Tuesday 14th July

CDPF Regional Meeting on COVID-19

THANDWIE: Thank you so much Richard. Gemma are you still there.

GEMMA: Am absolutely still here. Richard is not here he just recorded that for us so you can start the meeting I will be quiet.

THANDIWE: Ok thank you so much Gemma but is it possible for that video to come to members so they can remind themselves?

GEMMA: Exactly so this video is part of this call, this is a really good time to tell you all this before I be quiet. This video, this whole call is being recorded and it includes that video. So this call will be put on the website on the CDPF website which you can access via a link, you have to click on to it watch it again, if you would rather I can email the link to you before it gets put on the website absolutely it's fine. You will basically have the video at the beginning and then the rest of the call.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Lydia ‑ Gemma, my apologies. I think it's time now that you must introduce yourself and see who is here inside the house so that we can start to know each other. My suggestion is to say when you introduce yourself please put your mic on and your video so we can see you and when you finish talking mute it again please. Thank you. Oh. Can everybody hear me?

MFABOTHE: We can hear you.

GEMMA: Very well.

THANDIWE: Here I am my name is Thandiwe, from disabled people South Africa my position I am the deputy Secretary General but I am also the vice‑chairperson of Commonwealth, thank you so much. Let's go to the other people to introduce themselves.

MFABOTHE: I am Chimidza I am also the member of Commonwealth people disabled forum. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you Wabothe can we see your face,.

MFABOTHE: You can't see why I am sorry for that.

THANDIWE: Put your video on.

MFABOTHE: It can't, I will continue off. I am sorry.

THANDIWE: Fine can we have the next person thank you.

REBECCA: I am Rebecca, from the Botswana federation of the disabled but specifically from the rehabilitation society. Thank you.

THANDIWE: You are welcome.

>>: Thank you I am [inaudible] from the Botswana federation of people with disabilities representing the rehabilitation society. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much. Next? Where are the other participants, can you get people to introduce themselves please?

MBUSI: Good morning can you see me? Halo?

THANDIWE: You're video is off.

MBUSI: My video is on I can see myself on the screen, my name is Mbusi, from disabled children action group which is a parent’s movement of children with disabilities in South Africa I am the Secretary General, thank you so much.

THANDIWE: Thank you Mbusi. Next? Can we have the next?

MFABOTHE: [inaudible] coming from? Thandiwe?

THANDIWE: Mbusi is coming from South Africa disabled children's action group.

MFABOTHE: Oh.

THANDIWE: Where are the others?

GEMMA: So you have got Rebecca, Rebecca.

MFABOTHE: She just introduced herself.

GEMMA: Am so sorry.

THANDIWE: Let's go Rebecca, talk to us.

MFABOTHE: She has already done that.

REBECCA: I have introduced myself already.

THANDIWE: All right, so it's only people from Botswana and South Africa, where are the other countries, where is Malawi?

GEMMA: So I was told somebody from Eswatini was supposed to be here, also somebody from Zambia, somebody from Mauritius and somebody from Malawi were all supposed to be here they may join, I will keep an eye out and let them in if they turn up.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Gemma. So because we have introduced and others will follow us later, can we start with, I did send a sort of an attendance register and as we listened to Richard's video, the purpose of this meeting is to defend disability and it's also to build a better co‑ordination or a better what can I say I am not so sure of the proper word but a better working together as DPOs in southern Africa. Also to find out in your country what is happening round the COVID‑19 issue. He raised a lot of points where he talked about lack of reasonable accommodation. When it comes to schools we have got a problem with, because now there's schools are closed especially for children with disabilities, and they don't have access to what do you call it, access to media or access to be training through maybe video clips and all those kind of things. And we also need to concentrate on Article 19 of independent living. I am just going to leave it and give to it each member to raise in their region or country what is happening around the COVID‑19 issue. Can we have someone a who can have a take around that?

REBECCA: Do you want to start for Botswana then me will join you, Chimidza? Chimidza?

MFABOTHE: Hello?

REBECCA: Why don't you start for Botswana we will join you.

MFABOTHE: I am right here I don't want to, I want to hear what you say.

