Commonwealth Disability People's Forum

Monday, 13 July 2010

EDWIN: Thank you. That was a lovely presentation. We virtually note take all and we will walk towards our destination of inclusive medication. We will need to start over now by introduction. My name is Edwin and I work with persons with disability in Nigeria. Hello?

MAWUNYO: Hello again. Okay.

EDWIN: Go ahead, please.

MAWUNYO: Okay. So Mawunyo, President of the ... organisation. Also the treasurer for Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum meeting.

EDWIN: Beautiful. We're going to, go ahead now and (inaudible). Gemma, please can you introduce yourself to the group? Let us know who you are.

GEMMA: Thank you so much. Okay. Okay. So I work for ADD, Action On Disability and Development and we're the physical partners of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum. So I'm here in my role as I suppose administrator for the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum. And I've been helping set up the regional meetings. So this is the West African one. And my role, really, is to not say anything, but just to try and help set them up and play videos when it works! The video was fantastic, but I think it was just I didn't manage to play it properly! So I have to step back but I'm just here to set things up assault's it's a pleasure to have anything to do with this so thank you so much.

EDWIN: You've done so much, thank you for that, I have seen what you have been doing, bless you for that. Thank you so much. We have Dr Obeng here, can you please introduce yourself?

DR OBENG: Hello. Yes. I'm Dr Obeng and I'm the Director of the Ghana Blind Union and I'm honoured to be part of this forum. But I didn't get the video, anyway.

EDWIN: No problem, we can hear you.

DR OBENG: Okay, good. That's fine.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. Please, can we go ahead, we don't have much time. Christopher, are you there?

CHRISTOPHER: Yes I'm Christopher and I'm the COVID-19 response for the Ghanian ... of the disability organisation, thank you.

EDWIN: Mawunyo?

MAWUNYO: Did you get that? Is it too fast? Hello? I'm here Edwin, I'm here. I'm just concerned about you getting some of the points and the names so that -- and the portfolios.

EDWIN: Okay thank you very much.

GEMMA: I'm just going to say Edwin and Mawunyo, if we miss anything, this whole meeting is being captioned so somebody called Katy is listening and she is writing everything down. So while that will be a lot of writing to read it's very useful for us, we can have at that to go back on. So no panic if you miss something.

EDWIN: Okay. Were you here with us when we started the movie? Elias, can you introduce yourself?

ELIAS: Yes, hello, I can hear you, thank you very much. My name is Elias Apreko and I'm the Secretary Director of the Ghana Stammering Association.

EDWIN: You are welcome. Hello? Good afternoon.

>>: I'm here.

EDWIN: Good afternoon, you are welcome, sir.

ADAMU: My name is Adamu Ishiyaku and I'm the President of the Nigerian Society of the Blind. Thank you for having me.

EDWIN: You are welcome, sir. Thank you. John Mefful are you here with us?

JOHN: Yes. Hello.

EDWIN: Okay.

JOHN: I'm John Mefful, Reverend John Mefful, from The Ghana Society of the Physically Disabled. I'm the President.

EDWIN: Thank you. And I'll also have Dennis here? Dennis, you are welcome, thank you. Reverend.

JOHN: Yes.

EDWIN: Can you give us a report, we have a little bit of time and we need to --

JOHN: Apart from the (inaudible) disabled?

EDWIN: Yes, all the information we can. Give you a short report of key issues currently for disabled people, persons with disabled in COVID-19 in your country.

JOHN: I think there is somebody on the platform representing the comments.

EDWIN: You can still -- sorry -- we will get back to the person. But I'm starting with you or shall I give you some time?

JOHN: Let me come in. Can you hear me?

EDWIN: I can hear you perfectly.

JOHN: Okay. Ghana Society of the Physically Disabled, we are responsible for taking care of all the persons who are physically disabled like wheelchair users and amputees and people with glasses. And COVID-19, it has not been easy for majority of our membership. First one has to do with movement. As we all know, social distancing is paramount in reducing the spread of the COVID-19. You know our people, we are mostly assisted by other people. So, for us to adhere to the social distancing, in relation to COVID-19 is a little difficult. That means some of our members who are able to move only when they are assisted by other people, cannot go out, they have to remain, that is one challenge. And another challenge is also that some of our people who are self-employed have been hit by COVID-19, the impact of it and a lot of them have been renders unemployed and treating themselves and their families is a little bit of difficulty. And we also have a little challenge in relation to supply of food for our members. We don't, majority of them now cannot fend for themselves and it's a little bit of difficulty in relation to that. The government has implemented some loans for some businesses, but it has not yet come in and I don't see that one able to, take care of that, as a whole. We are trying to, in collaboration with GMP, Ghana federation of disability organisation, is trying to lobby through the government for government to consider our members who own their own businesses and have applied for the facility. So that's what I can say about our level, thank you. I have finished.

