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## Section B: Operational Security

# Module 11: Inclusivity and Security Risk Management



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#### Introduction to the series

The pandemic continues to impact not only the security risks that NGOs may face but also the way risk treatment measures are developed, implemented and communicated to staff. As we get used to new ways of working with COVID-19, and the focus is, rightly, on the pandemic and its impacts, we must ensure that we do not lose sight of ongoing and emerging security situations and issues.

#### Introduction to the module

A person's intersectional [1] risk profile is made up of various characteristics (including gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and disability) that intersect with one another in a way that shapes their unique vulnerabilities, exposure, and coping capacities with regard to risks in their environment.

Inclusivity is the practice of proactively responding to the unique intersectional characteristics of personnel, to ensure that everyone has equitable access to resources and opportunities. An inclusive security risk management system ensures that staff security concerns are equitably prioritised by the organisation, regardless of their race, nationality, gender, seniority, etc. It also means that resources for reducing risk are equitably distributed, according to who has the highest exposure or vulnerability to risks in a particular environment.

This module is intended to guide security risk managers to be more inclusive during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Fig. 1 Diversity Wheel.**

**Source:** Johns Hopkins University and Medicine via <http://www.lgbtqiintersect.org.au/learning-modules/identity/>

[1] Intersectionality was coined as term in 1989 by US law professor, Kimberlé Crenshaw, to capture “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality>)

## Acknowledgements

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## Why is it important to acknowledge inclusivity during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

### COVID-19 and concurrent events have highlighted pre-existing inequalities

The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted disproportionate levels of risks facing our global community. The following is a generalised description of how groups have been disproportionately or uniquely impacted by risks related to the pandemic. These and other inequalities have been well-documented in various sources. For further reading on this topic, see the Annex “Resources: Intersectional differences and COVID-19”.

- **Physical health risks related to COVID-19 are higher for certain groups of people.** Disparities in health risks related to COVID-19 are not only evident among different age groups and those with pre-existing health conditions, but also across racial, ethnic and geographic spectrums as well. Inequalities in access to health care have been statistically demonstrated and reported throughout the pandemic.
- **Although mental health risks have risen globally during the pandemic, certain individuals are more vulnerable.** Various groups struggle disproportionately with regard to their mental health and living situations during periods of lockdown and quarantine. Many people do not have access to mental healthcare services.
- **The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic has affected certain identity groups disproportionately.** For example, women are more likely to lose their jobs. People without savings and who lost their jobs due to lay-offs have struggled compared to those who have been furloughed or able to work from home.
- **Acts of xenophobic violence and harassment have particularly affected foreigners and staff of Asian descent,** especially at the beginning of the pandemic.
- **Social-distancing and Work-From-Home (WFH) orders have raised risks for staff in different ways.** For example:
  - People living with disabilities (visible and invisible) may be at greater risk of missing critical information if challenges with online communication are not accounted for.
  - Women are at greater risk of experiencing domestic abuse during lockdowns.

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- Staff who do not have adequate internet or other resources to easily work from home may face additional challenges in doing their work.
- Staff who care for children or family members whilst working from home are likely to be at higher risk of stress.
- Women and LGBTQI+ personnel are more likely to face harassment online.

### The unique parameters of decision-making during COVID-19

Three overlapping dynamics have made objective risk management decision-making uniquely difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **It is global.** Risk managers and leaders are required to make rapid and broad-reaching decisions that impact multiple locations, countries and/or regions, including their headquarters and representational offices. In this context, decisions must be made rapidly, and consultative processes are often deprioritised.
- **It is personal.** Risk managers and leaders are personally affected by the crisis. Their ideas about the pandemic are inherently influenced by their own government's policies, domestic media coverage, and their own society's response to the virus. Therefore, they may have a greater tendency to make decisions that are heavily influenced by their personal experience and priorities.
- **It is unequal.** Risk managers and leaders are often less vulnerable to certain COVID-related risks than the staff they are tasked with advising, supporting or managing. This may be because of their physical location, gender and/or socioeconomic status. Although these inequalities are intersectional, and not clear-cut, they need to be examined.

