

Part V

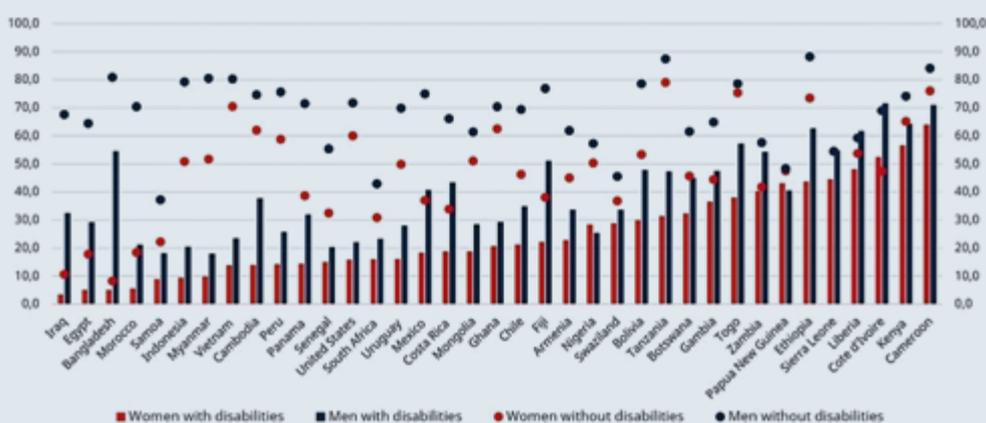
# Ensuring a disability-inclusive response to COVID-19

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189. As emphasized in the 2020 General Survey,<sup>295</sup> persons with disabilities already tend to face discrimination and exclusion in employment, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Despite accounting for some 15 per cent of the world population,<sup>296</sup> persons with disabilities are less likely to be in employment and to have decent working conditions than those without disabilities. They tend to experience higher levels of poverty, including extreme poverty, than other groups, and incur greater costs than persons without disabilities.<sup>297</sup>

Figure 5.1

## Employment-to-population ratio by disability status and sex, most recent ILO data



190. As shown in figure 1 above, men and women with disabilities have significantly lower employment rates than their non-disabled counterparts. Moreover, women with disabilities have uniformly lower rates of employment than men with disabilities. According to United Nations data, across eight geographical regions measured, the employment to population ratio for persons with disabilities aged 15 and older is 36 per cent on average, compared to 60 per cent for persons without disabilities.<sup>298</sup>

The *CUT* and the *CTC*, indicate that, according to the Registry of Persons with Disabilities, 6.3 per cent of the Colombian population has some type of disability, of which only 28 per cent are in employment. Furthermore, they highlight that there is no national policy on vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities and that the measures adopted are intended only to protect from dismissal persons with disabilities who are already working, and not to promote their access to employment or the implementation of reasonable accommodations.

<sup>295</sup> ILO, General Survey of 2020, Chapter 5.

<sup>296</sup> WHO and World Bank, [World Report on Disability](#), 2011.

<sup>297</sup> Sophie Mitra et al., "Extra Costs of Living with a Disability: A Review and Agenda for Research", *Disability and Health Journal* 10, No. 4 (2017), 475–484.

<sup>298</sup> See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), [Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities](#), 2018, 152–154.

**191.** Persons with disabilities are also over-represented in the informal economy, where they are likely to be at greater risk of exposure to the virus, but have little or no access to health services or social protection.<sup>299</sup> They are also more likely to be self-employed, or to be in part-time work, and to earn lower wages. The situation is compounded for women and older persons with disabilities. It is estimated that 46 per cent of persons aged 60 years and over have a disability, and one-in-five women are likely to experience a disability over the course of their lives.<sup>300</sup>

**192.** Persons with disabilities face a number of obstacles that play a significant role in limiting their job opportunities, including lower education levels, discrimination, stigma, negative attitudes concerning their capabilities, lack of accessible transport to and from work, and inaccessible workplaces, as well as a lack of reasonable accommodation.<sup>301</sup> Persons with multiple, severe or psychosocial disabilities are even less likely to be employed than persons with other types of disabilities.<sup>302</sup>

*Brazil* – The Government indicates in its report that it has recently passed the Inclusion Law (Law No. 13,146/2015 which provides for an inclusion aid for persons with disabilities to encourage their entrance in the labour market. Furthermore the Government refers to the National Service for Industrial Learning (SENAI) projects designed to promote accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities and to other initiatives by manufacturing companies such as the “*Moda para todos*” initiative (that designs clothes for persons with disabilities).