MAWUNYO: Thank you, Reverend. Edwin, are you there? I don't see him.

GEMMA: Mawunyo, he is still showing as being on there. Hang on. No, he has dropped off. I think you might need to carry on, if everybody's introduced themselves, you might need to take over. Mawunyo, because the meeting's been captioned, it doesn't matter about the notes so much and then maybe if Edwin comes in?

MAWUNYO: Okay. Okay. So did everybody introduce themselves? If not introduce themselves. That's approach of Edwin. If there is someone who has not introduced themselves?

GEMMA: If you are thinking about Dennis, he is one of the interpreters. That's probably why. If you have had Gideon, Elias, Christopher, Adamu, revered John, Dr Obeng, there's someone showing up as phone number. They've raised their hands. Maybe try the person that has raised their hand. If that person can speak now?

MAWUNYO: Can you please introduce yourself? Hello?

GEMMA: I'm going to, there's not a lot I can do, to be fair. It's coming up with a phone number that ends with 6614, if that's you, could you introduce yourself, please?

>>: Okay, as our name suggests (inaudible) blind and partially sighted. Now with a covid situation, our challenges are mainly, that's for example, when you say social distancing, you know blind persons normally, they need a guide or somebody to hold on when you need to move around. So we have been able to educate our people that they should make sure that they do the other protocols like washing of hands and wearing the mask and also use a sanitiser and ensure that the guides also do the same. And you know with blind people, too, our risk is quite high because we normally -- we see with our fingertips so we do a lot of touching. So that has become a challenge. We put out the message about using hand sanitiser and staying at home when you don't need to go out but one of the major challenges is in education. Because we find our learners left behind. Even though government have introduced e-learning and a line portals and things, many blind people are unable to access this facility. So you find many of them, they don't either, they don't have the equipment. Or they don't have the skills. Or, if they are at home maybe their parents don't have the skills to help them. So that has been a major problem so far. And then we are partnering with Ghana national education to see if we can reach out to these children so we're doing some educational material in the (inaudible) division and that's what disabled children. Apart from that we've also put a lot of the material that is out there is not accessible. So we're putting a lot of the covid material in braille and then we are also putting some in audio. Audio, because not every blind person can read braille and so the audio gives them a chance to listen and with the audio we are able to go into the local languages so at least make sure that our message gets there. So in a nutshell, that's what we're doing.

MAWUNYO: Okay, thank you. Thank you.

>>: No problem.

MAWUNYO: (inaudible) are you with us?

>>: Yes I'm here. Can you hear me?

MAWUNYO: Yes.

ADAMU: National President Nigeria Association of the Blind. We have a similar issue in Nigeria, when we have the unexpected matters of COVID-19 situation, like have descended on other countries like Nigeria we have found ourselves in a very, very confusing situation, just like any other person. But this is more so to a person with disability like a blind person. Looking at the situation of social distancing in our community, is very, very difficult for a blind person to survive with this kind of policy, because we do most of the things through the help of other people and touch and other things like that. So most of them we work on finding our homes in our houses restructured. And then another unfortunate weighs is majority of our people (inaudible) economy which means they have to go out to get something for themselves. And all these things have been stopped because of the lockdown situation introduced by the government. And, added to that, most of the policies of government at the beginning, and even now, in most of the state of Nigeria, does not seem to capture the peculiarities of persons with disabilities in such areas. Yes, the government when they started they introduced lockdown in three states including LDTC(?) that's Lagos and ... the implication of that is provide (inaudible) for the people in those areas. When we call those persons, yes. Can you hear me?

MAWUNYO: Go on.

ADAMU: Okay so the implication of that, it means that the government don't have any provision for other people in other parts of the country. So as a result, places like Abuja which is the fed retail capital and Lagos and other places, our (inaudible) team has been set up to persons with disability where they represented a persons of disability by giving way to do that. This is one area we can say, yes, it's a clear inclusion aspect. What in all other states of the federation, there was nothing like that. And, also, we tried everything possible to meet with the minister in charge of things. I remember we had a media chat to BBC Media Action, representatives of the Presidential Committee of COVID-19 and Parliament were in that meeting. They were saying we were trying to involve people with disability but what is clear is that there was no deliberate effort by the government at the beginning to support persons with disability, including the blind and the visually impaired persons in Nigeria. And, also, some step government have provided, we can say, yes, there is a deliberate (inaudible) but a will the, honestly, blind people and other persons with disability were not deliberately (inaudible) and there was to conscious effort, for example, I asked some state chairman to visit some of the isolation centre to look at the arrangement put in place whether for reasons, if a person with disability or let's say visually impaired as been (inaudible) taken to those isolation centre designated by the government for patients who have COVID-19, what happened to (inaudible) any arrangement to take care of the person, is there any arrangement ... because of the facilities in persons and communication and other things virtually there was no arrangement in almost all the states. So at the end of the day we are in contact with the minister and according to the report we're receiving at the moment, committee where all the national tasks will be, that's (inaudible) persons with disability, and chart the way forward for the palliative and economic support. Government have tried to push this for COVID-19, thank you.