Given these compounding dynamics, it is essential that risk managers and leaders understand their own power, privilege, and biases. Otherwise, they may be more likely to make decisions that are disproportionately influenced by their own environment, immediate personal concerns, and/or based on information that has not been verified by direct consultations with staff.

### Definitions

**Power** is the ability to influence and make decisions that impact others. Persons tasked with managing risk hold a great deal of power in an organisation. This not only pertains to security risk managers, but also to decision makers in other parts of the organisation.

**Privilege** is advantages and benefits that individuals receive because of social groups they are perceived to be part of. These individuals may tend to hold a great deal of privilege, in terms of their race, country of origin, language, culture, etc, in the context of the organisation.

**Bias** is prejudice in favour of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another. Biases can be conscious or unconscious, and can inhibit managers from making effective decisions based on facts.

### Further information

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[Article: Bond \(Dec 2020\) Why INGOs Need to Put Power Analysis at the Heart of Governance](#)

[Article: Elks, Sonya. Exclusive: Half aid workers report racism at work in past year - poll \(Reuters, October 30 2020\).](#)

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## Good practice for security risk management: Inclusivity and SRM during COVID-19

### Examine power, privilege and bias in risk management decisions

In order to address intersectionality within security risk management during COVID-19, it is important that decision makers examine their own power, privilege and bias. As a first step, consider asking the following questions when a decision is being made:

- **What power, privilege and biases do I hold as a decision maker?** What is my own background, identity, and location? How might it influence my perspective?
- **Who has been included (or excluded) in making this decision?** Has this decision been made by an individual or a group that is particularly homogenous or dominated by a particular form of identity (e.g., predominately white, wealthy or from the Global North)? Is the group representative of individuals who will be affected by the decision?
- **Who does this decision prioritise? Who might it disadvantage?** Is the decision aimed at protecting and serving the most disadvantaged? Does it prioritise the decision makers and/or members of their identity group over others?
- **Is this decision informed by direct first-hand information?** Who has been consulted at the individual level? Has it been informed by those who will be affected by the decision? Or is it only informed by second-hand and/or meta-level data?

Examples of actions and decisions in which power, privilege and bias of decision makers have not been adequately examined	Examples of decisions and actions that proactively account for the power, privilege, and bias of decision makers
<p><b>Based on country-level data that the government in country X is providing vaccinations, an organisation decides not to organise vaccines for staff there.</b> However, in reality most staff in country X are not able to receive vaccines, because the roll-out is slow and ineffective. The staff themselves have not been consulted directly about their reality.</p>	<p><b>A Country Director organises consultations with staff representatives from different parts of the country,</b> before deciding who to prioritise for vaccinations. She comes to realise that the vaccination is not being provided equally in all districts and organises the distribution of internal resources to compensate for this gap.</p>
<p><b>Management requires all staff to come to work after the country office is reopened with social-distancing measures.</b> However, most staff must take public transport to work, which is overcrowded and unregulated in terms of PPE. The staff agree to take this risk without argument, and the option of arranging alternative transport is not raised.</p>	<p><b>Prior to reopening the office, the Senior Management Team (SMT) organises consultations with staff to understand their concerns, including the details of their commute.</b> It is decided staff will be allowed to work from home for a period until alternative transport can be arranged.</p>
<p><b>Not only are these decisions not inclusive, but they also are objectively poor risk management decisions, as they end up exposing all personnel to greater risk.</b></p>	<p><b>These decisions and actions are more inclusive, and as a result, contribute to the equitable improvement of safety and security for all personnel.</b></p>

 **Useful sources**

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[EISF. \(2018\) Managing the Security of Aid Workers with Diverse Profiles. European Interagency Security Forum \(EISF\).](#)

[Website: Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security \(WOCAPS\) website](#)

[Website: Bond list of anti-racism resources and facilitators](#)

[Boise State University Privilege Checklist](#)  
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**Conduct inclusive Security Risk Assessments (SRAs)**

An SRA is the foundation of a robust security risk management approach. It is the process of identifying threats in your environment, assessing how likely it is they will occur, and what the impact would be on your assets, personnel, and operations if they happened. SRAs form the basis of decision-making around how resources should be allocated in order to mitigate risk.