*Myanmar* – In its report, the Government indicates that section 23 of the Law on the Rights of Persons with disabilities adopted on June 2020 states that persons with disabilities should not be denied admission to work due to their disability. The Government further indicates that the training institutions in the country provide adequate training to the persons with disabilities according to their vocation.

**193.** The pandemic has starkly accentuated existing stigma relating to persons with disabilities, and their consequent inequalities. On 9 June 2020, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) expressed grave concern at the devastating impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities, noting that the crisis has exposed and deepened existing vulnerabilities and risks that are underpinned by entrenched discrimination and inequality.<sup>303</sup> The CRPD noted that, while many persons with disabilities have health conditions that make them more susceptible to COVID-19, they are also one of the most excluded groups in terms of health prevention and response actions, and economic and support measures.

<sup>299</sup> ILO, UNICEF, United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, International Disability Alliance, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Disability Inclusive Social Protection Response to COVID-19 Crisis](#), Brief, 2020.

<sup>300</sup> UN, [Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19](#), May 2020, 4.

<sup>301</sup> UNDESA, *Disability and Development Report*, 152.

<sup>302</sup> UNDESA, *Disability and Development Report*, 155.

<sup>303</sup> United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “[Statement on COVID-19 and the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)”, 9 June 2020.

## ► 1. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities

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**194.** Persons with disabilities are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. Many persons with disabilities face specific health-related challenges that are compounded by COVID-19. According to the WHO, persons with disabilities may be at greater risk of contracting the virus due to a range of factors. These include barriers to accessing basic hygiene measures (if access to water or hand-washing facilities is difficult) and difficulties in ensuring social distancing due to support needs and in accessing public health information.<sup>304</sup> If they are exposed to the virus, they may be at greater risk of developing serious disease due to underlying health issues,<sup>305</sup> and the risk may be further aggravated by barriers that impede their access to healthcare and support services.

**195.** COVID-19 has created new barriers for persons with disabilities, which prevent or impede their access to services and support. Persons with disabilities may be significantly affected by disruptions to the services on which they normally rely. Access to medication or assistive devices, as well as to basic staples, such as food, may be limited and require persons with disabilities to go through areas that may be crowded (making physical distancing difficult, if not impossible), or that may be difficult to access due to physical barriers.

“It is difficult for me to respect social distancing and hygiene rules because people with visual impairments always need a sighted guide when going to a new place and have to touch to identify objects and orient themselves”.<sup>306</sup>

**196.** These challenges may be compounded by a shortage of qualified carers, who may themselves pose a health risk to persons with disabilities. The situation is particularly difficult for persons with disabilities who rely on care workers to enable them to participate in the labour market and lead lives outside restrictive institutions.<sup>307</sup> Additional measures are therefore needed to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to health and care services, water, sanitation and public health information during the pandemic.

**197.** Social isolation and loneliness during imposed lockdowns and quarantines are a common occurrence linked to mental health conditions. Risk containment measures, such as self-isolation and lockdown, may limit the access of persons with disabilities to the carers on whom they normally rely, and may also have a significant psychological impact. Social isolation resulting from lockdown for those unable to work, and for those working from home, has given rise to higher than usual levels of anxiety, depression and other emotional and psychological conditions affecting many persons, including persons with disabilities.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> WHO, [Disability Considerations during the COVID-19 Outbreak, 2020](#).

<sup>305</sup> WHO, [Disability Considerations during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#).

<sup>306</sup> UNDP, [Rapid Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Persons with Disabilities in Viet Nam, 11 May 2020, 7](#).

