

Eighteenth meeting of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs on COVID-19 and the NCD-related SDGs

Date of meeting: September 4, 2020

Participants: Around 27 participants joined, representing 8 members of the Task Force

Subject: UN Secretary General's Policy Brief: a disability-inclusive response to COVID-19.

1. Dr. Alarcos Cieza, Unit Head, Sensory Functions, Disability and Rehabilitation, WHO, facilitated this meeting and delivered the presentation "How did the UNSG Policy Brief on Disability and COVID-19 come about and what actions resulted from it". Dr. Ola Abualghaib, Manager at UNPRPD Technical Secretariat, delivered the presentation "Building Back Better for All – UNPRPD Global Programme Supporting Disability Inclusive COVID-19 Response and Recovery at National Level". Phinith Chanthalangsy, Head of Unit, Programme Specialist Social and Human Sector, UNESCO, delivered the presentation "Experiences from an implementation project in Zimbabwe". All the presentations are attached.
2. According to WHO, 15% of world population experience some kind of disability. This include people with NCDs and other comorbidities. People with disabilities have been one of the most hit populations, as a consequence of COVID-19 exacerbating pre-existing social and economic inequalities associated with disabilities. People with disabilities experience increased risk: (i) to contract COVID-19, due to environmental barriers for effective protection; (ii) to develop severe symptoms of COVID-19, due to pre-existing health conditions and comorbidities, and denied healthcare because of triaging practices; and (iii) to experience poorer health during and after the outbreak.
3. WHO's response included the publication of the WHO "Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak" which outlined actions for people with disability, governments, healthcare workers and other relevant parties, as well as a virtual meeting co-hosted by the UN and WHO which requested the development of a UNSG Policy Brief on disability and COVID-19. The brief, published in May this year, puts a lot of focus on the socio-economic impact, in terms of employment, education, support services and violence on people with disabilities. It also emphasizes the necessity to have accountability mechanisms to monitor that investments are reaching people with disabilities and that data are disaggregated by disability.
4. The follow up of the policy brief has been a plan of coordinated actions among UN agencies. The USF Ana Maria Menendez convened a time-bound workgroup working on four different workstreams around: (i) health response and recovery; (ii) socio-economic response and recovery; (iii) humanitarian response and recovery; and (iv) funding. The workstream on disability inclusive health response and recovery includes different activities, among which information dissemination, access to telehealth, access to rehabilitation, and monitoring institutional deaths.
5. The UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) is a Multi-partner Trust Fund which makes resources available for people with disabilities. It was created in 2019 as a

realization of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to establish a UN wide collaborative effort to support governments to respond to the commitments of the CRPD. It consists of 9 UN entities and 2 civil society organizations.

6. From 2012 to 2019, UNPRDP has supported a number of joint UN programmes in five regions, influencing government and policies to ensure the rights of people with disabilities. During the COVID-19 outbreak, UNPRDP supported countries to carry out COVID-19 emergency response plans inclusive of the rights of persons with disabilities, offered financial support to conduct additional activities, and launched a global joint initiative to harness UNPRDP members expertise to support COVID-10 responses. The “Building Better for All” programme aims to provide UNCTs with better understanding and capacity to develop a disability-inclusive response to COVID-19.
7. Zimbabwe is one of the countries financially supported by UNPRDP to conduct additional COVID-19 emergency related activities. Since April, Zimbabwe has been under lockdown resulting in difficulties for persons with disabilities to access health services. In addition, the country is experiencing increasing food insecurity for its population, as well as increasing cases of gender-based violence. The health sector has also been weakened by the pandemic, with health workers going into several strikes.
8. The UNPRDP project in Zimbabwe has been catalytic for policy development around the rights of persons with disabilities. It puts people with disabilities in the driving seat, giving visibility and importance to organizations of people with disabilities. Through this approach, UNPRDP managed to build trust between the Government of Zimbabwe and umbrella organizations between the UN and the civil society organizations. UNPRDP also accomplished to include a disability-inclusion approach in the UN joint programme “Spotlight” on gender-based violence prevention, as well as to participate in the discussion around the next UN cooperation framework.
9. Regarding the support to COVID-19 response and recovery, UNPRDP is working to ensure that funds are allocated effectively adopting a disability-inclusive approach, and that the same approach is taken into account in the UN COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan and in the next Country Cooperation Framework. The team in Zimbabwe is also collecting data on people with disabilities among the migrant population recently returned in the country, to better tailor specific programmes.
10. PAHO underlined that people with disabilities face challenges coming from different dimensions, exacerbated by COVID-19, and that a multisectoral approach, involving and empowering organizations of people with disabilities, is key to develop effective responses. IDLO mentioned the organization’s effort to ensure that people with disabilities overcome barriers to access the justice system.

Other issues:

1. The UNIATF Policy Brief “[Responding to NCDs during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic](#)” has been published together with its supporting papers: (i) [state of evidence: a rapid review](#); (ii) [state of evidence: infographic](#); and (iii) [examples of actions being taken by selected members of the](#)

Task Force. They provide evidence of the association between NCDs and COVID-19, a roadmap for response and building back better and actions for governments and development partners, including the UN system.

2. WHO and the Russian Federation have secured a side event on the occasion of the High-Level week of the **United Nations General Assembly**. The side event titled “**UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases: working with Member States to deliver the NCD-related Sustainable Development Goal targets during and beyond COVID-19**” is planned to be held on **Thursday, 24 September 2020**, 10 AM NY time in videoconference (concept note and flyer attached).
3. If you want to participate, please use this [link](#) to register and to receive updates.

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