

# Summary of the Q&As during the webinar “Disability Inclusion in COVID-19 responses in the World of Work” on 24 March

This is an edited summary of the more than 100 questions and comments received during the webinar. We have clustered the questions and for some of the questions, we provide answers either from the ILO disability team, panellists or other participants.

Many thanks to all participants for their contributions, which helps us to prepare adequate guidance from the ILO side on the topic.

There is a final section with some resources that you might find useful.

## General questions/recommendations for consideration

How can we make sure the private sector sees this as a learning moment on the issue and builds on that once the crisis is over?

Furthermore, how can we ensure disability inclusion is seen as integral to business in light of the recession?

How to concretely address, other than disability status, other intersecting grounds for discrimination during this health crisis - such as a disabled person who is also female and member of an indigenous group?

Provision of reasonable accommodation including flexible tele work arrangement, preventing undue firing are other specific short-term measures.

Have any social protection measures been considered for people with disabilities that have lost their job or cannot earn money anymore in their usual informal work?

Recent news from the US for example suggests state advised triage plans that decide the order in which patients are treated are designed to prioritize those with higher chances of surviving and no pre-existing issues, i.e. people with disabilities come last in the priority list. How to influence state action to respect disabled people's right to life? *Comment: Indeed, this is probably the most concerning issue related to the current crisis.*

Containment measures, such as social distancing and self-isolation, may be impossible for those who rely on the support of others to eat, dress and bathe. *Response: There are exceptions to this rule for people who need care. Care-givers can still give care to those who need care but introducing with additional precautionary measures*

## Special challenges faced by developing countries

I assume, there's a good chance of economic recession after COVID-19 pandemic or during this Pandemic if it is prolonged. Under this circumstances industries in under developed countries may face serious challenges. Will love to know how ILO will work with Local Governments to protect employment of workers with a special focus on people with disabilities.

South Africa as being the country with the highest TB and HIV stats, persons with disabilities and compromised immune systems are even more vulnerable during this pandemic and government support is very limited. The health care system is failing miserably and disability grants a disgrace. NPO's are really struggling to support persons with disabilities, the elderly and children. The South African Disability Alliance would like to thank you for this excellent discussion and look forward to an ongoing relationship with ILO.

Disability and sustainable development and decent work should be prioritized among social partners. How can a country with almost 80% informal be formalize to accommodate persons with disabilities.

## Adequate IT solutions to ensure telework works well for persons with disabilities

It is really possible to have alternative situation and work from home (even if this requires different arrangements in terms of hardware and software- used internally), which can be accommodated for ALL of us including persons with disabilities.

Perhaps this is the occasion to ask companies to re-consider the policies regarding allocation to staff the equipment (hardware and software) to ensure that all its employees including those with disabilities are fully empowered/enabled to work from company as well as (remotely) from home.

It is clear that accessibility of ICT is a sine-que-non condition to ensure that persons with disabilities can access digital information like anyone else so they can also benefit from working from home as anyone else.

UK has specific scheme Access to Work, which provides grants for disability accommodations at work including access to captioners and sign language interpreters. With this sudden move to working from home, many deaf or hard of hearing people are suddenly asking for access to real time captioning to continue in their employment. This needs to be fast tracked.

I am from Nepal, most of the laptops do not have all sorts of accessibility. How an employer can ensure in countries like Nepal where resources are limited a proper accessible working system?

Regarding accommodations at home, I am blind and most of us depend on using computers at home on daily basis. I have even better technology at home than in the office.

What is the cost that Ms. Bela Gor talked about when people with disabilities cannot access websites, because they aren't accessible? Response from Bela Gor: £17.1 Billion

Bela, can you share the source for the analysis you talked about this issue, please?

## Telework (specific or general)

I think that telework or gig economy will be in demand as some countries face serious labour shortage in coming years. The question is how persons with disabilities can partake in the opportunity.

In a scenario where we no longer have a pandemic, what is the recommended proportion of teleworking a person should have if we are to avoid isolation?

Removing anxiety on delivering on other people's timing, convenience and need for reasonable flexibility is a great practice and is an important point for discussion for company policy development for remote work.

How do you avoid burdensome reporting requirement?

Good point regarding managers who are the main barrier for teleworking - as not being content producers their problem is related to "control of other" as well as how they (managers) proof their "work deliverable" in a teleworking system.

Mine is a comment, that Teleworking is the future, it's not about how you work, but what you produce, it's not about when you work, but doing and given the best with your ability.

What kind of stay at home jobs are popular for persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities?