REBECCA: Ok. Thank you very much I can start for Botswana, and perhaps this this this Rebecca, a lot is happening in Botswana but the issue that was raised by the person who opened the meeting, are also well a life here in Botswana. Almost all the issues that are experienced in Africa we are experiencing in Botswana. The issue of disability inclusive responses is a concern but I am going to talk about just one issue and I will let others talk about other issues. The issue that I want to talk about right now is the issue of protection. The protection of people with disabilities, especially when it gets to getting credible information because we do have situations whereby informations are passed on and this information is not correct at all. Other people they have many channels where they can actually visit or hear and confirm whether the news are credible or not. I will come back to that I just want to point out the points am going to be talking about. The other issue of concern to me is about the public transport that they use or public places that they visit. The issue of their protection and safety when they get into this public transport, when they get into this public issues is also a concern. Let me just give an example. A visually impaired person will get into a bus. Then there's this issue of social di dancing, some people they don't care about social distancing, they don't care to wear mask the person will end up sitting next to a person who is not protected. Because in the public transport, there is no‑one who is there being a focal person who can take care and see how these people, how we are protected, people with disabilities are protected. Let me again talk about public places like shops. In the shops there's supposed to be, we're supposed to wear mask, they are supposed to be centres or point where you can get sanitiser. At time you need to be asking them, you don't find anyone by the door. They are supposed to be by the door, they are supposed to be, you are supposed to be writing your name when you get to door, they are supposed to be taking your temperatures but the times you find even the temperatures, you are told they are not working. You get there, you are a deaf person, you need to communicate this to people they don't understand you. Because they don't have the language. No‑one is to be actually helping people who are disabled, completely-completely. This is a concern like you said you get in a bus, we are told observe all the restriction we know it does not mean they are. You get in a bus you sit next to a person who is not wearing a mask, complete, complete, you can't even see that this person is not wearing mask. Who is there to actually protect you. These are some of the issues that really we need help to be looking at even getting into the Government offices. Where you can get important information about the COVID‑19 you find that when you get there, you find there's you want to use your sign language no‑one knows about it and no one is around at time to help you. Issue of protection especially in public place is for me is something that we really need to look at in all aspects, that issue like you said of how do they verify, how do we verify whether the information that we are hearing, if we cannot see is credible. Or that we read but we cannot hear is credible, other people they have different means of verifying the information and knowing who to do, but nothing, this is a gap I am seeing is not attended to how do we get to public places when we get into public transportation, once we get in the midst of other people once the lockdown has been released any other person, people with disabilities have to move around they cannot stay forever in there house because they also mean some means but where do we get the protection that is needed where others they can afford it because of, they can see or they can hear when others are talking. I just want to stop here I can come back to and give another person a chance to talk. Thank you. Is that ok? Hello?

GEMMA: Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Rebecca. I think Rebecca has spoken about very important issues in terms of protection that I round COVID‑19, in terms of public transport which each and every country has got it, but can we have some more input from other people please.

>>: My name is [inaudible] from Botswana. I am with Rebecca here in addition to what Rebecca has said in issues of protection, my concern is about movement of people with disabilities, especially those with visual impairment. Ever since this COVID‑19 started, at the beginning of this year in Botswana I have never, I have never seen any visually impaired person moving around freely with or with orientation cane. But my concern is where are these people? It means they are confined in the places, in their houses because they do not have any support to move around. So my concern is how can we help these people? These people need to be supported. So that they can also feel, move around independently, and safely in familiar and unfamiliar places. They need protection, they need support. Thank you.

MFABOTHE: Thandiwe? Hello?

>>: My name is Boikhutso from Botswana, my concern on the protection of people with disabilities on this issue is that in schools here in Botswana they are catered for, there are basins for them to wash their hands they forgot for those that are in wheelchairs to lower the basin for them to wash their hands. They even forget that even the use of masks in classrooms, they tend to forget that these people there are those that can't see at all who need to be shown how to use the mask, how to move around the classrooms because sometimes we found that the classrooms, even the social distancing for people with disabilities to move is very limited. Even those who cannot hear. They cannot hear what is supposed to me said, found out there are no boards in the school for those who are hard of hearing they need to read to know what is happening, or they need some people who will translating for them but they are not, that is not being in place. So we are, we have a problem in these people to be protect them Coronavirus to know we cannot be, we have to adhere to the rules and regulations that are for Coronavirus. Is just been said but they forget that other people are there in place that need to hear about this virus thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much. What I want to understand is this a special school or is it a normal school?

>>: It's a normal school. Normal schools in Botswana.

THANDIWE: Ok thank you so much, can we have other input from other people. [*[distorted audio]* Mbusi are you still on the line? *[distorted audio]* is it only Botswana people, where Is Mbusi.

MBUSI: I am here.

THANDIWE: Can you put around that?

MBUSI: People must mute their mics! *[distorted audio]*

MFABOTHE: Thandiwe can I add?

THANDIWE: No Mbusi is going to talk other of you need to mute your mics! There's noise, can you mute your mic.

