



# Concept Note: Webinar on Youth with Disabilities and the impact of COVID-19 and related protection measures

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## Background

While there have been many discussions around the overall impact of COVID-19 and persons with disabilities, there is a need to have a specific discussion amongst youth with disabilities (defined as persons with disabilities between the ages of 15 and 35)<sup>1</sup> on the specific impact and experiences that they have faced.

‘Youth’ as a distinct category of persons with disabilities does not figure in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but is covered in the spirit and letter of the Convention which highlights the multiple and aggravated forms of discriminations persons with disabilities face also on the basis of their age.<sup>2</sup> The last decade has seen great progress towards the inclusion of youth with disabilities in movements for the youth as well as within disability rights movements, reflected, for example, in the inclusion of an article on youth with disabilities in the African Disability Protocol.

While there are no exact figures on the number of youth with disabilities worldwide, it is estimated that 80% of them live in developing countries.<sup>3</sup> There is growing evidence that young persons with disabilities throughout the world are disproportionately isolated within their own communities and are far less likely than their peers to achieve the same educational and employment outcomes, and in many cases they are unable to begin families or establish healthy sexual partnerships as is seen with their non-disabled peers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> African Youth Charter, Definitions clause [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033\\_-\\_african\\_youth\\_charter\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Preamble of the CRPD, (p), and articles 8, 13, 16, 23,

<sup>3</sup> [www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-with-disabilities.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/youth-with-disabilities.html)

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA (2018) *Young persons with disabilities: global study on ending gender based violence and realizing sexual and reproductive health and rights* p. 18.

## Youth with disabilities and COVID-19

Many, if not all of the difficulties outlined in the previous section have been drastically exacerbated by the pandemic and related precautionary measures.<sup>5</sup>

Like their non-disabled counterparts, youth with disabilities in the education system have also faced disruptions in their access to education, trainings, and co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. During the pandemic, this experience has widened existing inequalities in accessing technology including accessible devices and steady internet connections. Furthermore, youth with disabilities in the informal economy have been disproportionately affected due to often having no job protection.

Young people with disabilities have also experienced disruptions in their access to essential services related to rehabilitation, assistive devices, and sexual and reproductive health services. In some cases, youth have faced harassment from family members and others in their immediate surroundings, including sexual violence, with no recourse.<sup>6</sup> Physical distancing has often resulted in social isolation, having been separated from their friends and colleagues.

This webinar, being organized by IDA, following the suggestion of the WBU Youth Engagement and Leadership Committee, seeks to provide a platform for an exchange of experiences between youth with disabilities from across different regions, enabling an environment to share their experiences and to strengthen a network of peers to learn from each other and support one another in advocacy to address the emerging challenges within the “COVID19 era”, in which the experiences of persons with disabilities, and particularly the youth, will prove to be a valuable resource.

## Participants

The participants will be from amongst the IDA members’ members and IDDC supported youth groups, including Bridge CRPD-SDGs Alumni, targeting those who are under the age of 35. Resource persons who are relevant to each region will also be identified to speak about good practices and research, where available, which has highlighted the situation of youth with disabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak and related contingency measures.

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<sup>5</sup> Deandra Mouzon, "How Are Disabled Youth Coping With COVID-19 Pandemic?" <https://youthtoday.org/2020/04/how-are-disabled-youth-coping-with-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>6</sup> PAZA Podcast Episode 4, “Sexual and Gender based violence in the global pandemic: Exploring the experiences of women and girls with disabilities” <https://www.this-ability.org/paza-episode4/>

## Language

The first webinar will be held in English. It is planned that 2 subsequent webinars in French and Spanish will follow.

## Timeframe and place

The webinars will be held in the months of July and August, using the Zoom platform as having been identified as the most suitable and accessible for persons with disabilities. As they are being conducted per regions, suitable timing will be identified for the discussion. The webinar will last for 2 hours.

The first webinar will take place on the **28<sup>th</sup> July, from 10 am to noon, New York time.**

## Agenda and structure

Each webinar will identify three key resource persons to speak of experiences and research or findings related to the experience of youth, also ensuring that the resource persons have an appropriate representation among themselves across different intersectionalities including gender, ethnic background, as well as from among underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities. The focus will be more on providing a platform for the youth participants to share their experiences; therefore, the role of the resource persons will be merely to give some context and to provoke the discussion.

Proposed speakers for the first webinar in English are:

**Vladimir Cuk** – IDA's Executive Director

**Alagammai Chenthilnathan** – Bridge CRPD-SDGs Alumni

**Dayna Schnell** - WBU Youth Engagement and Leadership Committee

For further information, visit our webpage [bit.ly/BridgeCRPD-SDGs](https://bit.ly/BridgeCRPD-SDGs) or contact us at [bridge-regional-fellow@ida-secretariat.org](mailto:bridge-regional-fellow@ida-secretariat.org).