MAWUNYO: Thank you. Edwin.

EDWIN: Yes, thank you. I appreciate. Thank you to Mr Ishaku Adamu for that report, the situation in Nigeria. If you remember, okay, you are not going to talk much, I gave a report with the issues of engaging persons with disability in Nigeria in this COVID-19. The fact is for Nigeria, I don't think we're prepared, even after COVID-19 to talk about persons with disability, what it has to do with working with them and making sure that this is a development issue that we need to really talk about. So for federal government, even the task team that was set up, there was no person with disability on the team. Meaning that we are being sidelined. Even after the acts, the law of persons with disability, the disability law has been passed. Up until now, has not been implemented. Implementing that law would have done a lot of things. But just like the President you say, we need to do more engagement, continue engaging the federal government until we get it done. Thank you, sir, for that.sorry I was locked out and I'm back. Thank you Mawunyo for holding it for me. Dennis, have you given your report?

GEMMA: Edwin, Dennis is an interpreter.

EDWIN: Sorry! I forgot.

GEMMA: That's okay!

EDWIN: Okay. Any other person that's ready to -- we have a few minutes to wrap up.

GEMMA: We're not, you have plenty of time, it's okay.

EDWIN: Okay. Hello Mawunyo? Okay. I'm trying to look at the names of people that are probably getting in. Anyone, for those still here, that you have not presented, we want you to give a brief report of the covid situation in your country, now.

ELIAS: Hello?

EDWIN: Yes we can hear you.

ELIAS: This is Elias, representing the Ghana Government Association. So basically what we do is to report stammering and then offer support so all whose lives have been affected by stammering. I'm sure as we all know stammering as compared to the other disabilities quite unpopular. So we need to do a lot of awareness, to reach the people, to let people understand how stammering affects their lives or their individuals and their families, as well. Specific challenges we've encountered during this COVID-19 season is the increased level of (inaudible) because of anxiety and uncertainty in their country. So anxiety does not cause stammering but it's interesting, the rate of stammering. So, for any fluent speaker, even if you are anxious you may turn to exhibit some levels of this fluency but for the person who stammers, the fluency has been a form of speech and therefore if anxiety levels goes up it means it also affects one's anxiety. So what we're facing now is that some of our members have lost their jobs, some have received salary cuts and those have been unemployed. Not saying as to what is going to happen in the future. So there's a serious increase in anxiety levels, which is costing a lot of this fluency in our speech which goes on to affect our mental health. So basically, we don't really have much challenge with keeping safe to protocols but our main challenge is with level of anxiety, level of uncertainty and depression that this pandemic has brought on. [Applause].

EDWIN: Thank you so much for that. Thank you. Thank you quick. Thank you for using the time. Reverend John.

JOHN: Yes. I was the first person. I have delivered my report.

EDWIN: Okay, I went offline and tried to get back on and I got cut short. I want to talk to Dr Obeng.

MAWUNYO: Yes we have.

EDWIN: It seems like everyone has given their report. Christopher hasn't. Christopher, do you want to give yours?

CHRISTOPHER: Yes I can.

EDWIN: Please, go ahead.

CHRISTOPHER: Thank you. My name is Christopher and I'm with the Ghana organisations, the Federation, since the month of April has undertaken a commitment in response to project, the project is to create awareness of the plight or the impact of COVID-19 amongst persons with disabilities and this has been done together with five implementing partners but now it is actually being done with all the other nine member organisations, at first it started with the five but now it's being done with the nine member organisations. From the month of April, what we have sought to achieve is to monitor government's response to the COVID-19, especially for how the government's response has impacted persons with disabilities. In the month of April we looked at what was going on in the lockdown areas, which was in (inaudible) and some of the issues that came up were that, for example, there was a support package which was one meal a day, which was being given, that's not the issue here, the issue is that persons with disabilities to large extent have dietary requirements. And so if a meal is being prepared for the general public, it then needs to take into consideration of the dietary requirements of persons with disability. So that was a no-no. The second one the mode of distribution. There were some areas where it was difficult to access the food and social distancing wasn't observed and in other cases where mother withs children with disabilities going for these support packages, it was difficult because they couldn't go with the children is how do you then identify as a person who has a child with disability and needs the support? And so that has been one, when you come to the other activities of the project, we have had persons with disabilities or these implementing partners, develop some materials to actually engage the young members on the whole coronavirus situation and what they need to do. What some -- and also they've also developed some documents to actually educate their members and also the general public on the current situation of persons with disabilities and the whole COVID-19 area. So there are many other things as well as which the organisation has been doing, it has not been easy because, for persons with disabilities, who largely fall under the high risk patients, has been difficult moving around so most of the time we've used technology just as we are using now to organise meetings, communication has been done via email and to be very, very effective. We have had some stakeholder engagements which is we have had an engagement with a promotions of the Ghana health service because for the materials we develop you needed (inaudible) you need to pass on information which was wrong. Or which wasn't accurate. We also had -- as part of the activity we have had to develop some guidelines for the engagement of something (inaudible) under this whole COVID-19 period you have organisations that are trying to, or the government's trying to meet the needs of the persons with disabilities but these guidelines, is to give it a step by step walk or step by step guide on how the government can or should engage the persons with disability. So these are some of the activities that we have had from April to this very point. I just want to bring my presentation to close here, thank you.