MBUSI: I think it's now clear, now look in South Africa I think for us what we have noticed we all know that we have got good policies in general, on issues of disabilities, however, the challenge has always been that we are unable, Government is unable to implement some of these policies which good as they are, but if they are not implemented they remain a good source of [inaudible] which is not practical. However, in relation to the COVID‑19 pandemic we have a concern as a disabled people, especially on children's education. That we are not consulted, we're not part of the team, even if it's a team that advises the officials and the ministers, we’re side-lined and there is no proper announcement from the departments in terms of how are they planning around opening schools for children with disabilities. Be it a special school or be it an inclusive school. We have a challenge with that, we all know that social distancing is impossible to some disabilities, as one has indicated that when a blind person will need somebody to assist. So this no social distancing that can take place. However, if we're not consulted as parents, as disability activists in the main we're not consulted to then Government has got no plan or it has a very little to say, this is the plan for persons with disabilities. In South Africa we have been a victim of we have been side-lined where people that have been provided with the food parcels as part of poverty relief during this time of lockdown in South East, we were not there, we have asked as organisation ss that may we be supplied as organisation then we supplied to our own people because that way we have our own people in the database we know them more than else. We asked Government to give funding to organisations of disabled people so that we can assist our members at large because we know how vulnerable they are. However, the approach of Government is treating us as everybody else and along that we get, we're left in the process we're left to starve. We appreciate the social grant that has been given to disabled people who are grant recipients however, we still feel that we need more than that. Grants alone cannot assist us in penetrating in all other aspects, that does not really require a grant. The issue of transport is a problem. I mean if Government allows 100% for community transport, where does a disabled person which is more vulnerable will fit into a transport that is not promoting social distancing, yet we are viewed as more vulnerable and some of the disabled people have got co‑morbidity. It's a great concern. We never stop engaging we never stop make noise the Government count us in. Or any information that are made or that are to work on issues of Coronavirus, we are pleading with Government to say count us in so we are able to make a meaningful contribution because there is no‑one else knows the sector more than disabled people themselves. We always subscribe to a slogan or nothing about us without us, that is our motto. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank so a much Mbusi you have raised a lot of questions in terms of policies to say, policies are there but in terms of adhering to policies it's a serious challenge. I can see someone from Mauritius, welcome Ali. He just joined us. So those are the points that you raised to say even if policies are there, there's adherence to policies, social distance is still a debate in South Africa. Transport owners they want 100% and then what Mbusi is saying to say that 100% it becomes a challenge because before Government was saying 70% in terms of public transport. In terms of social distancing it becomes, I have got a question around the social distancing. I am using a wheelchair and someone else has to push me with a wheelchair, where does the social distance come in. What I am trying to say as much as this person is assisting me, that person is not in terms of protective gear, that person does not qualify to be given free mask, sanitisers, whatever. They are not in that part but yet they talk about social distances a but let me give those who are still going to add something thank you, anyone who wants to talk please talk. Ali just joined us, Ali? Can you talk to us, welcome. Introduce yourself where you are from.

ALI: Hello can you hear me? Hello? Can you hear me?

THANDIWE: Yes yes we can hear you.

ALI: Sorry I am a bit late it's ok I just joined now I have heard some of you a few words about nothing about us without us, *[distorted audio]* and the social distancing. I think the problem is mostly we have to see how we can look to see how we can look for solutions to these issues.

THANDIWE: Are you still there?

ALI: Yes yes I think there's a connection problem. I can hear you can you hear me?

THANDIWE: Yes we can, can you continue or are you finished?

ALI: Yes I just wanted to raise some issues as most of people are raising for those who are with, wearing a mask for people with deaf issues, deaf problems, the big issue about wearing of masks because they need to transparent masks. You say recently social distancing is for those who can't move independently, and mostly in wheelchairs or those with visual impairments. This we have to think for solution how we have to find out how to facilitate these people. So hopefully, I don't have the solutions as such, but we should look for collective solution because as you know for people with disabilities it's not such as one‑size‑fits‑all, it depends on the disability for example, those with intellectual disabilities, or autism, the big issue of wearing masks and so on. Some children at schools can wear masks and others can't, so we have to make request from the I suppose from the World Health Organisation how we can have solutions for, there are much concern about these issues. We on our side we have to collaborate and see how we can have the best solution to our community.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Ali in terms of the COVID‑19 in your country how is it?

ALI: Fortunately in Mauritius we are out of curfew, everything is back to normal. We don't have any restrictions except for wearing a mask, and even the social distancing, people are not really respect the social distancing. The bank is open all the market is open, mostly all the public places are open. Fortunately we don't have this seriousness of this case in Mauritius but still we are on our side you know, we are prudent, we are prudent, we are taking care, you never know what happen but we are ok here, we're ok here. We have been able to handle this situation *[distorted audio]* comparing to other countries. By the way you know that Mauritius is very small country, population of 1.2/1.3 million people. Anyway schools are open again, with some restriction again wearing a mask, and social distancing but you know mostly are not respected, but we are managed, we are manage to go on here in Mauritius, thank God.

THANDIWE: Ok thank you. In terms of your policies, what do they say in terms of children with disability in school, what is happening?

ALI: There is a specialist schools [*Loss of audio*]

THANDIWE: Hello are you still there? I think we lost him did we lose you Ali?

GEMMA: Thandiwe can I just say just before Ali comes back in, that we have lost Chimidza, he [*Phone ringing*]

ALI: We're managing to deal with the situation, I won't say that we're perfect, but at least we can manage, we can manage, the schools are on we can manage. Children with disabilities also on now hopefully things are going I won't say perfect as I told you before but we're managing with the situation.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Ali. Any input from other people who is this girl Galaxy 10? Can we hear from other people. Simon are you around? Hello?

SIMON: Hello. This is Simon from Malawi. FODOWA. Maybe you can update me as to where we are so I can contribute from a Malawi perspective.