Therefore, it is critical that they are done using an inclusive, collaborative and facilitated process that properly integrates the diverse perspectives of staff involved in a given project or based at a specific location.

When adapting your SRA approach to COVID-19 social-distancing and travel restriction measures, the following are some points to consider in order to remain inclusive:

- **If conducting the SRA by video conference, request to know if anyone has hearing or visual impairments ahead of time.** If so, make accommodations such as using subtitles and/or requesting that everyone uses video to enable lipreading, if preferred, and ensure that all information that is conveyed through visual aids will also be conveyed by audio.
- **If the same language is not fluently spoken by all participants (including the facilitator) ensure that translation arrangements are made ahead of time.** This includes translation of written material. If you are using a translator, note that Zoom has a function that allows listeners to switch to a channel for their particular language. If none of these options are available at a minimum utilise video and, if available, the subtitles
- **Some personnel may not be able to participate via videoconferencing, due to poor internet connectivity.** In many cases this may prevent entire office locations from participating in the same call. In such cases, be sure to collect input in an equitable way, for example:
  - **For individuals, share a questionnaire ahead of time** so that their responses can be integrated later in the discussion.
  - **For teams, train and/or deploy a trained staff member to facilitate the SRA process** separately and merge the results of both processes after the fact.
  - **Consider how the sequencing of your actions may be perceived in terms of power dynamics, and potentially impact the level of trust with your team.** If a particular office is not able to join with senior management in the same virtual or physical space, it is better to allocate resources to conducting the SRA at the local level first.

- **Avoid tokenistic actions** such as conducting the SRA at the country-level and asking for personnel at the ground-level to validate its findings.
- **If an individual, team or office needs to be consulted separately, be transparent about how their input will be integrated,** and continue to seek their input at critical junctures, such as when decisions are made regarding resource-allocation for mitigation measures.

### Useful sources

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[Tool: Security Risk Assessment Tool from Open Briefing \(GISF\)](#)

[Course: Security Risk Management Toolkit from DisasterReady and GISF](#)

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[Forthcoming Tool: Rapid Risk Assessment \(RAMA\) suite of tools from SightSavers](#)  
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## Design inclusive policies and plans for COVID-related risks

It is important that COVID-related risk management policies, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and contingency plans are inclusive, taking into account all the intersectional risk factors of your personnel.

When developing COVID-related measures, specific needs and conditions of staff should be considered. For example:

- **Staff who are living with family or roommates may require additional financial support** to cover the cost of quarantining outside of their home (after returning from travel or if they are exposed to the virus).
- **Staff who are caring for family members at home or having to home-school their children** during working hours may require adjustment to their working hours, and additional stress management support.
- **Staff with diverse gender profiles** who either become infected, exposed, or go for vaccinations may be faced with discrimination and barriers to medical assistance.

- **Most aid workers globally are not eligible for unemployment compensation** by their home governments. Any decision to close an office, freeze a programme, lay off or furlough workers should take this into account. Staff should be compensated as equitably as possible by their employer.
- **Many insurance arrangements do not cover the cost of COVID-related health risks.** This may be a particularly evident inequality between nationally and internationally hired staff. Staff should be covered equitably through the insurance arrangements that are provided by their employer.
- **New procedures may need to be developed in light of risks that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.** For example:
  - Incident response procedures for domestic abuse
  - Incident response procedures for online harassment
  - SOPs for digital security at home
  - SOPs for wellness and resilience during Work-From-Home
- **Ensure that policies and procedures are accessible to all staff for whom it is relevant.** Conduct verbal briefings for staff who are illiterate (socially distanced or by phone). Send written notes of any online briefings for staff who cannot participate.
- **When developing security risk management policies and plans, be sure to ask the following:**
  - Is this recommendation practical given the unique profiles, abilities and needs of the personnel involved?
  - Does this policy advantage one group of staff over another?
  - Is everyone realistically able to follow these policies and procedures without additional assistance, or is additional assistance required?
  - Have the personnel who are expected to follow this policy/plan been actively consulted?