EDWIN: Thank you very much, that was very insightful of you. It's good to notice that most of the things like most of the things are identified like the issue of palliative is still coming out from almost all of the reports so far. And I also noticed that in Africa, especially in West Africa we have the issue of (inaudible), if you want to reach out to people, how do you generate that? The number of people that are in a particular place, before you enter ... can work. Thank you very much. Really appreciate that.

Going forward, I think everybody has done a great report of what is happening in your country at the moment.

MAWUNYO: Edwin.

EDWIN: What --

MAWUNYO: Edwin we have (inaudible).

EDWIN: Okay. Stay here. Please can you go ahead, sir?

GEMMA: He is accessing by the signing language.

MAWUNYO: He has to give his report.

EDWIN: Yes, he has to.

CHRISTOPHER: I'm thinking, if Juventus has to speak I'm guessing Ramon would have to unmute his audio so we can actually understand what Juventus is saying.

GEMMA: Ramon may have a hearing person with him.

EDWIN: Ramon, if you can do that.

GEMMA: Hold on, just hold on a minute.

EDWIN: Maybe had a we can also do is we are trying to get it working, Gideon can actually give his reports so that we can figure out as Juventus comes in. Thank you.

MAWUNYO: Okay.

EDWIN: Ramon might not be able to finish off what he is doing.

GEMMA: Juventus has his camera on now. So if Ramon could type for him? He is saying yes please, go ahead.

EDWIN: Okay.

GEMMA: Ramon has a hearing person now.

>>: Can you hear me?

GEMMA: Yes, thank you. Please, can I ask that everybody else needs to mute. We can hear you, thank you so much. Doctor Obeng, you need to mute, please, so does Reverend John Mefful.

EDWIN: Okay, go ahead.

>>: Can you stop the camera please? Juventus, can you start the camera, please?

GEMMA: Ramon, could you sign for Juventus to start his camera, please?

>>: I can't see Juventus. Is Juventus there? Can you start your camera? Juventus can you put your camera on, is that possible?

EDWIN: We can still take a brief report if the camera isn't working. That means we can, we can sort out all the issues.

GEMMA: Okay. Let me just tell everybody. He is saying it's impossible to sign, he doesn't have his interpreter there. So he was accessing the sign language but he is now saying it's impossible for him to sign with his interpreter.

EDWIN: Never mind.

GEMMA: So thank you. I'm hoping that you can still, I'm hoping Juventus you can see the signing that's going on and we need to look at this as a hub for next time.

GEMMA: Juventus you look like you are still on the screen. I don't know if you are able to see the signer? Could you send me a message on the chat so we know what to do next. We want you to access this as far as you can. We can take a written report. Or the signers have a hearing person, if you are able to turn your video on and sign to Ramon, he can see what you are -- Juventus if you are able to have a video on you could sign over your video because the interpreter is interpret what you are saying and the hearing person can speak for you. Just so everybody knows Juventus has sent me a message, if you can just bear with us for minute. It would be really good to have his report if we can make this work.

>>: Hello? Hello?

GEMMA: Hello?

>>: Hello?

>>: My name is Juventus.

GEMMA: Can you put your video on please Juventus?

>>: All right, so I have a separate interpreter. My name is Juventus. Please can you hear, for my interpreter?

EDWIN: We can hear you.

JUVENTUS: Juventus. I tried to introduce myself. I'm not sure you were receiving it but I'm the Director of the Ghanian Association of the Deaf. And I was trying to follow through the internet but (inaudible) but I wanted to ask you, I want to know from you, what you want me to say.

EDWIN: Okay. What we want you to say, we want you to talk about the issues concerning persons with disability, what it has to do with COVID-19. Just give us a brief report of all the issues you feel that are problem, challenges, persons with disabilities face in Ghana in this COVID-19 situation. Did you get that?