THANDIWE: Thank you Simon, what we were talking about it's the round the issue, there was a video clip that was played, the message from the secretary but what we're talking about is how, what is happening round the issue of COVID‑19 when it comes to people with disabilities, especially schools, especially Article 19, independent living, access to education, if your schools are closed, how are in terms of social distancing, the protections the public transport, a lot of them you can just tell us what's happening in your country.

SIMON: Yeah thank you very much. Basically as Malawi the COVID‑19 [inaudible] started round the second half of March, in by that time I think we had no case registered in the country. That's the time when the schools were even closed. After the closure the schools in some preventative measures had to be announced to ensure that there is no spread of the virus to the country. Now I think there was an establishment of a cabinet committee on COVID‑19 prevention, and which later was transformed into the presidential task force on COVID‑19. In both structures there is no representation no persons with disabilities, there was an attempt effect a lockdown which was challenged in court there was an injunction that was obtained to challenge the affecting of that particular lockdown. The issue is still in court up to now. One challenge that we had was that within the same time there was an order by the Court to do a rerun of the election we had last year so the election were nullified, the political aspects also come into play seriously and it affected most of the things. However, in terms of school, we know that [*Loss of audio*] we know that there was in conjunction with some mobile telecommunication companies, TNM, to be producing some materials to be accessed free of charge through mobile phones, or through internet. However, the challenge that we have had is that most of the materials, the materials were basically for secondary school levels, and the first half of the secondary school level that from 1 and from 2. However, these have not been accessible to most of our learners with diverse needs like visual impairment and other disabilities because? Production of the materials itself has not been adapted to feed learners with other disabilities like those with intellectual disabilities so these has been one of the major challenges, has been put towards the authorities but I think as of now nothing has happened in addition to that, what we have noticed ‑ yes yes, hello?

THANDIWE: There is some noise behind, please guys let's switch our mic off. Thank you, you can continue.

SIMON: Thank you very much. So the problem was that the materials that we actually provided for access by the learners were not very accessible most of the learners with diverse needs. However, there was also an effort to make sure that the schools open, reopen, and in that effort of reopening the schools the Minister of Education set up what was known ministerial task force for reopening, for the planning of the reopening of the schools. I happen to have been one of the members of this particular task force, and what we noted was that in most of the planning I think I would say that the disability aspect was still coming out because I think we have been part of the team. We had some sub committees, one sub‑committee on primary and secondary education, we had a sub‑committee on Higher Education, a sub‑committee logistics. We lasted the Minister of general children and social affair, to handle the ECD section, we also had the Minister of labour to handle the vocational training centres section. So we have developed the guidelines that are going to help the various stakeholders, including the institutions themselves that are making sure as they. Reopening they should properly strategise. However, what we have noted is that the initial arrangement or schools would reopen by 13th, from 13th of July, however, with this kind of, with the trends the way the trend are going in Malawi with the case it seems it's almost impossible to reopen at this time the presidential task force has to put that particular arrangement on hold, up until maybe the situation stabilise, maybe the downward trends comes into play, that's maybe when the reopening will be considered. However the guidelines are indeed considering issues of disability quite a lot, there are lots of issues to do with online learning but these online learning programmes most especially for private institutions, are still leaving behind learners with diverse needs, more especially those with disabilities. That's a one of the major, major, major challenges. Also, I am sure that as of now I think we have not had a real kind of an intervention that will help more especially those with visual impairment in terms of making sure they still benefit from those particular arrangements, special arrangements. But even those with hearing impairment it's a problem at least they can access the print materials, but it's still very big challenge in the country. For the presidential task force, one challenge that I feel, I know that's as of now the ministry or that is responsible for disability affairs has transcribed some of the materials, the COVID‑19 materials into Braille, but the biggest challenge with this kind of arrangement is that I think they have not consulted persons with disabilities in doing most of the things. The presidential task force, one time I think it's two weeks ago, just to check with him, as to what they are doing in terms of disability, what I was told was that the ministry for disability was the one that was tasked to bring those kind of interventions and stuff like that, but still more what I noted was that it still is a big problem because the ministry itself, the line ministry itself has not consulted persons with disabilities, such that to me there was a very serious need to even adapt most of the materials, the preventative materials, preventative measures that R being propagated out there. There was a need to adapt some of them so that they really fit into the needs of persons with disabilities but that has not been done to an extent that what I feel strongly is that I have not got old hold of the materials so far, I have visual impairment but I have not got hold of many materials that have been transcribed into Braille but at the same time my biggest fear is most of those kind of materials are the same materials that are being disseminated to everyone else, such that the materials have not been adapted and this is a big risk still because the materials are not taken into consideration the needs of persons with disabilities in terms of the various kind of messages that are already in circulation out there. So basically I think in the interests of time, I can stop there.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Simon, thank you very much for the information I can hear you talk about the presidential task force, that means is it inclusive of people with disabilities? I am curious round that.

