

**Leave No One Offline**: digital inequalities and addressing barriers to full participation and inclusion online

**Dec 2, 2020 12:00 PM Eastern Time** (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this webinar:

<https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DnjMa_vZSnSvJHwvhvKVOA>

# Introduction

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a wide acknowledgement of the digital divide which further marginalized those who could not access information technology on account of barriers including its availability, affordability and accessibility. There are many accounts of how this digital divide has widened inequalities in education, employment, accessing justice and support as well as in nurturing relationships and social capital, and persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by this.

The move to digital alternatives to the physical world carried with it the experience of exclusion and inaccessibility for persons with disabilities, despite the existence of [standards on web accessibility](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/) and efforts like the [Marrakesh Treaty](https://www.wipo.int/marrakesh_treaty/en/). Many underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities had never been exposed to digital devices and services and the lockdown was an inopportune moment to begin this orientation. The availability of steady and adequate internet – for those reliant on video for communication, for example – was also a huge question, as also affordability of connections and devices.

Digital accessibility moved from being a tool for potential to a necessity, and many groups of persons with disabilities now have reevaluated what online inclusion means for them.

Still, the disability sector thrives on innovation, and so many endeavors, led by organizations of persons with disabilities, have tried to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully and effectively engage with the online world, even though for some, offline support is an important and non-negotiable reality.

This panel discussion is meant to highlight some of these initiatives including in the Global South, while recognizing the barriers faced by groups underrepresented in the digital space, and looking to policy and advocacy opportunities to ensure that no one is left offline.

# Speakers

Moderator: Ambassador based in Geneva - Linked to the Freedom Online Coalition (tbd)

Panelists:

Mr. **Pradip Sinha**, Society of Empowerment of the Deafblind, India / World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB), speaking about the findings of a study the organization conducted earlier in the year on "how restricted are deafblind people in India" and linked to access to technology;

Ms. **Rosario Galarza**, Comisión de Damas Invidentes del Perú - CODIP/ RIADIS, presenting on the experience of RIADIS in co-hosting an online course on sexual and reproductive health and rights with UNFPA in Latin America;

Mr. **Moses Serwadda**, Uganda Federation of the Hard of Hearing / International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH), speaking about experiences of advocacy in Uganda in integrating disability into internet technologies as a way of leveraging opportunities for equal participation, especially during the COVID19 time;

Mr. **Axel Leblois**, G3ICT President, research results and practical examples related to “Leave no one offline” and the institutional advocacy during the lockdown especially regarding accessibility of digital services;

Ms. **Paula Hearn**, International Disability Alliance, presenting the iData platform to establish more inclusive and accessible online surveys and data collection for all.

Ms. **Amba Salelkar**, International Disability Alliance, presenting the development of IDA’s online courses platform.

Discussions with participants.