

Training the Trainers & Development Programme, India

The Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum (CDPF) successfully hosted a five-day Training the Trainers & Development Programme in India, bringing together disability rights leaders and advocates from across the region. It was held from 9th to 13th March 2025 at New Delhi.



Participation: 5 representatives from Sri Lanka, 2 from the Maldives, 19 participants from across India. Unfortunately, due to visa issues, no participants from Pakistan or Bangladesh were able to attend this time.

Demographics:

Gender: Almost equal number. Male - 54% Female - 46%

Trainee Age Groups: 18–25 -12.5%, 26–35- 58.33%, 36–45 - 29.17%

Disability Types Mentioned: Mobility impairment-9, Speech and Hearing impairment-3, Visual impairment-8, Thalassaemia-1, Cerebral Palsy-1, Multiple Sclerosis-1, Unspecified-1

Highlights of the Programme

The training focused on strengthening leadership, advocacy, and capacity-building for disability rights, aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Key sessions included:

- Paradigm Shift in Disability – history of the disability movement in India and globally, the language we use, and tackling traditional barriers.

- Inclusive Education (Article 24) – designing inclusive schools, addressing segregation vs. inclusion, and role-play advocacy with officials.
- Employment & Livelihood (Articles 27 & 28) – engaging employers, building campaigns with youth, and addressing barriers to equal work opportunities.
- Disability & Health Services (Article 25) – case studies and access to quality health care.
- Guardianship and Supported Decision-Making (Article 12) – implications for mental health and legal systems.
- Media, Representation & Awareness (Article 8) – challenging stereotypes and influencing mainstream narratives.
- Gender Equality in the Disability Movement – empowering women leaders.
- Using the UNCRPD and SDGs for Advocacy – building strategies to influence government policy and public awareness.

The course concluded with participant reflections, evaluation, and certificate presentations.

Trainers The programme was led by a diverse team of international and regional trainers: Richard Rieser, Sarah Kamau, Diethono Nakhro, Sruti Mohapatra, Arman Ali, Nancy Maguire, Gemma White (Admin)

Programme Education Participants discussed how inaccessible schools, lack of assistive devices, and family attitudes hold disabled children back.

Outcome: Agreement on the urgent need for inclusive schools, trained teachers, and equal access to learning.

Quote: *“Families are very influential – they can either open or close the door to education.”*

Employment Disabled people continue to face discrimination, unequal pay, and limited workplace adjustments.

Outcome: The group developed ideas to expand opportunities through inclusive hiring, entrepreneurship, and fair workplace policies.

Quote: *“Financial independence is harder to achieve because of discrimination, we are denied opportunities, fair pay, and even access to loans to start our own businesses.”*

Politics Disabled people are too often excluded from mainstream politics and decision-making.

Outcome: Strong calls were made for voter education, grassroots organising, and greater representation in political parties.

Quote: *“We want strong representation so we eventually have someone who will do something for us.”*

Women Discussions revealed how disabled women often face stereotypes, lack of privacy, and barriers in healthcare, family life, and relationships.

Outcome: A commitment to challenge these attitudes and ensure disabled women’s rights are fully respected.

Quote: *“Doctors sometimes advise sterilisation or abortion without consent — disabled women must have the right to make their own healthcare decisions.”*

Brought together 26 participants from across regions gender balanced - India, Sri-Lanka and Maldives

Engaging and active training. Sessions included discussion on CRPD, advocacy, and inclusive employment. Employers from Amazon India and a Indigo Air major airline participated best practice around including disabled people in the workforce. Training enhanced participants' capacity to advocate and champion for disability rights. Participants received certificates upon completion.

Social Media Coverage: Managed by Naddy. Hindi translation- Access Issues 7 blind people and 2 sign translation, 1 using captions

Additional Highlights: Participants mixed by region and country to promote cross-regional learning. Strong representation from youth voices, including Muso from Maldives. Unfortunately, participants from Bangladesh and Pakistan were unable to attend due to access constraints. Gemma organised a final celebratory meal and Karaoke which was very well received.

Quantitative Ratings

- How do you rate the training?
 - Mostly Excellent, some Good
 - Excellent - 16
 - Good - 7
- Learning and Readiness:
 - Majority of participants (approximately 70%) rated the training as Excellent, indicating high satisfaction with the content, delivery, and relevance.



MEETINGS WITH SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL MANDATED WITH DISABILITY INCLUSION IMPLEMENTATION

After the training the Chair and Vice Chair had opportunity to travel to Odisha to engage with senior government officials on disability rights and inclusion. Since India is quite vast, there was need to reach out more to other local areas with the CDPFs message of Disability Equality and Rights training modules that could be tailored to suit each areas' need.

VISIT WITH THE STATE COMMISSIONER FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ODISHA - INDIA

The meeting discussed and agreed that the Commission will organise a Disability Equality training and Dr. Sruti will do the training together with others in the movement in Odisha. If need be for an online interaction other senior CDPF official that will be organized. The Disability Equality Training Module was shared to sensitize on what was be trained on and also create awareness on disability inclusion matters.



A meeting was held at the Swabhiman office and virtually with diverse groups in Odisha. The CDPF Chair presented on what the goal of CDPF is and took them through the Disability Equality Training topics to appraise them on how they can carry out advocacy at their local areas. The participants also gave their views.

VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY - 19TH MARCH 2025

The Chair visited the University of Rama Devi Women University. She engaged with the staff and students and finally met with the Vice Chancellor. The students shared their experiences on disability rights studies. The CDPF Chair sensitized the girls on the need to know their human rights and challenge the laws and regulations that deny women and girls their rights in every sphere including reproductive and menstrual rights, gender based violence, access to education on the same level with boys, economic empowerment and independence, being in leadership positions in order to be part of the development at large and influencing retrogressive cultural norms that deny women and girls opportunities in life. Since this is a women only university, focus was more on disability inclusion.



The Vice Chancellor of the women university (left) during a courtesy call at his office.