SIMON: The task force is not inclusive, we have advocated as much as possible, to make sure that the task force becomes inclusive, there should be a representative of persons with disabilities. The only thing we know it's like it seems the ministry of disability sits in that particular task force but basically in terms of the representation of persons with disabilities is not there. It has not done as, it has done almost nothing in terms of consulting the DPO movement in Malawi. We have talked quite a lot about it, we reached the point of writing the chief secretary to the Government to ensure that we secure a spot within the task force but I think nothing has happened.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much. So it seemed to me in terms of that there's no self‑representation in terms people with disabilities, someone else is representing so the DPOs are not part of it. We in South Africa we do have the presidential task team. We are people with disabilities are represented but there's a challenge because they are represented together with the service providers. At the end of the day there are more service providers than DPOs. So also create challenges into our discussions in terms of that one but let me give to it other people to say. *[distorted audio]* anyone wants to make input? Chimidza? *[distorted audio]* is that you speaking Chimidza? Who is speaking? I can see you.

GEMMA: Chimidza it might be better for you if you turn your video off it will help, it will help your bandwidth if you turn your mic off. Not your mic, I if you turn video off while you're trying to talk, Ali please could you mute your mic.

THANDIWE: Put your mic and your video off, is it possible or we have lost you.

ALI: Can I add something please?

THANDIWE: Pardon.

ALI: Ali, can I add something.

THANDIWE: Who is speaking now? Is it Ali? You want to say something Ali? We're getting people, people are getting lost. Who is here?

ALI: I am Ali can I add something please?

THANDIWE: Welcome Ali, go on.

ALI: Yes, as he was talking about the UNCRPD I would suggest that if we can make a collective resolution for Article 33. The national implementation and monitoring of the UNCRPD because most of the time we don't have, here in Mauritius we don't have this national, it would p, useful for us to monitor the implementation of the UNCRPD, this should have been a cat list catalyst for us in the pandemic situation. Maybe there is strength on its common collective decision we can make pressure on the Government. I mean from our international organisation, or DPO, any organisation, IDA, I don't know, which organisation can make this pressure. Locally here you know how it works, it's very difficult to fight against Government, or to insist on these issues, but a collective international global can influence the decision of the Government. This is one of my suggestions, we can bring you know stronger in the coming weeks, coming month and coming years. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Ali are you saying from the international level we must assist your country in terms of issues of disability? Is that what you're saying.

ALI: Yeah yeah. Yes. Yes what I mean you know, we have to assist us here because you know in most countries like I heard before my friend in Malawi, talking about how response of the Government, *[distorted audio]* we are inside the country it's difficult to pressurise to insist with these issues, when it comes from international level it's global.

THANDIWE: I cannot respond on that but my other question is to say do you have programmes for activities to push the Government to start and listen to you, because we cannot just come from outside and want to get into your house, before the owner of the house.

ALI: No I agree with you but when it's a common force from all‑out side from all people, from all *[distorted audio]* DPOs from international level, when they are you know when the how you raise make the noise I would say, we can make the noise together this is very important for us to have a collective work because here we can go ahead with this but who will hear us? When it comes from collective and come to press, when it comes to pressure at international level things move differently.

THANDIWE: Thank you Ali I heard you.

ALI: You get my point.

THANDIWE: Yeah I do get your point. Ok thank you. Anyone, Chimidza? Are you still around?

GEMMA: We lost him again unfortunately.

THANDIWE: Wow it's an issue of network.

GEMMA: Yeah I think so.

THANDIWE: Is there anyone who would like to make some input? More input.

REBECCA: Yes I am from Botswana my input is about strengthening organisations in resources like funds, you need organisation in Botswana, not only Botswana but you need it in other country we need funding, so funds, so we can cater for equipment and materials, for example in the case of in the area of visual impairment we need to the area of visual impairment we need to assess functional visual assessment in children and adults and then refer them that eye clinics, the eye specialist and optometrist, so that in this time of COVID‑19 they can also function properly with their vision. To be independent. We also need to be taught, organisations I think need to be taught on how to apply for or consultancies for grants, we do not know the know how most of us. That's why maybe in some organisations there's lack of funds to go forward. We need also strengthening in partnership with the Government, like social workers, to assist people with disabilities with any kind of training and guidance which can improve their social life, emotional states. I think that my edition. I have some also technological ‑ thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you I can see the gesture in that welcome, the thing I did not hear it probably coming out, is to say how do we build back or how do we do better after the COVID‑19? We didn't talk about that, to say because there's now COVID‑19 it's there. It's reality. As a sector, or as the disability movement, what are we saying around those things. And as activists, do we have plan to make sure that all these challenges that we have as DPOs we are able to still as much as our Government is not listening, but push on until they end up listening. I did not hear that. I also did not hear the Article 19 of independent living it was not really clear to say when we talk about independent living, do we understand what are we saying, where people still belief in social instead of us doing our own things, not to say their role is not important but we're talking about the role being important as people with disabilities assisting each other, doing things for ourselves, pushing, standing up not waiting for people to come in and assist us. In terms of inclusive education, what are we saying, what is it that we're going to do it better or what are we building so that after the COVID‑19, we are not starting from scratch. Already we're doing running instead of starting. Let me hear some input from there, thank you.