<sup>307</sup> Sophie Mitra and Douglas Kruse, “[Are workers with disabilities more likely to be displaced?](#)”, *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 27, No. 14 (2016), 1–30, in which the authors find that in the *United States*, over the 2007–13 period, 75 per cent of men with disabilities and 89 per cent of women with disabilities were more likely to experience an involuntary job loss than men and women without disabilities; Michelle Maroto and David Pettinicchio, “[An Unequal Labor Market means that COVID-19 has been Especially Harmful for Vulnerable Groups, including People with Disabilities](#)”, *London School of Economics USCentre Blog*, 21 May 2020.

<sup>308</sup> UN, [Policy Brief: COVID 19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health](#), 13 May 2020.

*Japan* – Statistics compiled by the Government show that suicide claimed more lives in October 2020 alone than Covid-19 has to date. The number of suicides in the country per month rose sharply to 2,153 in October 2020, according to Japan’s National Police Agency while from the beginning of 2020 until the end of October, the total number of deaths in the country attributable to Covid-19 stood at 2,087, according to the Ministry of Health. These alarming statistics indicating rising rates of suicide could provide valuable insights into the impact of pandemic-related measures on mental health, in addition to helping identify those groups that may be at higher risk. While the reasons for Japan’s high suicide rate are complex, long working hours, school pressures, social isolation and cultural stigma around mental health issues have all been cited as contributing factors. The rate of suicides in Japan had been decreasing in Japan over the past decade, falling to about 20,000 in 2019. The pandemic appears to have reversed this trend, however. While women represent a smaller proportion of total suicides than men, the number of women taking their own lives has increased disproportionately. In October 2020, suicides among women in Japan increased almost 83% compared to the same month the previous year.<sup>309</sup>

**198.** Persons with disabilities, especially women and older persons, are particularly disadvantaged by the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. Lower rates of employment are consistently observed for persons with disabilities, with an employment gap in relation to persons without disabilities found in all regions of the world that ranges between 18 percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa and 39 percentage points in northern America. Moreover, in all regions, women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than men with disabilities and than persons without disabilities.<sup>310</sup>

**199.** If persons with disabilities are in employment, they are more likely to lose their jobs and livelihoods than persons without disabilities. The enormous job losses due to the pandemic have placed persons with disabilities at an even greater disadvantage in relation to persons without disabilities, and they are more likely to experience difficulties in returning to work during the recovery phase.<sup>311</sup> According to Citizens’ Advice, one-in six (17 per cent) of the working population in the *United Kingdom* are facing redundancy during the pandemic; however, this figure rises to 37 per cent (one-in-four) for persons whose disabilities have a substantial impact on their activities.<sup>312</sup> A rapid assessment carried out by the UNDP in May 2020 of persons with disabilities in *Viet Nam* found that 96 per cent of survey respondents expressed concern for their financial security.<sup>313</sup> In this respect, many persons with disabilities report barriers or denial of reasonable accommodations as obstacles preventing them from working.

**200.** The socio-economic shocks caused by the pandemic have magnified existing inequalities affecting persons with disabilities, especially older women and older persons with disabilities.<sup>314</sup> In particular, during lockdown, the concentration of health resources on treating COVID-19 patients and the shortages of care workers have had a significant impact on persons with disabilities, creating barriers to access to health services and pushing persons with disabilities, particularly older persons with disabilities, into even greater marginalization and isolation.<sup>315</sup>

<sup>309</sup> CNN, [In Japan, more people died from suicide last month than from Covid in all of 2020. And Women have been impacted most.](#)

<sup>310</sup> UNDESA, *Disability and Development Report*, 152–153.

<sup>311</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19*.

<sup>312</sup> Citizens Advice, “[An Unequal Crisis](#)”, 6 August 2020.

<sup>313</sup> UNDP, *Rapid Assessment of the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Persons with Disabilities in Viet Nam*.

<sup>314</sup> UN, [Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons](#), May 2020. The policy brief has been supported by a [Joint Statement](#) signed by 138 Member States and Observers.

<sup>315</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19*, 4.

