

Adapting Wildlife and Nature Content for People with Disabilities.

In today's world, there are still many sectors of the population that cannot access information or entertainment on a regular basis. Not only for economic problems and democratic freedoms but because of a disability issue. Having taken into account those countries where their citizens can easily use any type of communication and cultural medium -television, newspaper, radio, cinema, theater, museum, etc. -, even there you can find a large percentage of people who cannot enjoy the use of these tools, due to different physical or intellectual deficiencies.

WHO estimates that there are 285 million visually impaired people in the world, at least 39 million are blind and 246 have low vision. There are also 360 million people suffering from hearing loss, 328 million adults, and 32 million children, more than 5% of the world's population. Common knowledge understands that access to information is essential for life in a democracy. The lack of accessibility limits the autonomy of these individuals, their possibility of making free decisions, their citizen participation, and their level of interaction in social life.

In 2006, The National Council Report on Disability of the United States stated that it is a crucial principle to develop the essential means so that all human beings can have equal access to information, knowledge, education, employment or social relations and leisure, especially through the potential that new technologies are developing day by day. The obligation to achieve a more just and egalitarian society, without giving space to the marginalization of any human group, is the responsibility of both the public sectors and the private companies who know their potential.

Hence, what can we do in the audiovisual industry to improve inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities?

1) INFORM OURSELVES

- a) We have to sensitize ourselves to the subject, experiment with adaptations in order to open our senses to new audiovisual languages. The more we empathize with it, the more we care. You can find wildlife and nature documentaries on Netflix, such as "Chasing Corals", "Challenger: the final flight" and "Dancing with the birds", that have English audio-description and CC. It is harder to find documentaries with special subtitles, which have different colors depending on the character and show the sounds of actions and verbal tones. It is even harder to find with sign language interpretation. But you can contact [Okurelo Cine](#) and they can show you a few complete examples.
- b) Search for your local norms and regulations. Understand what you must do and what you should do as a company that produces or distributes audiovisual content. If your government does not require your company to adapt or to distribute accessible content, find out how many people are blind and deaf in your country, and calculate if there is a new audience there waiting to consume your product.

- c) Find information about what your competition is doing in terms of audiovisual accessibility. If they are doing more than you, then you have to keep up. If they are doing less, you can use that as a competitive advantage.

2) ADAPT CONTENT

- a) For our movies, TV shows, educational videos, etc., we can include a percentage of the budget to adapt the content with Audio-description to help blind people and Special Subtitles (one step further than Closed Captions) along with Sign Language Interpretation for deaf people.

2) DISTRIBUTE THE ADAPTATIONS

- a) Networks, Streaming Platforms, Theaters, etc. should provide -at least- a few hours of accessible content as part of their programming. In order to do this, they should buy adaptations or negotiate with producers to include them as part of their deliveries.
- b) If you are not able to distribute the adaptation on your platform, you should allow NGOs and academic institutions that work with blind and deaf people to distribute the content -for free or for a very low cost- as part of their internal and private library (Always protecting Copy Rights).

3) ORGANIZE ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

- a) If you are a film festival organizer, a PR managing a promotional event of a TV show, or a producer arranging the premiere of your film, you should consider hiring an accessibility consultant that will guide you in how to make the event accessible for everyone. For example: If you are organizing a cinema screening, you would need trained ushers that can guide blind and deaf people to their seats, you would need a ramp so people using a wheelchair can get in, and you would have to make sure that the brochures, posters, etc., that you use to promote the event are going to be understandable by everyone.

4) HIRE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- a) There are a plethora of tasks that people with disabilities can perform in the process of making a movie, a TV show, or a museum exhibition. For example, in pre-production, you can hire somebody that uses a wheelchair to develop the story of the documentary and do the research while seating behind a desk with a phone and a computer. During production, you can hire a deaf person as the driver that takes the equipment to each location. And, in post-production, you can hire a blind person to make the transcripts of the interviews. There is always the possibility that one physical or mental disability can enhance a working ability.