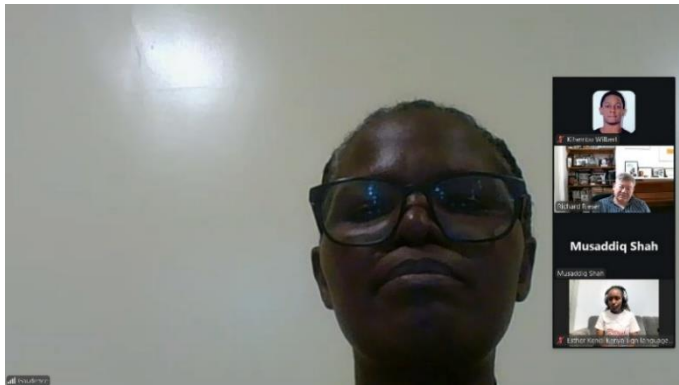


CDYF Capacity Building Webinar Series

Between October 2025 and March 2026, the Commonwealth Disabled Youth Forum (CDYF), with support from the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum (CDPF), successfully delivered its first Capacity Building Webinar Series. What started as a simple idea to create learning spaces for disabled youth quickly grew into something deeper, a platform for connection, reflection, and collective voice across the Commonwealth.

The series brought together young people with disabilities, advocates, and experienced leaders from different countries and backgrounds. Each session created an opportunity not only to learn, but also to share lived experiences and challenge systems that continue to exclude disabled youth.



The journey began with a powerful opening session on Climate Change Through an Inclusive Lens. This discussion highlighted how climate change does not affect everyone equally. Persons with disabilities often face greater risks during disasters, displacement, and environmental crises, yet they are rarely included in planning and response efforts. Participants explored the need for inclusive climate policies and the role of

disabled youth in shaping climate action. It was a strong start that set the tone for honest, relevant, and action-focused conversations.

As the series continued, it moved into more personal and often overlooked areas. One of the most impactful sessions focused on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). This topic is rarely discussed openly in many communities, especially in relation to disability. Yet it directly affects the dignity, safety, and wellbeing of young disabled people.

The session created a safe space for participants to speak openly about the barriers they face. These included lack of access to information, inaccessible health services, untrained health workers, and harmful stereotypes that silence young people with disabilities. The discussion also



highlighted the increased risks faced by women and girls with disabilities. At the same time, it was not only about challenges. Participants explored solutions such as inclusive health policies, accessible communication tools, community awareness, and the importance of empowering disabled youth to advocate for their rights. For many, this session was a turning point, showing the power of creating space for conversations that are often avoided.

Education was another key theme in the series. A session on inclusive education emphasized that the problem is not the learner, but the system. Schools, policies, and attitudes must change to remove barriers and create environments where all learners can thrive. The discussion drew from global frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and highlighted the role of teachers, communities, and governments in making inclusion a reality.

This conversation naturally extended into discussions on higher education and employment. Participants reflected on the gap between accessing education and securing meaningful opportunities in the labour market. It became clear that inclusion in education must be linked to real pathways into employment, leadership, and decision-making. Without this connection, access alone is not enough.

Another important session focused on the rights and development of disabled girls and women. This discussion brought attention to the multiple and layered forms of discrimination they face. Even where policies exist, implementation often remains weak. Participants emphasized that inclusion must move beyond words and become action led by disabled women themselves. The session also highlighted how issues such as education, health, economic empowerment, and protection from violence are all connected, and must be addressed together.

The final session of the series brought everything together with a strong focus on leadership and meaningful participation. One message stood out clearly throughout the discussion: inclusion is not just about being present, it is about having influence.



As one participant reflected, “It’s not enough to be in the room without having influence.” Another added, “Presence doesn’t mean you have the power to shape decisions.” These reflections captured a reality that many disabled youth experience. Being invited into spaces is important, but it is not enough if their voices are not heard or acted upon.

At the same time, the session offered a hopeful and forward-looking perspective on leadership. It challenged traditional ideas that leadership is defined by titles or positions. Instead, it emphasized purpose, action, and the courage to challenge systems that were not designed with inclusion in mind. This message resonated strongly with participants and marked a powerful close to the series.

Across all six sessions, accessibility remained a key priority. The use of sign language interpretation, captioning, and inclusive facilitation ensured that more participants could engage meaningfully. This was not just about talking about inclusion, but demonstrating it in practice.

The webinar series also highlighted some important challenges. Internet connectivity, time zone differences, and limited awareness in the early stages affected participation. However, these challenges became learning points. Improvements in communication, use of reminders, and sharing of recorded sessions helped increase engagement over time.

Despite these challenges, the overall impact of the series was clear. It created a strong sense of community among disabled youth across the Commonwealth. It strengthened confidence, built knowledge, and opened space for voices that are often unheard. It also positioned CDYF as a growing platform for youth-led learning and advocacy.

Looking ahead, the success of this first webinar series marks the beginning of a new phase for CDYF. There is clear potential to expand these efforts into more structured programs, deeper engagement, and stronger advocacy at both national and Commonwealth levels.

More importantly, the series has shown that when disabled youth are given the space, tools, and support, they do not just participate. They lead, they influence, and they redefine what inclusion truly means.

CDYF continues to grow as a space where voices matter, experiences matter, and leadership is shaped by purpose.

All the recordings and resources are available on our website; www.commonwealthdyf.org

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