The incidence of COVID-19 in care homes and institutions has resulted in extremely high fatality rates. Moreover, older persons with disabilities who are quarantined or in lockdown with family members or carers may also face higher risks of violence, abuse or neglect.<sup>316</sup> The pandemic has placed enormous strain on national health systems, leading to instances of healthcare rationing, including triage protocols, when the insufficiency of care and treatment resources has resulted in the need to take life-or-death decisions, such as which critically ill patients are put on ventilators, often based on discriminatory criteria, such as age or assumptions about quality of life or life expectancy based on disability.<sup>317</sup>

201. Moreover, persons with disabilities, and particularly women and girls, have faced a greater risk of domestic violence, which has escalated during the crisis.<sup>318</sup> The Specialised Training & Disability Centre of the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (*Sri Lanka*) has highlighted the need for measures to ensure accessible reporting mechanisms and victim assistance services for women and girls with disabilities facing domestic violence and harassment.<sup>319</sup> It is important for responses designed to address these concerns to be coordinated with the persons concerned, their families, caregivers, local communities, health institutions and other relevant authorities.

## ► 2. A disability-inclusive response and recovery

202. The United Nations Secretary-General has called for a disability-inclusive COVID-19 response based on an integrated approach to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind in the response and recovery.<sup>320</sup> The strategy sets out four overarching areas of action applicable to all aspects of crisis response and recovery, aimed at ensuring:

- the mainstreaming of disability in all responses and recovery measures, together with targeted disability-specific measures to ensure the systematic inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- the accessibility of information, facilities, services and programmes;
- meaningful consultation with and active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at all stages of the response and recovery; and;
- the establishment of accountability mechanisms to ensure disability inclusion.

203. An ILO policy brief on COVID-19 and the world of work, focusing on the inclusion of persons with disabilities at all stages of the response, reviews the key issues to be addressed in the response, within the framework of the ILO's four-pillar policy framework for tackling the socio-economic impact of the crisis.<sup>321</sup> The ILO has also launched a call for action urging all stakeholders to include persons with disabilities as a central element of all COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives.<sup>322</sup>

<sup>316</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons*, 3.

<sup>317</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons*, 5; Samuel R. Bagenstos, "[May Hospitals withhold Ventilators from COVID-19 Patients with Existing Disabilities? Notes on the Law and Ethics of Disability-Based Medical Rationing](#)", (24 March 2020), *130 Yale Law Journal Forum*, (2020 Forthcoming), or [Univ. of Michigan Public Law Research Paper No. 670](#). See also K. Liddell, et al., "[Who gets the ventilator? Important legal rights in a pandemic](#)", 11 May 2020.

<sup>318</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons*.

<sup>319</sup> ILO, [COVID-19 and the World of Work: Ensuring the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities at all Stages of the Response](#), Policy Brief, June 2020.

<sup>320</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19*.

<sup>321</sup> ILO, *A Policy Framework*.

<sup>322</sup> ILO, "[No one Left Behind, Not Now, Not Ever: Persons with Disabilities in the COVID-19 Response](#)", 8 April 2020.

204. In light of the ILO policy framework, the Committee examines below the range of measures taken by ILO constituents with a view to promoting employment and decent work for persons with disabilities in their crisis response and recovery measures.

*Austria* – In its report, the Government indicates that there will be more flexible subsidies for employers that employ people with disabilities, for more secure jobs.

The *ITUC* stresses that persons with disabilities are more likely to encounter discrimination at the workplace during the pandemic, emphasizing that States should respect their obligation to ensure non-discrimination with respect to people with disabilities. The *ITUC* calls for recovery plans to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability as well as on multiple grounds. Measures should also be taken to ensure that persons with disabilities benefit from OSH protections.

