



# How women with disabilities were treated during COVID-19, and how to make things better

The experiences of women with disabilities and COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific Region



easy  
read

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In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are blue and underlined. These are links which will go to another website which has more information.

# Introduction

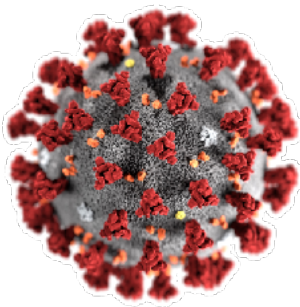


UN Women and Sightsavers have been looking at how women with disabilities have been affected by the **COVID-19** crisis.



We are organisations that:

- help women be stronger
- make things fairer for women around the world.



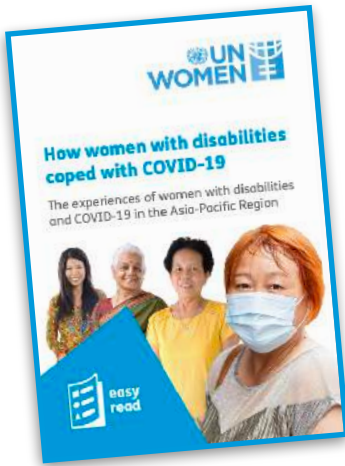
**COVID-19** is also called Coronavirus. It is an illness that is spreading around the world. It can affect your lungs and breathing.



We spoke with women with disabilities in 10 countries across the **Asia-Pacific Region** to find out how COVID-19 had affected them.



The **Asia-Pacific Region** is about 50 countries in the Americas, Asia and others, around the Pacific Ocean.



This is our report and our ideas for what should happen now.



# How women with disabilities coped



Many countries had a **lockdown** to help keep people safe and to stop COVID-19 from spreading.

A **lockdown** is where everyone stays at home and keeps away from other people. Many businesses had to close.



People with disabilities have a harder time than other people in normal times.



Women with disabilities have a harder time than men in normal times.



These differences were worse because of the lockdowns.



Women living in towns and cities were worried about being safe when they went outside.



Women in country areas had problems with phones, computers, the internet and finding information.



Women with disabilities who were looking after children had more difficulties than most during the lockdown.

# Poverty and earning money



The lockdowns made the gap between rich people and poor people wider.

Many women with disabilities were already having difficulties with money.



Many women with disabilities don't have a job. If they do have a job it will probably be low paid.



Many things became more expensive during the lockdowns. For example the cost of food, transport and healthcare went up.



It was difficult because you didn't know how the cost of housing, food, health and travel was going to change.



It was hard for women with disabilities when other people in their household suddenly had no work.



# Health and sexual health



Some people didn't go and get help with their health problems because they were frightened of catching COVID-19.



Some health services were not available. The price of transport and medication went up.



Women who were pregnant had difficulty getting the services they needed.

In some places it was hard to get sanitary products.



In some places there was not enough clean water.

# Not enough information



It was hard to get information about COVID-19.



There was not enough information for women with disabilities.



Without good information many people became frightened of COVID-19.



People were frightened to go and get the help they needed.

# Mental health



People told us that they felt worried and depressed because of the lockdown.



Women who already had mental health problems found that their mental health got worse.



Some health services had less medicine available for people with mental health illnesses.



People could not go to the groups that help them with their mental health.



The lockdown has changed things for a long time. People are worried about what may happen in the future.

# Not being able to get about



Women with disabilities felt that they couldn't move around and travel to services.



They normally have to touch people or have support as they move around.



They felt that this would not be safe, so they felt they had to stay at home.

# Education



It was difficult for some women to carry on learning online from home.



Sign language interpreters were not available for people who needed them.



Lip reading was not possible because people were wearing face masks.



Schools were closed and children needed to be taught at home.



Many women with disabilities did not feel they could teach their children at home, because they did not have a good education themselves.



# Institutions



An **institution** is a place where some people with disabilities and people with mental health conditions are kept for a long time.