### **Examples of COVID-related risk management documents include (but are not limited to):**

- Contingency plan for COVID outbreaks in an office
- Procedures for reopening an office
- SOPs for use of PPE and social distancing at work
- Incident support and response during Work-From-Home
- Medevac plans for international staff
- Policies for the provision of COVID-testing
- Policies for medical care, leave arrangements, financial support, childcare, quarantine arrangements.
- Site security assessments and policies on the provision of security upgrades for staff homes

### **Useful sources**

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[Course: WorkFA. Workplace Adjustments: A Guide for UK Employers.](#)

[Webinar: European Disability Forum \(EDF\) project funded by VIVID \(May 2020\) “VIVID Webinar Enhancing Disability Inclusive Practices in Humanitarian Action and Volunteer Management”](#)  
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### **Make the work environment a safe space (on and offline)**

A safe space is a virtual or physical space or environment in which people feel comfortable and confident they will not be exposed to discrimination, microaggressions, harassment, retaliation or any kind of emotional or physical harm. Here are some important ways to create and enforce safe spaces in meetings and throughout the virtual workspace:

- **Address the diverse challenges of working remotely.** Acknowledge openly that not everyone has a comfortable, quiet space to work from home. Invite staff to share any challenges they may face, and genuinely work to advocate for additional resources on their behalf.
- **Recognise and address microaggressions that you witness during meetings and discourage them publicly.** By leading by example, you send a positive message to any staff who may feel marginalised by the intentional or unintentional actions of others. Simultaneously, you are helping to prevent further escalation or normalisation of discriminatory behaviour.
- **Structure your meetings and briefings to encourage equal opportunities for participation.** Some people may find it harder than others to engage in a discussion unless they are specifically invited to do so, particularly if they cannot see the facial expressions or body language of others. Some ideas include:
  - Use non-verbal functions to collect diverse viewpoints. Chat facilities, polls and other non-verbal functions can be useful in getting introverts and others to participate more fully in discussions.
  - Incorporate different participation strategies, such as a round-robin and break out room discussions that give everyone the opportunity to speak.
  - Allow staff anonymous or private ways to submit feedback. Some staff may not be comfortable sharing their concerns in a group, due to the fear of reprisal or negative attention.
- **Put in place mitigation measures for incidents of online discrimination, harassment, exclusion, or abuse.** Highlight this risk in security briefings to staff and ensure they know how and when to report an incident. Work with HR to build preventative measures such as briefings to raise awareness and policies to prevent actions by potential perpetrators. Have an incident response plan in place.
- **Encourage staff to form their own formal or informal networks** to share concerns and exchange information regarding any unique issues affecting them at work or home.

### What is a microaggression?

Microaggressions are intentional or unintentional comments and actions that put down, demotivate or harm an individual due to their unique profile. Microaggressions happen on a regular basis with no intervention (such as inappropriate jokes and comments). They normalise problematic behaviour which could lead to more serious incidents such as harassment to occur.



