



**Concept Note**  
**CoSP Side Event**  
**Using Technology to Bring Together Women and Gender Minorities with Disabilities during**  
**the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
*June 2022*

**Organizer:** Women Enabled International

**Co-sponsors:** CREA, Canada, Disability Rights Fund

**Background**

Restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as lockdowns or social distancing measures, had a significant impact on the rights and well-being of people around the world. In particular, women and gender minorities with disabilities, who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and its consequences, experienced social isolation, heightened risks of gender-based violence, interference with their sexual and reproductive rights, and other human rights violations.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the abrupt interruption of their work, studies, and social life had deleterious effects on their physical and mental health, sense of belonging, and self-concept.

To address these issues, many women and gender minorities with disabilities undertook efforts to build connections and engage in joint advocacy throughout the pandemic. During the pandemic, video conferencing technology, such as Zoom, became an essential tool for building community and lessening the experience of social isolation in the comfort and safety of people's own homes.

Furthermore, the increased use of video conferencing technology (when accessible) lessened many of the financial, accessibility, and logistical barriers women and gender minorities with disabilities faced to convening in person. This has led to significant progress in building the movement of women and gender minorities with disabilities locally, regionally, and internationally. At the same time, barriers remain to the equitable use of this technology, including a digital divide that disproportionately impacts women, girls, and gender minorities with disabilities.

**Objectives of Event**

This event will highlight examples of how groups have used technology to build movements working at the intersection of gender and disability at the local, national, regional, and global levels, as well as the challenges and barriers that remain in building these movements during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The event will seek to answer the following questions:

- What was the importance of developing online movement building amid the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the challenges throughout this process?

- What techniques have been used to create a community online?
- What were the major barriers you experienced in using technology to convene during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how did you overcome them?
- What opportunities did the switch to virtual meeting spaces create for convening, community building, and joint advocacy that were not there before?
- Who has been left behind by the switch to digital meeting spaces? How can we reach those individuals?

This event will bring forward the voices and perspectives of advocates with disabilities and their representative organizations to encourage movement-building of women and gender minorities with disabilities as the pandemic continues and beyond.

### **Format and Speakers**

This event will be a dialogue about the use of technology to build a community of women and gender minorities with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The speakers, advocates, and their representative organizations will participate in a roundtable discussion about this topic, with the same set of questions posed to all panelists. There will be a Q&A between the audience and the panelists at the end of the round table. This will be moderated via the Q&A feature on Zoom with some oral and/or video participation from the audience when accessibility needs require it.

**Intro to Event and Background for Panel:** Representative of Women Enabled International (5 minutes)

**Moderated roundtable** – 3 questions to be answered by all the speakers (Moderator – Rep of WEI) (40 minutes)

**Participants:** 4-5 speakers

Speakers will be representatives of grassroots organizations from different countries and regions around the world.

**Moderated Questions and Comments from Audience (20 minutes)**

**Closing Remarks:** Moderator or other co-sponsor (5 minutes)

### **Details/Logistics**

The event is on 17 June, 10:00 am EDT. It will last one hour and fifteen minutes. It will be held virtually on Zoom.



### **Accessibility features**

CART closed captioning, International Sign interpretation, and English-Spanish simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

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<sup>1</sup> See United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) & Women Enabled International (WEI), *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* (2021), <https://womenenabled.org/wei-unfpa/UNPRPD%2C%20UNFPA%2C%20WEI%20-%20The%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20Women%20and%20Girls%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>