>>: Hello? Hello.

THANDIWE: Yes you can talk go on.

>>: Hello, I think we as people with disabilities we need to encourage ourselves not to depend on the social [inaudible] but to work and to make businesses, get into offices of people who stand for us, but if we sit back and say we will depend on social records to help us live it's going to be difficult. I take it that we need to have businesses, there are so many businesses that people with disabilities can be, can engage on, so I take it if we can run our own businesses after this Coronavirus, we will be somewhere to say I have made this I can earn a living on my own without depending on social, that would be of help us to, and The other thing is that, we need to encourage those children that are still in schools to be more dependent than depending on other people for to go for the lessons, or to do their school work. They need to encourage themselves at their own expenses, to do their schoolwork without depending on other people. Independence is something that I can see that is lacking on people with disabilities to work on themselves. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much. Any input Emile. I saw you due to want to make input.

>>: Good morning ma'am and good morning everybody I apologise for being late but I must say that it's quite an honour for me to attend this meeting, and to attend it with very influential people with regards to our purpose and why, the reason why attending this meeting we acknowledge that there's a crisis and we acknowledge that our rights are not being met, if we look at accessibility and also with regards to equality and especially inclusivity if you refer to education. But so unfortunately I couldn't hear the first part of the discussion, but I quickly want to add a small contribution if I may. As we all know the COVID‑19 outbreak is a serious threat particularly to city services and global health. As we know it's radically transforming the societies in which we live. As we know that specifically disabled people we're heavily affected, this the worst economic contraction since the great depression. 1.6 billion workers all round the world especially in informal sectors are having their livelihood threatened by lockdown in most African countries, specifically heard something with regards education, that two thirds of children [*Loss of audio*] THANDWIE: Are you there Emile? Have we lost you?

>>: *[distorted audio]*

THANDIWE: Yes Emile? Ok I think we our losing Emile? Yeah we have lost him. Hello?

GEMMA: Thandiwe can I just interrupt, it might be a good time to take a 5 minute break for our captioner, she needs to rest her fingers.

THANDIWE: Can we just go, what is the time it's 16 minutes past 12. Hello are you back? Emile? Ok can we have a break, hello.

THANDIWE: You are breaking.

GEMMA: Shall we just break for 5 minutes for our captioner. Ok. If everybody stays on the line though please. Emile it might be a good idea if you reconnect perhaps.

      [*Short break*]

GEMMA: Thandiwe are you there?

THANDIWE: Yes I am here. GEMMA: The captioner is back from her break.

THANDIWE: Thank you. Are we all here guys?

>>: Yes we are here.

THANDIWE: Emile are you here so you can continue? Is Emile here?

>>: Yes I am thank you. Can you hear me?

THANDIWE: Yes we can hear you.

EMILE:    What I basically want to say is that what I was basically just trying to say is that 15 to 25% of estimated forecasted loss in city revenues due to decline of economic activity due to COVID‑19, and our objective, artists objective is based on advocacy and engagement. Therefore we need to identify first thing the issues and the documented the lived experiences of disabled people. And specifically, ensure the sharing of best practices. I think that is the purpose of today's meeting is to create a network of networks, and bigger co‑ordination amongst ourselves and also to build a movement to communicate with Government, to ensure that persons with disabilities are accommodated in all am expects, and specifically the reason why we're doing what we're doing is based on the global act principles, number 1 is non‑discrimination. To ensure that all layers of Government each in its own capacity to guarantee the local Governments do not endorse discriminatory practices against persons with disabilities. The second global principle is accessibility. And to ensure that all local governments guarantee the access to clear communication in multiple formats, which is available. And to consider the many that many persons with disabilities, specifically older persons as well, living in poverty and settlements do not have access to internet. I think we can also say of course for R own country South Africa as well due to aim quality. Third, global contact participation and here comes Government, I think that the important role that Government needs to play is to ensure that local governments formulate and implement disability and age inclusive pandemic responses. In consultation, in partnership with ourselves., our disabled organisations. And older persons and representative organisations as well. I think there's also a need, I think I it was so encouraging when I logged into hear this discussion point that leads to this, it's with regards to active support programmes and to ensure that there's also recovery networks that to promote individual and organisational preparedness, to ensure we combat this problem. And then the last one that I also want to add, that I want to contribute is data collection for development. This also, this is where Government also comes in, to ensure that local governments publicise and share their standards, process, and criteria for data collection measurement and to prevent biased data collection and interpretation and then also that we ensure that we analyse this data, and specifically that we learn from the COVID‑19 and then when we leverage them to create a new post pandemic normal aim at the reduction of inequalities for persons with disabilities. So I am looking towards hear the conversation. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you Emile. Anyone who would like, is Chimidza still gone?

GEMMA: Yeah he is.

THANDIWE: Ok. So anyone who would like to make input please can we continue. Are we there all of us? It's already 12.32 in South Africa.