JUVENTUS: Okay, thank you. I will touch on the issues for persons with disabilities. Purpose of my disability and make you part of the meeting(?) ... we tried as much as we could to disseminate the information to our members. So that they can stay safe. It has been a challenge when the pandemic started. Usually our members meet up on the coronavirus. Fortunately in the course of advocacy we had a meeting with the Ministry Of Information and they provided the (inaudible) usually government come out with our presentations and it does that we get that information ... but one challenge that we're facing now for our members ... (inaudible) ... they don't benefit but those would be understanding the benefit, but (inaudible) because they don't understand the Ghanian (inaudible) information of COVID-19. We, as an organisation, are in partnership with the association of Ghanian people with disability, wait to reach out to our members with the information. We came up with a production, some video and other production, to share information with our members. We wanted to ensure that all the members in Ghana have access to quality of information on that COVID-19.

EDWIN: Okay. Are you done?

>>: No, I have not finished but --

EDWIN: Can you please make it brief? Even though we want to get all the facts, yes, thank you.

>>: The one challenge that our members are facing is about the understanding the preventive things, the PPE, sanitisers and other things that will prevent the virus from spreading. Thank you.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. It seems like we're done here. Thank you. Okay, moving forward. Gideon? Gideon, can you hear me?

GIDEON: Hello I can hear you.

EDWIN: Okay, Gideon, moving forward, what are the key issues you think that we need to inform to avoid the spread. What key issues do you think personally to you you feel that this is something that we need to take home today?

GIDEON: Please can you come again?

EDWIN: Okay. I'm asking, what are the key issues, after the presentations today, do you think, what are the key issues that, at the end of the day, we're going to make up a report about this. What one or two or three key issues do you think have been identified in the presentations we've heard today?

GIDEON: Okay. Thank you.

EDWIN: Personal, to you.

GIDEON: To me, yes. Since we're talking about persons with disabilities here, an issue of social distancing when it comes to persons with visual impairment, they can't observe social distancing but they can equally observe the other protocols by hand washing and hand sanitising. Yes, on that issue I can take that up on and other aspects of inclusive medicine addition.

EDWIN: Okay.

GIDEON: Packages and giving to persons with disabilities and the likes, yes.

EDWIN: All right. Mr Ishaku Adamu? Hello, Mr Ishaku Adamu, are you with us?

ADAMU: Yes I'm here with you.

EDWIN: Thank you, sir. Please, I would like you to give us key issues. You think that we're talking home today key issues person to you?

ADAMU: Okay. Yes. I think, from the presentation I have listened to and from the one I saw, I think key issues are that definitely should include a rough conclusion of persons disabilities of policies that affect our person with disability but in a critical situation like the COVID-19 situation. This means that we still have a long way to go in disability movement but in our countries it means the government are still taking issues and decisions without having it forced out on persons with disability and also pour people with disability ons our side we need to do more to convince or government and to push forward our agenda, in the cycle of government. And, also, another key issue that I think we should look at now is the issue of what will happen in the post-19? A lot of countries are facing a will the of economic challenges and government are bringing policy that will cushion the affect or the impact of the covid on the economy, and the sector, education, health and other issues so what will happen to persons with disability in those areas? So this is an issue that organisations of persons with disabilities we need to look at and also push for our agenda around those policies. So the government will take up disability issue into consideration. Thank you.

EDWIN: Yes. Thank you for that. I thought you were going to talk about implementation of disability law. That was in my mind.

GIDEON: Yes. Implementation is very important. I was thinking we were talking about covid but implementation for us in Nigeria, we are really working hard to see that the implementation is delivered because it's also considered let's say the bill has been implemented and we have an economics in place, maybe those issue of covid would have been taken care of but we don't have the commission yet so the bill has not been implemented it and signed but not yet implemented so it's a serious issue but I thought it was a committee issue. And all that development partners in Nigeria and we're working hard. It's very important for our own movement in Nigeria. Thank you.

EDWIN: Okay, thank you very much. I want to take a break, a little break just one minute. We get back to you. One minute break.

GEMMA: Sorry, Edwin, not one minute. At least 5 minutes, please. For the captioner to stretch her fingers. What we'll do is, when she is ready to come back, she will signify to us and we can start. Don't go away, we need you to stay on the line.

EDWIN: Stay on the line.

GEMMA: Thank you so much.

(Break).

GEMMA: Edwin? Is Edwin there?

EDWIN: Yes I'm here.

GEMMA: Katy's back now.

EDWIN: Okay. Thank you.

MAWUNYO: Did we get Cameroon and ...

GEMMA: We invited them but I didn't hear anything. I didn't hear anything.

MAWUNYO: Meeting between Ghana and Nigeria.

EDWIN: I know. Which is good, all right? [Laughter]. That's good! That's a good thing! There was.