The *BDA* from Germany indicates that German employers take their responsibilities in the area of disabilities seriously and actively advocate training, professional inclusion and the ongoing reduction of unemployment for people with disabilities. In addition, the *BDA* has encouraged enterprises to provide training and employment to people with disabilities. The website: <http://www.inklusion-gelingt.de/> offers extensive information to employers in this regard. Successful examples of inclusion for the benefit of all those involved, which should encourage copycat initiatives, are also annually awarded the Inclusion Prize for Business. The prize is awarded by the business forum jointly with the Federal Employment Agency, the Charta der Vielfalt (diversity charter, a corporate initiative) and the *BDA*. The *BDA* will continue to share examples, demonstrating the successful results of inclusive practices that actively integrate persons with disabilities in employment and professional life.<sup>323</sup>

*United Kingdom* – In its report, the Government indicates that the Department for Work and Pensions will be bringing forward a Green Paper on health and disability support, which will explore how the welfare system and wider support can better meet the needs of claimants with disabilities and health conditions now and in the future, to build a system that people trust and that enables them to live independently and move into work where possible. This Green Paper will build on the response to Improving Lives, including the commitment to reform the work capability assessment. The Government is committed to working with people with disabilities and health conditions to build a system that works for them. The Green Paper will be strongly influenced by the views of people with disabilities and representatives from disability organizations, drawing on the significant engagement the Government has conducted to date and which will continue.

<sup>323</sup> Similarly, the Government of *Slovenia* indicates that the active labour market policies focus on the inclusion of workers with disabilities. In addition, the programme *Employ.me* also includes persons with disabilities (10 per cent).

**(a) Protection of workers with disabilities at the workplace**

**205.** The crisis has led to a change in the structure and organization of work in many businesses, with the aim of reducing risks for workers with and without disabilities. Enterprises that take a disability-inclusive approach can play an important role in safeguarding the interests of workers with disabilities. A survey carried out in May 2020 by the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN) shows that the most common initiatives taken by enterprises that are members of National Business and Disability Networks are to authorize telework (69 per cent), flexible working hours (56 per cent) and paid leave (32 per cent). In addition, 88 per cent of the respondent enterprises indicated that their business plans are inclusive of persons with disabilities and that these plans include the provision of mental health support for employees with and without disabilities.<sup>324</sup>

**206.** Persons with disabilities who continue to work may need specific protection or accommodations to enable them to work safely. Those who own their own businesses or work in the informal economy may need tailored support to enable them to continue working. Those who are able to perform their work using alternative arrangements, such as telework, may require reasonable accommodation to allow them access to digital platforms or to participate in online meetings or conferences.

**207.** Persons with disabilities, including workers with disabilities, should be provided with accessible and updated information on the health risks of COVID-19 and how to protect themselves and prevent further transmission. For example, Inclusion Europe has launched easy-to-read information about coronavirus available in many languages.<sup>325</sup> Communication strategies could include sign language interpretation, websites accessible to persons with different types of disabilities and telephone text services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**(b) Reasonable accommodations and access to assistive technology during the crisis**

**208.** Many persons with disabilities report barriers or the denial of reasonable accommodations as obstacles to the performance of work. Reasonable accommodations at workplaces can vary from no- or low-cost solutions, such as flexible working hours or the provision of an entrance ramp, to assistive devices, such as screen reading software, which is more costly and less readily available.

**209.** COVID-19 control measures, including the lockdowns imposed in many countries, have led to a surge in teleworking for many who are able to do so.<sup>326</sup> Where necessary assistive technology is not available during the pandemic, this may mean the difference between employment and unemployment for persons with disabilities. Employers' organizations have provided guidance on how their members can best support employees with disabilities through reasonable accommodations, where required, to enable them to telework.<sup>327</sup> Trade unions have also developed guidance on reasonable accommodations during the crisis.

<sup>324</sup> ILO, "[Disability Inclusion in Company Responses to COVID-19: Results of a Survey among National Business and Disability Networks and their Members](#)", 2020. In May 2020, the ILO GBDN carried out two surveys, one for National Business and Disability Networks (NBDN) and one for NBDN company members. The objective of the surveys was to identify good practices and gaps in responding to COVID-19 in a disability-inclusive manner. A total of 159 companies in 22 countries (in four regions) participated in the company survey and 19 national networks participated in the NBDN survey.