GEMMA: Have a got half an hour Thandiwe but you must stop by 1 o'clock your time.

THANDIWE: There's someone, is there any input that people like to add on what was discussed or they have got something extra.

BOIKHUTSO: Hello? Again from Botswana, the other input that I want to make it concerns our independence as people with disabilities. We need to be supported if we want to be more independent there should be some guidance that we ought to use as people with disabilities. We in a developing country lack so many things that we need to use when looking at technology. So many thing that people with low vision who are partially sighted or who are blind, they lack some radios to use so they can get into this nowadays technology, like when we look at the [inaudible] we found at when we were watching on TV the those people that are the e‑learning, the lessons on TV, the deaf people are missing a lot because they are just watching but there's no‑one who is interpreting for them in this lessons so I take the it that so many of them a lot of the things need to be put in place for our independence, rather than to dependent other people. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much. So you are talking about inclusive education that is going to make sure that children with disability don't miss around, especially when we come to technology. I know in southern Africa also there are [inaudible] networks in deep rural areas there are no networks where people can access internet, even if they have got the gadget but because there no network, unfortunately all technology in that area, they are still going to miss those opportunities. Anything that you would like to add? You also talk about independent living, it depends from one country to another. In South Africa we are still allowed to have you can still most of the time we have been practising the Government is giving housing then free houses. Now those free houses includes people with disabilities, so I don't know in other countries there's free house for community. Or for the society. When it comes about independent living, we are saying this is such a programme interaction together, maybe we still have to take it further, how do we [inaudible] how do we put pressure on other countries that don't include disability, how do we do that like Ali was saying there's a cry for outside organisations to put pressure, international to put pressure into their Government. How do we become a pressure group that makes sure that the Government is complying in terms of people with disabilities. I think those are some of the thing we talk about. Anyone would like to Mbusi is he out? Hello?

ALI: Hello, Ali here.

THANDIWE: Yes Ali?

ALI: Yes I would like to add something you know about, because I myself have been [inaudible] children because we have to make emphasis how to empower parents of children with disabilities, mainly you know as parents we have been many issues during this pandemic seasons and you know before and other is dent parents have lots of issues for welfare of the children. So I suggest that we should set up here also in Mauritius and anywhere, very concise and precise how to empower parents of children with disabilities to know their rights, the rights of the children with disabilities, the rights to education, the rights to leisure and sport in everything like this. As you know, having children with disabilities is not an easy thing [inaudible] parents, I know what I am speaking about. We have to, as I used to say we have to join hands together, how to find out to make a proper empowerment of parents of children with disabilities and youth with disabilities also.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Ali. Any input?

EMILE:    Sorry if I can just quickly add something. I think the 3 main challenges to implementing urban accessibility is number 1, it's budget constraints, specifically the lack of financial mechanisms and then specifically also, the lack of training and tools to implement accessibility policies. And then the limit awareness and understanding of accessibility, and I believe if we summarise just what everybody said, specifically with regards COVID‑19 response priorities to guarantee equity as well as autonomy of disabled people in emergency situation, the fur thing that comes to mind is specific information in accessible formats. Then also like we just said as well with regard to digital inclusion, and then also mobility, and then social and mental health care services, which is basically the top priorities that we need to look at. Thank you.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Emile. Any input? Hello? If people don't have, or no more having some inputs to make.

SIMON: Hello?

THANDIWE: Ok.

SIMON: This is Simon.

THANDIWE: Simon you may talk.

SIMON: I just wanted to add firstly from the colleague from Mauritius had said, when he was talking of pressurising governments and stuff like that I was thinking, I don't know if you have this part of interaction but maybe one thing that we can do is to maybe see how we can engage the heads of states, so that be it at a conference or whatever, to engage in that kind of forum, maybe some of our resolutions presented to them where we can come up with a position paper or whatever, to be submitted to them so that issues of disability rights, disability inclusion, are advanced from that kind of a level so that each Head of State as they go back to their respective countries, they must understand that it's their obligation to make sure that persons with disabilities are well taken care of enjoying their rights to fullest. One other thing I want contribute is the colleague was talking about issues of parents. Even if terms of inclusive education parents have a very important role to make sure that children with disabilities are well taken care of in terms of their right to education. So, even in these kind of time like in Malawi, schools are not open yet, even those countries where schools have opened, I think there is a strong need for remedial kind of programmes, so that the children with disabilities are really coming back to, on their feet in terms of the instruction process:    Otherwise what I have noted is that you may find that even these time around, more so the other students, they are counterparts without disabilities, have been at least having some remedial kind of instructions in the process, such that even when they are going back to school, they have all been way ahead of those with disabilities, and people may even conclude to say children with disabilities are not performing, but in this period where schools have closed, these children have not had access to most of the materials, so even the parents have an important role to play in that particular area. You were asking about the some social support programmes to support community members in terms of housing and stuff like that, in Malawi, we have what is known as the [inaudible] programme, this has subsidy programme for various materials for building and it also has like a grant aspect which is given to people that are labour constrained that they wouldn't be able to earn a living on their own, and this is where maybe some of the people with disabilities benefit from but it's quite a very, very small percentage and it doesn't really add a significant contribution to the problem that is out there. From what we have also been advocating for is for persons with albinism, what we notice is that quite insecure, very insecure, and we were advocating that maybe the Government would through the programme, target persons with albinism first, so that at least all households that have person with albinism that are living in very insecure houses they should those particular households should be provided with some safe houses. However the amount was, the Government actually put an amount of money in the budget last year, in the 2019/20 national budget. However, what ended up happening was that the budget, the fiscal year came to an end on 30th of June, and we have noted that no house hats been constructed so far. But we know that there was an allocation for that particular purpose, and that's the trust was like, that was trust was like a big, big problem. I think I should stop there.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much., wow, what's happened here ... thank you so much. So we are saying you after talking about the support, presidential, Head of States, what I picked up what is happening the Head of States they invite the workers union, they invite the business sectors but they never invite the disability sector. Maybe I am not so sure Gemma here you will assist me to say one of the resolutions is to have a letter that is written to the States, to the Head of States each country to say we want to be part of their meetings, so that issues of disability can be raised there. That's how I understood.