Agreeing than teleworking should not be the only employment option for persons with disabilities, my question is for Jon Messenger. If trust is the key element in a teleworking arrangement, are there any good practices of trust at the beginning of a labour relationship that starts as teleworking for people with disabilities?

Searching for positives during this challenging time – Using the current situation where most employees are requested to work remotely, our sector should use the result of the situation to benefit the sector. The familiarity that is created on working remotely, the systems and technology that are developed and trialled to do so, could be used to making remote work the norm. This removes one criterion for exclusion of persons with disabilities in the future job planning, and recruiting. *Comment: Sure, but also we need to be careful to make telework the magic solution for persons with disabilities. It should be an option for persons with disabilities but not an excuse for not making environment and workplaces accessible*

Full time teleworking is not good from isolation perspective but the teleworking is clearly making tangible proofs that can increase productivity in particular for those who are "content" producers as it enables a calmer environment.

Do you think this is a new opportunity for people with disabilities when people are actually aware working from home is actually possible and do you think this will be a possibility also after the pandemic as a way of work for people with disabilities. *Comment: I am sure we can learn from this, but we also need to be careful not to making telework THE solution for the employment of persons with disabilities*

Working from home is great if you have all the kit (as Yves says) and if your home is safe and comfortable. Lots of ifs there. But it can also be lonely. I worry that an unintended consequence of the crisis may be remote employment of people with disabilities without the opportunity to benefit from face-to-face in-person communication and working. We will need to be vigilant on this one.

Teleworking requires trust on both sides. Managers trusting their employees to deliver on agreed outputs and employees demonstrating they are to be trusted. Eliminates micro management.

## Impact on carers of persons with disabilities and carers with disabilities

Are there any arrangement for childcare (relatives care) for people with disabilities when they work/telework?

I miss out on care responsibilities for family members with limited access to health care at home and combining this with work

Thanks for some guidance to employers of workers with family responsibilities. Full-time teleworking is proving to be very challenging in a context of childcare breakdowns, including school closure, suspension of school meals, afterschool care and support measures/services for children with disabilities.

Parents with disability might be in special concern since some of them (even if they are independent regarding activities of daily living) would need help taking care of their child. Loosing this help due to social distancing represent a challenge.

## Mental health and COVID-19

Related to mental health, we can also promote digital platforms, YouTube offers a variety of solutions such as guided meditation, mindfulness, heartfulness. It can improve mental wellbeing and is accessible to all for free. Often you can even get an app and download it on your mobile and use it whenever you need it.

I think that it is an opportunity for everyone to take charge of their health, including mental health through knowledge and awareness-building.

Given the work from home setting, what are the measures in place or interventions made available to ensure that the mental health of employees are taken cared of by companies/employers?

Mental health issues are going to proliferate - among people with disabilities and currently "non-disabled" people - as a result of the anxiety, isolation, pressure etc generated in the current crisis. I am keen to hear about initiatives anticipating what will be needed and working to put it in place.

What are the long-term suggestions and recommendations for preserving a good mental health for people with disabilities during and after the COVID-19 crisis?

## Accessible information

Access to information is one very important issue in awareness and response, usually people with hearing disability have little or no access. Is it possible to push government and private TV to make real-time captioning / subtitle mandatory for any emergency announcement, such as COVID-19?

*Comment: Correct, also information in the workplace needs to be accessible to persons with different types of disabilities*

Health professionals use masks, which is important but this makes communication very difficult for those who have hearing loss and rely on lip reading. Simple remedies such as writing down what was discussed would be helpful. Captioning all health information as well as sign language. Both should be provided to ensure full inclusion.

If the vital information regarding COVID-19 is not provided in accessible formats it can put persons with disabilities in higher risk of contamination due to impossibility to be aware and informed on the measures to be considered and respected in this pandemic period.

Content /information regarding the COVID-19 should be delivered in accessible formats so they can be perceived by everyone, including by persons with disabilities (for example, public television advertisements, online videos and exclusively audio-based web transmissions will be inaccessible to deaf people unless they are accompanied by subtitles or interpretation of sign language). Like in any other emergency situation, apart from traditional forms of telecom/ICT (TV and radio), the world of telecom/ICT includes different mechanisms that can facilitate communication to people with disabilities in such extraordinary situations: landlines, mobile audio, text/SMS messages and Internet-

based services and resources such as websites, video, instant messaging over the Internet, voice services on Internet protocol, web conferencing, social networks that allow instant communication and exchange of photos/videos and satellite communications (ibid.)