GEMMA: There was no word from Sierra Leone or Cameroon.

MAWUNYO: Okay thank you.

EDWIN: By the end of the day we'll send a report to them so we can see what we talked about and see how the meeting went. I think it's good if we do that.

GEMMA: That's great. Okay you got just over half an hour.

EDWIN: Okay. Thank you. We just finished can with Gideon, Mr Ishaku Adamu. Elias, are you there? Mr Elias?

ELIAS: Yes, hello.

EDWIN: Yes. Give us three minutes, can you just please talk about the priority issues that you feel you have been able to identify from today's meeting?

ELIAS: Okay. Did you say 30 minutes?

EDWIN: No! Just 3 minutes! I don't want you to talk ...different issues for me and you.

ELIAS: [Laughter]. Okay, so actually I'll be very brief. I think listening to all of us, one thing stands out and it's all about inclusion of our issues and design of COVID-19. So I believe that some organisations are more affected in a way with regards to observing safety protocols. These concerns are very, very key. By and large what we are looking for is our safety. So I think that anything to do with protecting our health in this instance is very key and if I'll be biased a bit, I would also want to talk about issues that persons with disabilities are facing, aside from observing safety protocols. The impacts that COVID-19 has had on the lives of persons with disabilities. Initially I mentioned anxiety and depression. These are very serious issues that we shouldn't just, you know, overlook. Yes, they are safety protocol, we have to adhere to, here and there. But, also, let's also look at how it is affecting the livelihood of persons with disability so it's not just about health but also improving our lives in general. So the issues with anxiety, issues with depression, I think that's the things we should really look at in giving support to persons.

EDWIN: Thank you. Can you do just a brief report on these and send across to Gemma, if it's possible?

ELIAS: Okay, I'm in. I'll be very glad to do that.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. Okay. Dr Obeng? Are you there?

DR OBENG: Yes. Hello there.

EDWIN: I can hear you, we can hear you.

DR OBENG: Okay, good. The issue I would like to focus on. I think from the discussion I think there must be a lot more engagement when it comes to planning some of these policies because it appears that one way or another there seems to be gap for provision of facilities for persons with disabilities. So I think we should look at that aspect. And then I also think that our government must focus more on the mode of education that we are giving at present. Because here we have (inaudible) coming up now a lot of the instruction is go online, is going e-learning. But do our people have the skills to take part? This is the opinion of the post covid. Post-covid. I think we're going to see a lot more e-learning and on line persons and are people ready to take part in this? Governments have to focus on that and we must engage them so we are not left behind because we have been left behind for too long. Thank you very much.

EDWIN: Thank you, Doctor, we appreciate it. Thank you so much. This is like most of us left the group. But we continue. Christopher? Can you hear me?

CHRISTOPHER: Yes, I can.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. Please, in less than three minutes can you please give you a run down?

CHRISTOPHER: Okay. So one thing we need to all understand is that the covid situation doesn't look like it's going anywhere, any time soon. And so what we are looking for is not just temporary solutions so a quick fix or, you know, something that can actually just make us comfortable for maybe a month or two. The issue of persons with disabilities and others with COVID-19 needs to be fully addressed just as Dr Obeng spoke about, the issues of education and e-learning have to be fully looked at, policy-wise, you know, a lot of stakeholder engagement with the Ghana education service and the Ministry Of education. All of these things need to be looked at. I'm saying that, moving on, one key issue is how covid has affected the businesses of persons with disabilities because as we see people can't even go to the offices or go to the work places, where they are working for someone so these are the things we need to look at, moving forward. Permanent solutions in policy, permanent solutions in health, so me personally one of the things I'm saying is that the health of people need to be prioritised and our health facilities moving forward because if a person of disability is coming to a health facility you should understand that person is a high risk patient. So their health should be prioritised. Thank you.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. That was very insightful. I think these are the issues we're currently facing in Nigeria. One of the devastating issues has to do with the women accessing women accessing health facilities. This is something that we really need to work on. Probably I think at most we should (inaudible) because women with disabilities are accessing facilities ... (inaudible). Thank you for, that I really appreciate. I think we just need to move forward. Please, can you speak up if you've not prioritised your issues? I think people --

>>: One thing I would also like to add to the discussion is about the involvement of persons with disability and we want the government to be more specific about when we want to more persons of disability in designing our policies. When we are employing persons with disability as having the same challenges it sometimes doesn't help so probably we should be able to know the challenges of each person with disability faces so at least we'll come out with their specific challenges or needs. So we'll be able (inaudible). Thank you.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Is there any other person that might want to say something or add something to what they've said before so we can move forward? Okay let's move on, thank you. Mawunyo, do you have anything to say or to discuss? Hello?

MAWUNYO: Hello? Edwin?

EDWIN: Do you have anything to add to the discussion?

