



ASSIST NEWSLETTER — ISSUE 6 – JUNE 2026

From Visibility to Leadership: Women with Deafblindness Leading Change

International Day of Deafblindness

Welcome to the **sixth edition of the ASSIST Project newsletter**, released in celebration of **Deafblindness Awareness Month, Helen Keller Week**, and the **International Day of Deafblindness**, observed annually on **27 June**.

The **International Day of Deafblindness** commemorates the birth of Helen Keller, whose life and legacy continue to inspire the global movement for equality, education, accessibility, and inclusion for persons with disabilities.

This year's celebration carries particular significance. Alongside raising awareness about the rights and experiences of persons with deafblindness, **the global disability community is also marking the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, a landmark human rights treaty that continues to guide efforts towards equality, accessibility, and inclusion worldwide.

In this edition, we highlight the growing leadership and visibility of women with deafblindness around the world. From international advocacy at the Women Deliver 2026 Conference to the establishment of the new WFDB Women Committee, **women with deafblindness are increasingly shaping conversations on gender equality, disability rights, healthcare, and inclusion.**

These developments strongly resonate with the mission of the **ASSIST Project**. Women with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing equitable healthcare, including maternal healthcare. Ensuring that women with lived experience are represented in decision-making processes is essential for creating healthcare systems that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to their needs.

We also share inspiring updates from our project partners, including an innovative initiative in Croatia

promoting the visibility and empowerment of women with deafblindness.

About the project

The **ASSIST Project** is a three-year project co-funded by the EU under the Erasmus+ Programme, aiming to reduce discrimination and attitudinal biases among healthcare professionals when treating women with disabilities during motherhood.

The Project will offer training to medical students and healthcare professionals to provide more inclusive and welcoming care, supported by a Digital Ecosystem using a Virtual Learning Environment and 3D simulations. It also promotes advocacy to drive policy change and strengthen NGO capacity, emphasizing positive behaviour and inclusive practices in healthcare. To achieve these objectives, the **ASSIST Project** has brought together a consortium of three higher education institutions from Italy and Greece, as well as seven organizations from Greece, Belgium, Italy, Norway, and Ireland, focusing on the rights of mothers, persons with disabilities, education, and digital innovation.

[🔗 Learn more about the project on our website! 🔗](#)

Women with Deafblindness Leading Change

Women with Deafblindness as Changemakers

June is a significant month for the global deafblind community. **Helen Keller Week and the International Day of Deafblindness** provide an opportunity to celebrate achievements, raise awareness, and advocate for the rights of persons with deafblindness.

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The International Day of Deafblindness is observed on **27 June, commemorating the birth of Helen Keller**, whose advocacy and achievements continue to inspire generations of persons with disabilities worldwide.

This year, these celebrations coincide with the **20th anniversary of the CRPD**, reminding us that while significant progress has been made, women and girls with disabilities continue to encounter barriers in accessing healthcare, education, employment, and participation in public life.

At the same time, women with disabilities are increasingly taking on leadership roles and shaping global conversations on equality, inclusion, and human rights.

Global Advocacy and Women Deliver 2026

The growing leadership of women with deafblindness was also visible at **the Women Deliver 2026 Conference in Melbourne**.

WFDB President Sanja Tarczay, in her role as **First Vice-President of the International Disability Alliance (IDA)**, delivered opening remarks at the event *“Celebration and Solidarity: Two Decades of Championing Article 6.”* Reflecting on 20 years of advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities through the CRPD, she highlighted the importance of ensuring that women, girls, and gender-diverse persons with disabilities are fully included in the global movement for gender equality.

“The greatness of the feminist movement can be judged by how they treat women with diverse abilities. So, let’s make the feminist movement truly inclusive for ALL women, girls and gender-diverse persons.”
(Sanja Tarczay, PhD)

Her intervention highlighted the importance of **ensuring that women and girls with disabilities are not only included in discussions on gender equality, but are recognised as leaders and decision-makers within the global feminist movement.**

WFDB Women Committee: A New Global Voice

Established in October 2025, the Committee brings together women with deafblindness from diverse regions, age groups, communication systems, and lived experiences, **reflecting the diversity and strength of the global deafblind community.**

Composed of seven women with deafblindness representing Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America, Oceania, and South America, the Committee **serves as a platform for international cooperation, leadership, and advocacy.** Its mission is to strengthen the representation of women with deafblindness worldwide and ensure that their voices, experiences, and priorities are reflected in policies and initiatives affecting their lives.

Ahead of International Women’s Day, the Committee held its first meeting, bringing together women leaders from diverse backgrounds, communication systems, and lived experiences. The gathering marked the beginning of a new chapter of collaboration and solidarity among women with deafblindness across the globe.

The creation of the WFDB Women Committee is particularly relevant for the ASSIST Project. It reinforces the importance of ensuring that women with disabilities, including women with deafblindness and mothers with disabilities, have a stronger voice in shaping the policies, services, and systems that affect their lives.

Why This Matters for ASSIST

The ASSIST Project recognises that **women with disabilities must be active participants in shaping the policies and services that affect their lives.**

Research conducted within the project has shown that women with disabilities, including women with deafblindness, often face communication barriers, inaccessible services, and discriminatory attitudes when accessing maternal healthcare. These barriers can limit informed decision-making and negatively affect experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood.

By promoting inclusive healthcare practices and amplifying the voices of women with disabilities, **ASSIST** contributes to the implementation of the CRPD and supports the creation of healthcare systems where every woman is treated with dignity, respect, and equality.

Women with deafblindness are not only beneficiaries of inclusion efforts. Their leadership, expertise, and lived experience are essential for building healthcare systems and communities that truly leave no one behind.

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Latest Updates

Croatia Hosts First Fashion Show of Deafblind Women

As part of **Women's Awareness Month**, the Croatian Deafblind Association DODIR organised the **first-ever Fashion Show of Deafblind Women in Croatia**.

Held at the Zagreb City Museum, the event celebrated visibility, confidence, and empowerment. Women with deafblindness showcased historical costumes on the runway with the support of interpreters, professionals,

and volunteers, creating a memorable and emotional experience for participants and audiences alike.

The event welcomed international guests, including deafblind model and activist Mireia Mendoza from Spain and deafblind advocate George Pantermarakis from Greece.

Supported by the ASSIST Project, the initiative provided an opportunity to promote inclusion, share experiences, disseminate research findings from Croatia, and **raise the visibility of deafblind women, including mothers**.

More than a fashion show, **the event was a powerful statement of visibility, confidence, and empowerment**. It reflected the same message highlighted throughout this newsletter: visibility, representation, and leadership are essential for building more inclusive communities.

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The ASSIST Digital Learning Platform (VLE) is now available. Register for free to access six training modules, designed and delivered by experts, aimed at promoting more inclusive and accessible healthcare for mothers and women with disabilities.

Register here: <https://elearning.assistproject.eu/>

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