



Permanent Mission of Finland  
to the United Nations



## UN-Women Executive Board

### Informal briefing on UN-Women's work for women and girls with disabilities in the joint response to COVID-19 crisis

17 September 2020, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

**Co-organizers:** UN Women and the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations

**Co-sponsor:** Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations

#### **Background:**

The unprecedented global crisis that has resulted from the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities and exposing cracks in our social, economic, political and health systems. The pandemic is exacerbating systemic discrimination experienced by populations made vulnerable as a result of existing structures of oppression such as ableism, patriarchy, racism, and classism.

Women and girls with disabilities experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion, which has an impact on their ability to meet basic needs even in normal times. Women with disabilities are three times more likely to have unmet healthcare needs, three times more likely to be illiterate, two times less likely to be employed and two times less likely to use the internet in comparison to men without disabilities.<sup>1</sup> They are further at least two to three times more likely than other women to experience violence, including by family, intimate partners, caregivers, and institutional facilities.<sup>2</sup>

While not all impacts of the COVID-19 crisis can be explained at this time, it is becoming clear that the gender, disability and structural inequalities that underpinned societies before the crisis are being exacerbated, in particular for those who experience intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion, including women and girls with disabilities.

The informal briefing aims to provide a space to explore (a) how UN Women has responded to the COVID-19 crisis till date to ensure that the rights of women and girls with disabilities are addressed and (b) what more needs to be done by stakeholders, Member States, Civil Society and the UN System, to ensure that as we 'build back better', the rights of women and girls with disabilities are addressed.

**Objective:** To provide an understanding of UN Women's approach to responding to the COVID-19 crisis, have a discussion about what the emerging areas of investment are and how to "build back better"

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<sup>1</sup> UN DESA flagship report <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/publication-disability-sdgs.html>

<sup>2</sup> U.N. General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, U.N. Doc. A/67/227 (2012).



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## **Provisional agenda**

Moderator – Ms. Kaarina Airas, Head of Unit, Unit for Development and Human Rights,  
Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, New York

- Opening of informal briefing by Ms. Anita Bhatia, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women (*5 mins*)
- Interactive dialogue: Gender-responsive disability inclusion - Coordinated efforts to respond to COVID-19 (*35 mins*)
  - Dr. Monjurul Kabir, UN Coordination Adviser and Disability Programme Coordinator, UN Women and Dr. Ola Abu Al Ghaib, Manager, UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
  - Ms. Leyla Sharafi, Gender Advisor, Gender and Human Rights Branch, Technical Division, UNFPA and Ms. Amanada McRae, Director of United Nations Advocacy, Women Enabled International
  - Ms. Niluka Gunawardena, Hype (Sri Lanka)
- Q&A (40 mins)
- Closing remarks (5 mins)
  - H.E. Mr. Jukka Salovaara, President of UN Women Executive Board