<sup>325</sup> Inclusion Europe, "[Easy-to-read Information about Coronavirus Available in Many Languages](#)", March 2020.

<sup>326</sup> In *Germany* for example, labour courts have held that section 164 of the Social Code SGB IX concerning severely disabled persons who "are entitled to employment in which they can make the most of their skills and knowledge and develop them further" can include the right to telework.

<sup>327</sup> ILO, "[An Employer's Guide on Working from Home in Response to the Outbreak of COVID-19](#)", 2020.

The Trades Union Congress of the United Kingdom (TUC) has issued a guide to help trade union representatives address issues that may arise in the context of teleworking arrangements for workers with disabilities.<sup>328</sup> For example, the guide notes that workers with disabilities who are teleworking may require reasonable adjustments to enable them to participate in video or telephone conferences with colleagues. These could include using a speech or text provider, or a special phone.

210. These measures offer examples of good practices to help workers with disabilities continue working in the workplace or from home. For other workers with disabilities who are unable to telework, other means of support need to be ensured, including skills development and the expansion of social protection coverage for those most affected by the crisis.

### (c) Access to education and skills development opportunities

211. The pandemic has disrupted access to education and vocational training for students and jobseekers around the world. According to the United Nations, although reliable data are not yet available, it is likely that the pandemic has exacerbated the exclusion of persons with disabilities from education. Lack of internet access, support, accessible software and educational materials, particularly in developing countries, means that learners with disabilities are less likely to benefit from online learning solutions. Moreover, interruptions of vocational education and training programmes, particularly work-based learning programmes, will undoubtedly have a significant effect on young persons with disabilities, who already face difficulties entering the labour market.<sup>329</sup>

*Philippines* – The Philippines Business and Disability Network has launched a reskilling initiative to help workers with disabilities acquire skills to enable them to access post-crisis jobs.<sup>330</sup>

### (d) The crucial importance of targeted disability-specific social protection

212. In view of their high incidence in informal employment, many persons with disabilities have little or no access to social protection, and particularly health insurance, unemployment benefit, maternity protection and social security benefits, which are all the more necessary during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. Globally, only 28 per cent of persons with significant disabilities have access to social protection benefits, and only 1 per cent in low-income countries.<sup>331</sup> The coverage gaps are significant in some developing countries, where fewer than 20 per cent of older persons of retirement age are in receipt of a pension.

213. Urgent targeted support measures have been taken in a number of countries for persons with disabilities who are self-employed or in the informal economy to provide them with income support and enable them to take the necessary precautions to avoid infection and further transmission of the virus. These measures often consist of:<sup>332</sup>

- ▶ cash transfers;
- ▶ in kind support;
- ▶ adapted delivery mechanisms; and/or
- ▶ flexible working arrangements.

<sup>328</sup> Quinn Roache, “[Covid-19 and Reasonable Adjustments: Guide for Reps](#)” (TUC, 22 April 2020).

<sup>329</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19*, 4.

<sup>330</sup> ILO, *COVID-19 and the World of Work*, 2; ILO, “Disability Inclusion in Company Responses to COVID-19”.

<sup>331</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19*.

<sup>332</sup> ILO, *COVID-19 and the World of Work*.

214. In many countries, cash payments to persons with disabilities who were already receiving benefits have been increased or extended.<sup>333</sup>

*Fiji* – The Employment Taxation Scheme (ETS) incentives for employees with disabilities who are employed for three years will increase from 300 to 400 per cent.<sup>334</sup>

215. In other countries, administrative requirements have been relaxed to facilitate continued access to benefit, including the adaptation of benefit delivery mechanisms that take into account lockdown restrictions to prevent exposure to the virus. For example, in *South Africa*, specific dates have been established for the withdrawal of benefits with a view to preventing crowding. In *Albania* and *Armenia*, measures have been taken for the home delivery of cash transfers, and in the *Russian Federation*, online registration and remote access to disability certificates have been introduced.<sup>335</sup>

*United States* – Tax relief measures have been adopted to help alleviate the financial situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the pandemic.<sup>336</sup>

216. The Committee also notes that in a number of countries paid leave has been provided for parents or family members of persons with disabilities to ensure continued income support.