GEMMA: That's right I think Richard wrote the letter for everyone to give to their governments didn't he I think there was something like that.

THANDIWE: Yeah we did give, there was a letter but I think we need to resend another letter again.

GEMMA: Yes.

THANDIWE: Then if there are no responses, then we can have a programme that specifically challenges Head of States. If it means we becomes on radio and TV then we need to be there. But speak with one voice.

GEMMA: Yeah.

THANDIWE: I think that one of the things we should look at because until we stand up for ourselves, no‑one will listen, they will look at your letter they look at your email and keep quiet.

GEMMA: Yeah.

THANDIWE: But once we start challenging them I think the Commonwealth will be able to assist us to engage with international medias and regional media start to raise awareness around this issues. Which means on a monthly basis, or twice in a month we can that have a programme that talks about COVID‑19, that talks about issues of disability that we don't adhere to. That is the only way to put pressure, because now President would need to respond why is it not happening. That's my suggestion, but I will hear from the group and time is running remember. It's 48 minutes now we only have 12 minutes. Ok.

REBECCA: Can I just reiterate what was said hello?

THANDIWE: Yes you can talk.

REBECCA: Yes, this is Rebecca I just want to reiterate some of the points that you said that was said in here. That perhaps what we need more is a collective voice. So what we have been saying for example like identifying platforms that we can use for our voices to be heard I think that is the most important thing for each country to say for us, we do have these platforms where we can use them for the nation to hear what we're saying. The issue of sadec with a collective voice too is something for me that is a very important one, but apart from that collective voice, I just want to reiterate the point, empowerment or parents. If you still remember when the secretary of [inaudible] this morning, he actually set what we need is to help us people with disabilities to live in our communities, not to be taken at of the communities and as we know parents are the ones who can lay a very good foundation. But as we know quite now we know that there are some parents who are totally disempowered in the fact that let me give an example, for example I know a parent who live with a person who cannot talk, a deaf person and the parent doesn't know the sign language complete, completely. How do we empower parents like that especially at this time when remote learning or when children are expected to learn from their homes. So the parents' empowerment for me is one thing that should be in our agenda including the second one of collective voice, and then the third thing for me will be the protection of disabled people in the public transport. I just want to be saying all this because I have a meeting at two so exactly quarter past 1 I have to run at for another meeting, those are my points if we take something home 8 be collective voice, let it be empowerment of parents, let it be protection of people with disabilities during this time, especially in the public places and public transport. Thank you very much.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much. We are now left with 9 minutes, Gemma do you want to say something?

GEMMA: No I don't have anything to add I am just here to assist you all.

THANDIWE: Thank you so much Gemma, I think *[distorted audio]* will be sent us to on what we have agreed upon, [*Background noise*] then we take it from there. We can take it from there and come up I am not so sure when can we meet to have now a proper programme that is a pressure group that will be challenging, including that the letters that came that need to go to our leaders. Our Presidents in the country, I know sometimes it becomes very difficult to reach them because there are too much gatekeepers, so we need to make sure that if there is a gatekeeper, how do we access and how do we assist each other. And make sure that our presidents in our countries, can hear what you are saying. Thank you so much. What is his name, I would like to thank the interpreters I would like to thank Gemma for been there for us, I would like to thank Julia as our captioner, I would like to thank all of you as leaders, let us encourage other countries, Eswatini I don't know what happened to them and Namibia I am not sure what is happening, can we encourage each other and make sure that we become part of this team. Thank you so much. Can I see your faces please guys, can you just put your video on so I can see everybody's face because I can see no‑one wants to see me here I am, the lady with a golden voice. Thanks Simon. I can see Emile, where is BOFOD. Ok.

ALI: My camera is off.

THANDIWE: All right thank you everybody. Thank you for so much for attending, let us ‑‑ I love you and take care.