barriers for some
• Lift existing barriers for others
Leave No One Behind in COVID-19
A Case-Study from Chennai, India
Way Forward: Leave No One Behind

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Way Forward: Recommendations

- Ensure accessibility of all local public health updates.
- Ensure continuity of essential health services such as regular rehabilitation and medicine distribution.
- Provide exemptions for people with disabilities such as allowing close contact with personal assistants.
- Collaborate with local OPDs (organisations of people with disabilities) to identify needs, reach audience, etc.
Way Forward: Further Reading

Some excellent resources on inclusive COVID-19 response:

• Policy Brief by UN Secretary-General: Link to PDF
• UNESCAP Policy Recommendations: Link to PDF
• Guidance Note by WHO: Link to PDF
• Recommendations by IDA: Link to PDF
• UN DESA Webinar: Link to HTML
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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