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| |  | | --- | | *We are experiencing a global health crisis of high magnitude. Our concerns are about staying safe and ending the pandemic. As Corona virus (Covid-19) spreads, we issue this statement to ensure that the rights of people with epilepsy, their families and carers are protected from the impact of the pandemic:*   1. People with epilepsy are likely to be highly impacted as family, community, national, regional and international resources are channeled towards this new pandemic. For example, medical and social support staff may be directed more towards Covid-19, at the expense of existing conditions. We urge families, governments and the international community to ensure that medicines and other essentials for the management of epilepsy remain available. 2. People with epilepsy with other medical conditions may be impacted more by the condition. We urge authorities to be thoughtful as they lead us all in the fight against corona virus. 3. People with epilepsy have experiences of stigma, and some have experiences of mental health, which could be triggered if they find themselves being stigmatized as a result of Covid-19. We urge the international community not to stigmatise those who are affected by corona virus. 4. Social triggers of seizures like worry, anxiety and depression may increase during these trying times. 5. People with epilepsy might have limited access to communication due to technology, literacy and language barriers resulting from regular discrimination that they face. We urge publication of information in local languages, and use of accessible formats such as radio and accessible applications such as SMS and Whatsapp. 6. With many people with epilepsy being farmers, running self-help projects, individual or family enterprises, they are likely to be impacted in terms of income while social distancing is in place. We urge governments and communities to provide economic support, and social assistance where needed instead of focusing on more established enterprises only. 7. In the event of quarantine or isolation, people with epilepsy are likely to miss on essential care and support they require, including but not limited to access to clinics and hospitals and social services. 8. There could be, in some communities, continued discrimination of people with epilepsy as others seek to make decisions for them about such things as self-isolation and other social distancing strategies. There is need to involve people with epilepsy in decisions at both family, community and national levels. 9. Women with epilepsy already have a tripple burden and there is need to ensure gender balanced programs during these trying times. 10. Shortages of basic commodities may have a huge impact on people with epilepsy especially medicines. 11. As companies and organizations prepare alternative plans for doing work, they should protect their workers with epilepsy. 12. As teaching and learning moves to online or other remote delivery modes, learners with epilepsy might be disadvantaged by inappropriate technology or a lack of resources. Their needs and capacities must be prioritized. 13. Organizations advocating for rights of people with epilepsy and those providing much needed services may be impacted as resources are channeled towards the novel virus. 14. We urge research into susceptibility, medicines interactions as well as triggers. 15. We know that most people with epilepsy are resilient, and they may be able to draw on this experience to deal with consequences of Covid-19 but coping with two conditions at once is no easy task. Our communities can make it easier by following to the advice provided in this statement.   *We urge Epilepsy Africa Alliance advocates and their organizations to remain vigilant to ensure that the rights of people with epilepsy are protected during these trying times. As an Alliance, we want to stand by you and the people that you serve.    Council of Epilepsy Alliance Africa, 19 March 2020* | |