## IT-related comments

Most windows 10 computers have speech output and zoom

Low awareness was mentioned at the beginning of the online meeting. I work as a web accessibility consultant and organize awareness workshops together with users with disabilities in Switzerland. Faced with the crisis I am working on online workshops. If you have needs or interests in the field of online communication, contact me info@web-accessible.ch (you can write me in French, German, English and Italian). I would be happy to help with projects.

Please email me at office@invision-it.co.uk for help people using screen readers

How effective is accessibility in slack? Slack has done quite a bit of work on accessibility. They have tips for keyboard accessibility and using Slack with a screen reader included in their help documentation: <https://slack.com/intl/en-ca/help/articles/115003340723-Keyboard-accessibility-in-Slack->

## Dissemination and outreach

Is there a way we can get branded social media content from ILO and share it across all our platforms to support spreading solutions and share knowledge so that we can encourage everyone to join us in this disability inclusion project? *Comment: Please also join our LinkedIn group: ILO global business and disability network*

## Terminology

Just a comment on current presentation. we do not use "disabled" people as it is a demeaning terminology. Instead we use persons with disabilities, customers with disability. It is legally recognised by UNCRPD. *Comment: in the UK the disability movement prefers the use of the term disabled persons/people, making it clear that it is society that disables them due to the barriers. In the ILO we have decided to consistently use the term "persons with disabilities" in line with the CRPD.*

## Questions to the presentation from Haibin Zhou (China)

Haibin, how do you fund your services?

Is Alibaba involved in this career development and job finding?

Haibin, did you create psychosocial support services? were they online, or by phone? were they provided by this therapists? *Response from Haibin: We are building a group of job coach online, who are both work on the job requirements and also talk with persons with disabilities. The peer to peer support is also very key to them when they face challenges in understand the jobs and how to deal with work details*

Can you provide more information about how we can implement? In Nicaragua we were in the middle of a training program for community counsellors on job search, but would like to learn what changes in terms of content for training the counsellors, and how you did it go for persons with hearing impairment?

*More from Haibin: yes, we have invited 50 psycho specialists and coaches online to talk with persons with disabilities. It turned out that persons with disabilities appreciated it very much. It is by phone and messages.*

Can you share with us an example of a guideline or manual to provide this kind of support?

I feel psychosocial and mental health issues are of crucial importance .Helping people with disabilities undergo tremendous stress with the change in the routine and their vocational training is limited owing to lockdown

If Haibin can share examples of remote work/job matching that they have worked towards, that would be great.

## Particularly challenging situations

As we provided skill development for person with disability and placed them in the Tourism industry. Now they are in the home without income and job. Employers send them back to home. Is there any advise to how we can economically empower them - Lavanya from Sri Lanka, sharmini@diversable.org

The current situation is difficult for all. Specially manufacturing industry workers. What could be the advice to person with disability. Specially when touch is the biggest reason for outbreak and infection. Many persons with disability needs support from other. What could help them to boost morally?

This is World Autism Awareness Day on next April 2, any recommendation for the inclusion of workers with autism on COVID-19 context?

A lot of informal workers in lower tiers of the supply chains and internal migrants are losing jobs. Most are piece rated or daily wage workers. They are part of global and domestic supply chains but are in disguised employment relationship. Many of these workers are slow learners or persons with disabilities. First, they are not able to get full communication about the crises in clear and understandable manner. Second, they have no wages, no social protection and not part of unions. Even when the government is announcing relief measures, it is not possible for them to get access to that. How to include informal workers in such crises response.

In a manufacturing based industry, work from home may include lots of instability and challenges to both employer and employee

Yes, threat is that garment industry will revert to home working, with all its problems, especially for people with disabilities.

## Accessibility of the webinar

There should be captioning/subtitle standards (text size, font, alignment etc.), for example here the center justified captioning is not easy to follow. At least I am facing difficulty to read here. *Comment: There is a way of making the font larger, not sure about the justification. We will try to give some more guidance on this at future webinars.*

## Resources that might be useful

- [ILO page on COVID-19](#) (you can find on this website a video from Jon Messenger on telework)
- ILO publication on telework edited by Jon Messenger: [Telework in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#)
- [International Disability Alliance on COVID-19](#)
- [Action Platform of the World Economic Forum on COVID-19](#)
- CDC website on dealing with anxiety and mental health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic: [Manage Anxiety & Stress](#)
- Blog piece from Charles Catherine at the US-based National Organization on Disability: [Living with a Visual Disability during the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- Publication from American Psychiatric Association Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health on [Working Remotely During COVID-19: Your Mental Health and Well-being](#)
- Statement from Paul Gionfriddo, President and CEO of Mental Health America on [Coronavirus and Mental Health](#)