### Further information

[YWBoston.Org \(Article\): Seven Ways to Make Virtual Learning More Inclusive](#)

[Dalton, S., & Villagran, M. \(2018\). Minimizing and addressing microaggressions in the workplace: Be proactive, part 2. College & Research Libraries News, 79\(10\), 538.doi](#)

[Scully, M & Rowe, M. \(2009\). Bystander Training within Organizations. Journal of the International Ombudsman Association, 2\(1\).](#)



### Useful sources

[Video: 10 Ways To Promote Anti-Racism In The Workplace \(Forbes\)](#)

[Video: COCo - Centre for Community Organizations "Walk with Me: A Woman of Colour's Journey in Nonprofit Organizations"](#)

### Actively recruit, retain and promote diverse security staff

There is a substantial body of evidence that building a diverse team in terms of age, gender, race, and culture (among others) has benefits for staff retention, innovation, and other positive outcomes. Specifically with regard to security risk management roles, diversity is key to building trust amongst staff, expanding your network, and demonstrating by example how to create a "safe space."

Below are some suggestions for building a more inclusive security risk management team:

- **Targeted outreach can help attract more diverse talent to roles where representation is low.** Encouraging underrepresented candidates to apply noting specific characteristics (i.e. race, sex, ethnicity, gender, etc.) on social media, LinkedIn, university career websites, working groups for specific demographics etc.
- **Examine if traditional specifications are actually necessary for the role.** For example:
  - Traditional 9-5 working hours may exclude working parents who need to split their time between childcare and work.
  - Higher education requirements may exclude staff who have been unable to complete their degrees due to the pandemic, or who are otherwise perfectly capable to succeed in the role.
  - Prior security management experience often excludes large numbers of women and people with intersectional differences, simply due to the lack of existing diversity within the security management sector.
- **Use remote capacity-building tools to your advantage to train and mentor new recruits who are from non-traditional backgrounds.** The particular region of one INGO has built a substantive learning and development programme geared toward recruiting and building up capacity amongst staff who otherwise would not likely be selected as candidates for security positions. This has allowed them to diversify their pool of staff (e.g., more women). It also helps reduce turnover by investing in staff and ensuring their professional development.

- **Use online training to help hiring managers identify and reduce their unconscious bias.** Unconscious bias can unfairly impact recruitment processes, as hiring managers may make decisions based on their inherent preferences, rather than the candidates' qualifications for the role.

### A note on diaspora and returning candidates

Diaspora and candidates who hold citizenship in the country where recruitment is taking place, but who have worked abroad for international organisations often hold the ultimate combination of desirable qualifications to fulfill security risk management roles (language, cultural and contextual understanding, humanitarian architecture and systems, reporting, analysis, etc.) However, under most HR policies of INGOs, they are traditionally only able to be recruited under unfavourable conditions (e.g., being offered national-level salary and benefits). Understandably this may discourage individuals from applying to and/or accepting those positions.

### Useful sources

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**Training:** [Unconscious Bias. \(Learning Pool, via Kaya Learning Platform\)](#)

**Article:** [\(February 2020\) "10 ways to embed diversity and inclusion into your recruitment strategy."](#) Futures Website.

**Article:** [\(January 2021\) "Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace in Security."](#) Security Magazine.

**Article:** [\(April 2019\) "The business case for diversity in the workplace is now overwhelming."](#) World Economic Forum.

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## Further information

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[Opinion: Reese, L. \(June 2020\) “Beyond lip service: Tackling racism in your development organisation.” The New Humanitarian.](#)

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## Conclusion

A persons’ intersectional risk profile is made up of various characteristics (including gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and disability) that intersect with one another in a way that shapes their unique vulnerabilities, exposure, and coping capacities with regard to risks in their environment. An inclusive security risk management system ensures that staff security concerns are equitably prioritised by the organisation, regardless of race, nationality, gender, seniority, etc.

-  The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted disproportionate levels of risk facing our global community.
-  This crisis is unique in that it is global, personal and unequal in its impact. Therefore, risk managers and leaders are required to:
  - make rapid and broad-reaching decisions that impact multiple locations. In this context, decisions must be made rapidly and consultative processes are often deprioritised.
  - deal with the risk as it affects them in their personal lives. Their ideas about the pandemic may be heavily influenced by their own government’s policies, domestic media coverage, and their own society’s response to the virus.
  - advise, support and manage teams who may be affected disproportionately by the crisis, in ways they cannot personally relate to.
-  Given these compounding dynamics, it is essential that risk managers and leaders understand their own power, privilege and biases. Otherwise, they may be more likely to make decisions that are disproportionately influenced by their own environment, immediate personal concerns, and/or based on information that has not been verified by direct consultations with staff.