People were worried about what was happening in institutions during the time of COVID-19.

Often there was no information.



Some people heard that there had been an outbreak of COVID-19 in an institution and many people had died. It was very worrying.

# Violence and abuse



There was more violence and abuse against women with disabilities during lockdown.



The violence was coming from the people closest to the women with disabilities.



Some women had never been safe at home, but it was worse because everyone was at home all the time.



For other women the stress caused by having no money had lead to violence.



People had heard about rape and sexual violence against deaf women and women with intellectual disabilities.



Some women said that they suffered violence from the police if they went out during the lockdown.



Women said that there wasn't much support for victims of violence because of the lockdown.



People couldn't get help from the usual organisations. Women with disabilities couldn't get help from the courts.

# Unpaid care



Women do most of the work inside the home.



During the lockdown, this increased because the family was at home all the time.



This was harder for women with disabilities.

# Dealing with COVID-19



Some people said that men with disabilities were more likely to get help during the lockdown, because they could go out more.



Others said that women with disabilities were more likely to go out of the home to get help for the family, but this meant that they were more likely to catch COVID-19.



# Help from governments



Some women said that they got help from the government or the local council.



Others said that they only got help if they went out to ask for it.

Many people did not get any support.



Some people had heard that the government was going to help people, but they didn't receive anything.



Some people said that women didn't get help from the government because the government gave the help to the head of the family - which is often a man.



Women with disabilities said that they often did not know what help was available because the information was not **accessible** to them.

**Accessible** means it is easy to use and suitable for people with different needs.

# Organisations of people with disabilities



Organisations of people with disabilities have been supporting women with disabilities during COVID-19.



They provided information and support. They helped women get what they needed from governments and local councils.



These organisations:

- helped people to use computers so they could access things online
- explained why people should carry on getting treatment for health conditions





- looked at how people were coping



- looked at what extra help people needed.



## Families

Some women said that families had become stronger during the lockdown because it had been a hard time for everyone.



## Social media

Social media is some of the ways you can communicate online - like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



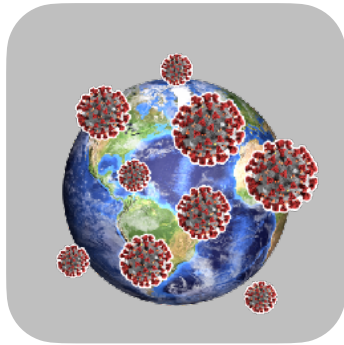
Some people said that social media had been a great help during the lockdown, because it helped women with disabilities to contact each other.

# Being involved in dealing with COVID-19



Most women told us that they had not been asked what was needed during the lockdown or what might come afterwards.

# How do we build back better?



COVID-19 has affected the lives of people in all countries.



People are saying that we should build back better.



This means that we should get back to normal in a way that is better for people.



We want women with disabilities to have a say in how we build back better after COVID-19.



# What should happen



Governments should:

- stop women with disabilities being treated worse than other people



- think about all the different things that make life difficult for people with disabilities



- look at why women do more unpaid caring work than men



- realise that people with disabilities have to pay more for their daily living



- make sure that they give more money to help people with disabilities



- make it easier for women with disabilities to get the benefits they should get



- work with organisations of people with disabilities to recover from the problems caused by COVID-19



- support organisations of people with disabilities to carry on helping women with disabilities



- let people with disabilities live independently, not in institutions



- look at the mental health issues of women with disabilities



- help women with disabilities to access the internet and to work online if they want



- help people with disabilities to learn online by making more online education accessible



- make laws that stop violence against women



- make sure women can get the healthcare and sexual health services they need



- make sure there is enough low-cost, safe and accessible transport for people



- set up organisations to make sure the governments do what they say they will.

# For more information



If you need more information, please go to our website: [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)



or write to us at:  
UN Women  
220 East 42nd Street  
New York  
NY 10017  
USA

Easy Read by [easy-read-online.co.uk](http://easy-read-online.co.uk)