MAWUNYO: No. Nothing.

EDWIN: Okay, no problem. Let's move ahead. Dr Obeng?

DR OBENG: Yes?

EDWIN: Okay, no problem. Dr Obeng?

DR OBENG: Yes.

EDWIN: Please, now we're moving forward. What do you think are the issues/needs, in training? What are the trainings that Commonwealth need. Need to address the issues not just for COVID-19, to address all the challenges that are being faced including on the side of education, like the inclusive education, the engagement with government, the engagement with stakeholders and the international community. What training do you think that we would need to standup?

DR OBENG: I think, first of all, DPOs, we need to look and focus the public here. Because without advocacy we will be able to reach out to our government and present our issues in ways that a government would not be compelled to address them so I think advocacy is an area we should look at but also I think that we should ... (inaudible) ... (inaudible) ... hello?

EDWIN: We hear you now, go ahead.

DR OBENG: Something about the ... (inaudible) ...

EDWIN: Your network is actually breaking. Can you hear me?

DR OBENG: ... ...

EDWIN: Dr Obeng, can you hear me? You just sound like music. Hello? Doctor?

DR OBENG: Is it okay now?

EDWIN: Yes it's okay now, we can hear you now.

DR OBENG: Okay. I was talking about advocacy, I was talking about ... (inaudible) ...

EDWIN: Hello, doctor?

DR OBENG: ...

EDWIN: Hello, doctor?

DR OBENG: Yes?

EDWIN: Okay we can hear you now. But when you talk about advocacy, we didn't get that.

DR OBENG: Our organisations need more capacity in advocacy and how to engage our government so that we involve the determinations into policies. And what goes in. And then I talked about education. Education. And I'm especially looking at the younger ones coming up. So us. Because the world is moving towards an area where we don't have (inaudible) education stills like this alarm we're on today. This is the level of ICT. These are basic things that are going round the world and everybody's getting it. If we're not there then we're left behind. So this digital information, or digital literacy, should be part of our capacity. And we should look at that as an organisation. So that our voice can be heard on national and international stage.

EDWIN: Thank you, sir. That's good, thank you very much. We're taking that into consideration, thank you very much. Christopher? Can you hear me? Hello, Christopher, are you there? Okay. Christopher if you are not there. Gideon?

GIDEON: Hello?

EDWIN: Please N one minute, can you tell us the areas you think DPOs need training? Dr Obeng has identified a couple of areas, education. Where do you think it is for us? Thank you.

GIDEON: Okay, thank you, once again. On the part of the education just like the doctor already said, I think to add to what he said, not everybody qualifies for formal education in some way, some how, but I think in some aspect, technical and vocational training can be also added to the education we were talking about to help build with capacity buildings, as well as the point of saying the persons with disabilities need basic ICT skills to be able to be aware of what we're doing now, this online platform, you need some kind of skills to be able to work around this. And on the part of ... I think political participation should also be a part of advocacy where persons with disabilities should be brought on board at the time of decision making where it should be about them and not to bring back to it on maybe the top initially from the top to bottom approach. But bottom-up approach. For example, coming up Ghana's 2020 elections and I think persons with disabilities should be added to decision making so we know what they want, rather than government giving them what they think is good for persons with disabilities.

EDWIN: Thank you. Thank you very much for that. I'm just trying to accommodate all the time we can. That's correct Christopher.

MAWUNYO: I think it was on the training fundraising. Because there has been a lot of calls on our organisations for support and we are so limited by projects so it has been very difficult for urbanisation itself to support members. So I think I will generate ... and training will also be helpful for ...

EDWIN: Okay. Fundraising, thank you.

MAWUNYO: All right.

EDWIN: Mr Elias?

ELIAS: Yes I'm here.

EDWIN: You are here? That's helpful for he me, you have 30 seconds! [Laughter].

ELIAS: So, yes, I think that the issue about fundraising that my President has just raised is very, very key. And what I want to grow more light on is organisational development. I think that this is very, very key. We need to build our organisations up to such a level where the Presidents of the organisation is an awareness creating. And when I'm talking about this organisation, development, I'm also looking at it in terms of visibility. So we need to help to really make our organisations very, very visible and how are we visible in this digital area? I think we have to capitalise the opportunity that social media brings. I think we should really try to up our skill in promoting awareness but via social media. So we should try and work on our Facebook pages, our Twitter and Instagram pages, try and bring some life into the DPOs. That's in itself, having an online presence would, even attracts donors and then you know funding. So I think that is one critical area that I want to touch on. Secondly, I'm looking at the cohesion between the DPOs. I think that there should be a very strong bond between us, between member organisations in a way that, if Ghana stammers organisation has an event, all right, I think that the other DPOs should be able to promote that on their various platforms as well. So we become a very solid force. We are not just focusing on issues that -- we are also able to promote the issues of other DPOs in the organisation. So I want us to take these things, organisational development and then build in that level of cohesion between the member organisations, thank you.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. That was really key, organisational development is very key. Christopher. Christopher are you with us? Hello, Mr Christopher?

