UNFPA and Rehabilitation International Joint Initiative Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health of Women and Young People with Disabilities

Newsletter
Issue 1, August 2021

ESCAP Asia-Pacific Regional Forum addresses the SRH needs of women and girls with disabilities

During the UNESCAP Regional Forum on Advancing Disability-inclusive Development through the Beijing Action Plan in December 2019 in Guangzhou, China, UNFPA and Rehabilitation International (RI) co-organized a session "Empowering women and girls with disabilities, including addressing their specific needs for sexual and reproductive health services" to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and ending gender-based violence (GBV) for women and girls with disabilities.
The Forum brought together representatives and experts from Asia-Pacific governments, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to support ESCAP member states in accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Rights Real" for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Asia and the Pacific.

The Regional Forum, especially the session on SRH which focused on Incheon Strategy goal 6, identified the needs of ESCAP member States for technical cooperation to promote universal access to SRH for women and girls with disabilities and called on policymakers to accelerate the implementation of the Incheon Strategy and Beijing Action Plan.

Learn more about the Forum

UNFPA Asia-Pacific launches a video on SRH and COVID-19 for PWDs

In December 2020, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the UNFPA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (APRO) launched a fully accessible video "Respect, Recognize and Engage: Addressing Challenges for People with
Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.” The video was produced in consultation with PWDs themselves and with support from RI, UNFPA China and other partners. It is the first-of-its-kind video at UNFPA, seeking to make the film truly accessible by PWDs with large-font subtitles, audio description of important visual content, and international sign interpretation. It calls on society to "respect" the rights of PWDs, "recognize" the challenges in their lives, and "engage" them in all spheres of social life. It promotes PWDs' access to SRH information and services, GBV prevention, their rights to education, representation and to achieve their full potential, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learn more about the video

UNFPA, RI, WEI and OPDs consultations on COVID-19, SRH, gender and disability in Asia-Pacific for the resource pack on COVID-19
THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

A Global Assessment and Case Studies on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender-Based Violence, and Related Rights
From October to December 2020, with RI support, UNFPA, Women Enabled International (WEI) and three women-led OPDs and youth-led organizations in the Asia-Pacific region conducted eight virtual consultations, with two additional in-person consultations in the Asia-Pacific region. Eighty-six PWDs (primarily women, with a small number of non-binary persons) participated in these virtual consultations, representing persons with intellectual, psychosocial, visual, hearing, and physical impairments as well as PWDs from youth, indigenous or other minority groups.

These consultations were held in the context of a larger UNFPA global project and fed into three critical outcome documents with easy read versions published globally in June 2021:

1) The impact of COVID-19 on women and girls with disabilities: A global assessment and case studies on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and related rights;

2) Easy read: Life for women and girls with disabilities in the world during COVID-19;

3) Compendium of good practices during the COVID-19 pandemic: Ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls with disabilities;

4) Easy read: Some good examples of women and girls with disabilities getting their rights during COVID-19;


6) Easy read: Making sure that people with disabilities get the right health care to do with their bodies, sex, relationships and having children during COVID-19.

This resource pack aims to aid a range of actors such as United Nations Country Teams, civil society, governments, multilateral organizations, and others involved in COVID-19
response and recovery—as well as planning, response, and recovery from other crises—to ensure that their policies and practices are inclusive of women and girls with disabilities and their rights are promoted. This resource pack focuses on three objectives:

- Meeting social determinants of health for women and girls with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ensuring long-term SRHR for women and girls with disabilities in the recovery from COVID-19 and beyond.

This resource pack will provide guidance for future programming to ensure PWDs’ rights and needs, especially in relation to SRHR and GBV, are fully included.

Learn more about the resource pack

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**Webinar on COVID-19 at the Intersection of Gender and Disability in Asia and the Pacific**

**Virtual Webinar**

**COVID-19 at the Intersection of Gender and Disability in Asia and the Pacific:**

**Ensuring a Disability- and Gender-Inclusive Response and Recovery**

**Wednesday, December 9, 2020**

**1.00-2.30 PM BKK time**

More Information and Registration Below!

CART Closed Captioning and ISL Interpreter provided.

On 9 December 2020, UNFPA, WEI and RI co-hosted a webinar "COVID-19 at the Intersection of Gender and Disability in Asia and the Pacific: Ensuring a Disability- and Gender-Inclusive Response and Recovery". Professor Asha Hans, Vice Chair of RI Education Commission, Executive Vice President of Shanta Memorial Rehabilitation Centre in India which is an associate member of the RI, made remarks at the webinar.

The event featured nine experts from across the region and globally, including five women with disabilities. The speakers raised awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on women, girls, and gender non-conforming persons with disabilities; brought voices from the ground
in the Asia-Pacific region into the discussion of COVID-19 at the global level, including diverse disability and gender perspectives; and proposed ways forward for the Asia-Pacific region to ensure a gender- and disability-inclusive response to this crisis and future crises. The event was attended by over 50 attendees from across the Asia-Pacific region and featured both live captioning and international sign interpretation.

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**Easy-Read SRHR checklist for PWDs during COVID-19**

In 2020, with support from RI and UNFPA, WEI began the development of an Asia-Pacific tailored Easy-Read version of its SRHR checklist for persons with disabilities during COVID-19.

Three self-advocacy groups of persons with intellectual disabilities in Thailand, Vietnam and Nepal were identified and conducted a review of the final Easy-Read checklist for Asia-Pacific. A regional-based illustrator was hired to create images for the Checklist.

Based on the global and regional version, UNFPA Country Offices including China CO have started the localization of the checklist to make it fit to the national context.

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Training package for in-country roll out of the UNFPA-Wei Guidelines addressing GBV and SRH needs and rights of women and young people with disabilities

In the second half of 2021, the UNFPA-RI joint initiative will support the development of training-of-trainers curriculum and training package for the in-country roll out of the UNFPA/WEI guidelines *Women and Young Persons with Disabilities: Guidelines for Providing Rights-Based and Gender-Responsive Services to Address Gender-Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*
The training package will focus on the capacity of facilitators, to instruct service providers and other stakeholders on the practical implementation of the Guidelines. WEI will work with UNFPA APRO and China CO to pilot the training package and refine the materials.

UNFPA and RI will also produce and disseminate knowledge and communication assets to partners for awareness raising and support them to utilize these tools to provide better SRHR services to PWDs.

Learn more about the Guidelines

About the UNFPA and RI Joint Initiative
UNFPA (the United Nations Population Fund) and RI (Rehabilitation International) established the partnership in December 2019. The cooperation aims to contribute to strengthening sexual and reproductive health information and services for women and young people with disabilities in both China and developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region in support of the full realization of disability inclusive development.

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