## ANNEX

## Resources: Intersectional differences and COVID-19

Topic	Resources
Global inequality	<p>Deaton, Angus. <a href="#">“COVID-19 and Global Income Inequality.”</a> NBER Working Paper No. 28392 (January 2021, Revised February 2021)</p> <p>“Inequality and COVID-19.” <a href="https://inequality.org/facts/inequality-and-covid-19/">https://inequality.org/facts/inequality-and-covid-19/</a> Inequality.org (Website)</p> <p>Goldin, Ian and Muggah, Robert. <a href="#">“COVID-19 is increasing multiple kinds of inequality. Here’s what we can do about it.”</a> World Economic Forum. (October 9, 2020).</p> <p>Sen, Kunal. <a href="#">“Five ways coronavirus is deepening global inequality.”</a> The Conversation. (August 18, 2020).</p> <p>Stiglitz, Joseph. <a href="#">“Conquering the Great Divide.”</a> Finance and Development. (September 2020)</p>
Inequalities in Africa	<p><a href="#">“Africa needs to tackle inequalities during the COVID-19 recovery process.”</a> UNECA. (March 3, 2021)</p> <p>Nwosu, C.O., Oyenubi, A. <a href="#">“Income-related health inequalities associated with the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa: A decomposition analysis.”</a> Int J Equity Health 20, 21 (2021).</p> <p><a href="#">“UNESCO addresses societal inequalities and economic impacts of COVID-19 in nine Sub-Saharan African cities.”</a> UNESCO. (December 22, 2020).</p>
Inequalities in Asia	<p>Jurzyk, Emilia., Nair, Medha Madhu., Pouokam, Nathalie., Sedik. Tahsin Saadi., Tan, Anthony., Yakadina, Irina. <a href="#">“COVID-19 and Inequality in Asia: Breaking the Vicious Cycle.”</a> IMF Working Paper, Asia and Pacific Department. (October 2020)</p> <p><a href="#">“GCAP publishes report on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Inequalities in Asia.”</a> Global Call to Action Against Poverty. (November 23, 2020)</p>
Inequalities in Europe, UK and U.S.	<p><a href="#">“Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups.”</a> Public Health England. (June 2020)</p> <p>Tiffany N. Ford, Sarah Reber, and Richard V. Reeves. <a href="#">“Race gaps in COVID-19 deaths are even bigger than they appear.”</a> Brookings Institute. (June 16, 2020)</p> <p>Rodríguez, Juan G. and Sebastian, Raquel. <a href="#">“Poverty and inequality surge across Europe in the wake of COVID-19.”</a> University of Oxford. (October 29, 2020)</p> <p>Van Beusekom, Mary. <a href="#">“Race, income inequality fuel COVID disparities in US counties.”</a> Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy. (January 20, 2021)</p> <p>Waldersee, Victoria. <a href="#">“COVID toll turns spotlight on Europe’s taboo of data by race.”</a> Reuters. (November 19, 2020).</p>
Gender-based inequality	<p><a href="#">“COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects.”</a> McKinsey Global Institute. (July 15, 2020)</p> <p><a href="#">“Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women.”</a> UN.org. (April 9, 2020)</p> <p><a href="#">“The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19.”</a> UN Women (Resource Page).</p>
Disability-related inequalities and Covid-19	<p><a href="#">“People with Disabilities.”</a> U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Resource page: Updated March 16, 2021).</p> <p><a href="#">“Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak.”</a> World Health Organization.</p> <p>Ighobor, Kingsley. <a href="#">“COVID-19: People with disabilities facing tougher times.”</a> UN.Org Africa Renewal. (May 8 2020).</p>