*Cyprus* – A child care special leave allowance is available for working parents who are responsible for the care of children up to 15 years of age and/or children with disabilities of any age who, due to the nature of their work, cannot telework or work from home or under a flexible working hours arrangement, provided there is no in-house assistance.<sup>337</sup>

*Italy* – In response to the pandemic, employees with children up to 12 years of age (there is no age limit for children with certified disabilities) can benefit from up to 15 days paid parental leave, paid by the social security and covering up to 50 per cent of their remuneration.<sup>338</sup>

217. In a number of countries, in-kind support has been provided in the form of food or non-food items and home-based support services.

<sup>333</sup> For instance, coverage has been expanded in *Rwanda* and *Sri Lanka* to include more persons with disabilities. In *Argentina*, *Chile* and *Peru*, persons receiving disability benefits will be provided with an additional amount in light of the COVID-19 crisis. See Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [COVID-19 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Guidance](#), 29 April 2020, 5.

<sup>334</sup> KPMG, [Government and institution measures in response to COVID-19](#), Update 20, 16 April 2020.

<sup>335</sup> KPMG, *Government and institution measures in response to COVID-19*, 3.

<sup>336</sup> Government of the *United States*, [“Tax help for people with disabilities”](#).

<sup>337</sup> KPMG, [“Cyprus: Government and Institution Measures in Response to COVID-19”](#), Updated on 14 May 2020.

<sup>338</sup> [Legislative Decree No. 18 of 17 March 2020](#) establishing measures to strengthen the national health service and provide financial support for families, workers and enterprises in the context of the COVID-19 epidemiological emergency.

218. Moreover, during the crisis, persons with disabilities may need support to access unemployment benefits, social security or other protection measures, particularly in cases where they are prevented from being able to access these benefits due to COVID-19-related restrictions on movement, or to disruptions in their social and care networks during the pandemic. Measures to address this situation have been taken in a number of countries.

*Malta* – Persons with disabilities who have to stay at home due to health concerns arising as a consequence of the pandemic, and who cannot telework, are entitled to a benefit of €800 a month for a specified period (€500 a month for part-time workers).<sup>339</sup>

**(e) The importance of designing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing response and recovery measures in consultation with organizations of and for persons with disabilities**

219. It is important for persons with disabilities to be included as active participants in the development and implementation of all response and recovery measures, both during the pandemic and in its aftermath. The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), in Article 5, calls for consultation with the representative organizations of employers and workers, as well as the representative organizations of and for persons with disabilities, on the measures taken to promote the vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities affirms the general principle of the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society. The close meaningful consultation and active involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at all stages of the recovery and response to the pandemic is essential to ensure the design and implementation of response measures that are effective and inclusive.

220. The Committee recalls that persons with disabilities are an extremely diverse population, and that they have first-hand awareness and experience of living with disability that those who are not living with these disabilities do not have. As a result, they have an important and unique contribution to make to the development and implementation of immediate crisis response measures, as well as longer-term measures to ensure an inclusive recovery. Their unique perspectives and experiences of the myriad forms of disability provide opportunities for the development of innovative solutions to the current challenges.

*Canada* – The COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group has been established with the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to advise the Government on disability-specific issues, challenges and systemic gaps and strategies, and the measures and steps to be taken.<sup>340</sup> Furthermore, in the framework of Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, the Government provides a special one-time, tax-free, non-reportable payment of \$600 to help Canadians with disabilities that are holders of a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate or are beneficiaries as at 1 July 2020 of: Canada Pension Plan Disability; Quebec Pension Plan Disability Pension; or disability supports provided by Veterans Affairs Canada.

<sup>339</sup> Lexology, "[COVID-19: Malta Financial Aid Package and Measures](#)", 23 March 2020.

<sup>340</sup> Government of Canada, "[Backgrounder: COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group](#)". In its report, the Government further informs that the Government of Quebec has launched the National Strategy for the integration of persons with disabilities.