CHRISTOPHER: Yes, sorry I had to rush, sorry I just came back, I heard I missed -- but I was actually paying attention to the bit on what Gideon said. You see, it is very important to capitalise on current issues or current events to your advantage. Why am I seeing this? There is an election in Ghana in December. We actually five months away from the election. This is the period where the policy makers and politicians and Parliamentarians are key on gaining -- I should say these are the times when they are open to conversations. The thing is that what we can do in these times is to engage policy makers, moving forward. We need to engage them on the things that we want to see done. My boss talked about policies and advocacy, it is key. My President talked about fundraising. These are the people we need now to help us raise funds or these are the times we need to engage them to help us raise funds. Not to make it very political but this is the time where you can really, really get the attention of policy makers so I'm just looking at it as what is ... (inaudible) ... ... currently happening? What can we use to make the best out of our situation? And I think that election is coming up, it's a very good thing. Thank you.

EDWIN: Thank you.

MAWUNYO: John Mefful?

EDWIN: He is not here. Institutional development, keep talk about the institutional development. I think we also need training on sustaining what we would be able to do. Sustaining our work and intervention, training, also stability. But most of the DPOs are just after funding and everything is just like that. Even though I know definitely we really need funding. But what Dr Obeng said about advocacy, we need to develop more advocacy skills and identify more ways of engaging the government like social media, Gideon talked about that, I think it was Gideon. Identifying ways of reaching government, massive social media campaigns and some things that we can do that we are not doing. Thank you very much. What are the important ... let's look at other important issues that maybe you've not been able to mention here that we are just wrapping up. We're wrapping up. Other regional issues that concern persons with disabilities that you feel you can talk about. Anyone can just talk. Anyone. Evening though I think we can consolidate on, we consolidate on more how our networks, we are need to build our networks, our network is a strain for us. I know that everyone knows our network is a strength but we need to renew that and move forward with it because we can achieve more, coming together. Thank you. So you were saying something before Juventus? Are you there?

JUVENTUS: Exactly what I wanted to say, unfortunately you just said it so I'm okay.

EDWIN: You can still -- okay, thank you. Thank you. Any other person want to say anything concerning that? Any other issue that you need? Thank you Mawunyo, go ahead.

MAWUNYO: (inaudible) more training issues.

EDWIN: There are those are the consistent, we work on that. Issues that have been identified around consistency that are moving up and coming up. We'll work on that.

MAWUNYO: Okay thank you.

EDWIN: I think that's a wrap.

GEMMA: If you are done, that's great. That's brilliant. Very impressed!

EDWIN: Thank you, everyone, it has been a very interesting outing today. It has been engaging and I love that. We did have time to speak, now that (inaudible) we didn't have time to fight the bill the rights.

>>: Don't worry, in the next meeting.

EDWIN: Thank you very much. Can you just give us a close up? Before we hand back to Gemma? Is there something you want to say before we round up?

MAWUNYO: (inaudible).

EDWIN: Thank you very much. For other countries that we've not been able to reach, I think we need to send the reports to the, we need to encourage them to be active and it has not been easy. I personally have to travel to leave my place to travel to get to where I am so it's not been easy and we understand that. We're all advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities in our different areas and that's something fantastic that we're doing. And we're doing it at an international level, that's brilliant and I thank each and every one for coming. Gemma, over to you, I'm done.

GEMMA: Thank you, Edwin, thank you so. Thank you, you were absolutely brilliant. I want to say host, that's not quite right, convener, chair. I sent Edwin a little private message saying, come and be British Prime Minister because ours is hopeless! He would be great. Thank you so much, Edwin, thank you Mawunyo, thank you all of you for your time and your input. And I will be following up with Juventus on the access issues and make sure that it's all smooth for future meetings. What is going to happen is I've been recording this video and we've been spotlighting the sign language so in a few days this video will be available on the CDPF website but I will also make sure that you all have a link. Because it's recorded absolutely everything it's going to have all sorts of nonsense that you might have to scroll through bits. But the captions will be available some days after we have had the call. So, thank you, again, and let's close today. Stay safe, everybody.

MAWUNYO: You, too, Gemma.

GEMMA: Thank you so much.

EDWIN: Gemma, can I say something?

GEMMA: Of course.

EDWIN: You know in Africa here we always start everything with prayers. Maybe probably we talk about that later, seeing as you are in West Africa, we do that a lot.

GEMMA: You can do that, that's fine.

EDWIN: Thank you. And include that in our programmes. Thank you.

GEMMA: Okay, bye.