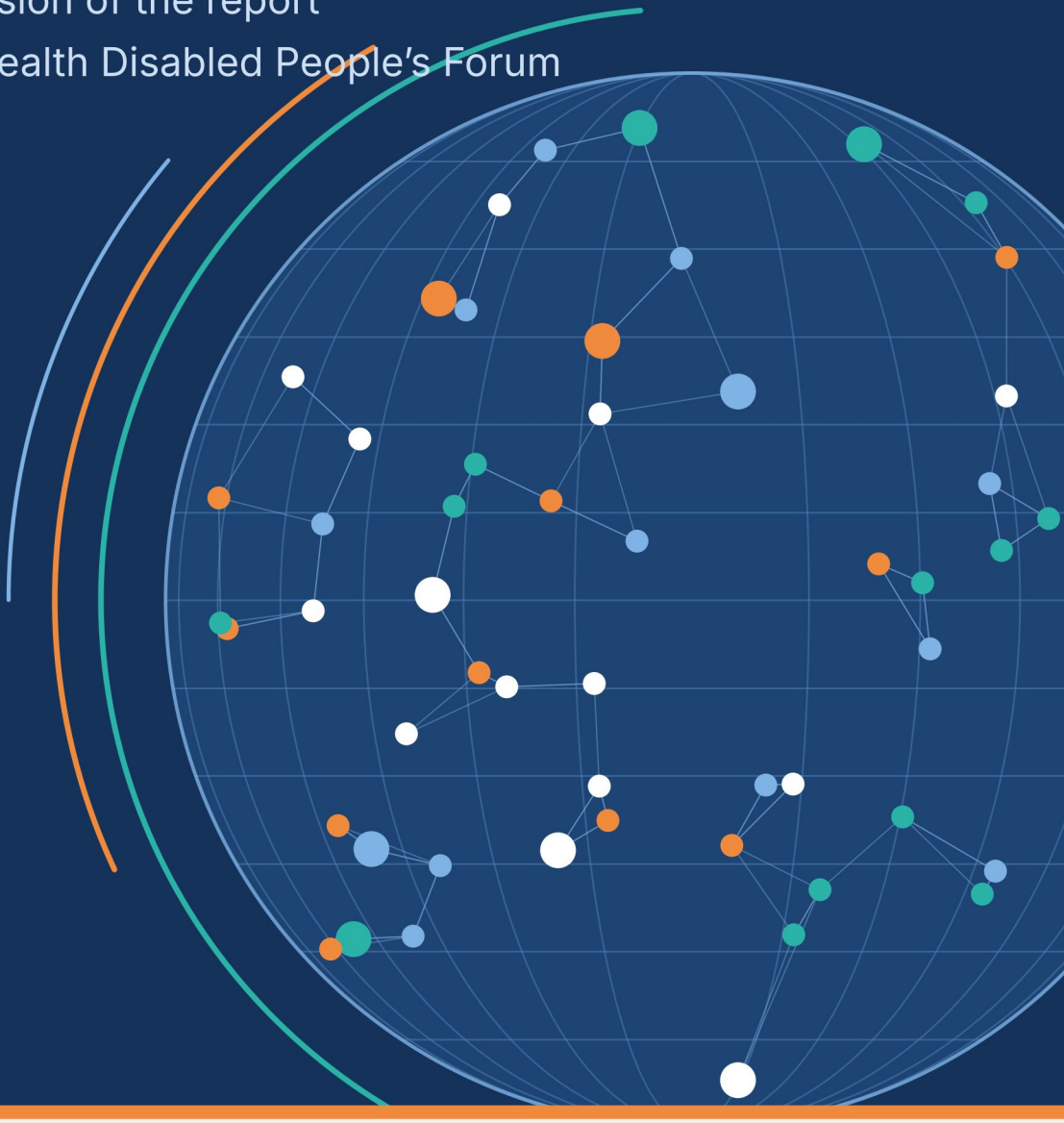
A COMMONWEALTH DISABILITY INCLUSION REPORT

Disability Inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Commonwealth

An Easy Read version of the report
by the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum

EASY READ



2026

Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum

commonwealthdpf.org

About this booklet



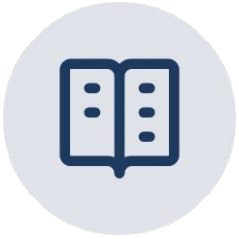
This is an **Easy Read** booklet. Easy Read uses simple words and pictures.



It tells you about a longer report. The report is called **Disability Inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Commonwealth**.



The report was written by the **Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum**. We call it **CDPF** for short.



Some words are in **bold**. These can be hard words. We explain what they mean. There is a list of hard words on page 33.



You may want someone to help you read this booklet. That is OK.

What is in this booklet

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Who we are



CDPF is a group of more than 100 organisations from Commonwealth countries.



These organisations are run by people with disabilities. They are called **organisations of persons with disabilities**, or **OPDs**.



Our message is **Nothing about us without us**. This means people with disabilities must be part of every decision about their lives.



CDPF started in London in 2008.



This report was prepared by Dr. Sruti Mohapatra. She is a Vice Chair of CDPF.

A plan for a better world



In 2015, all the countries in the **United Nations** agreed a plan to make the world better by 2030.



The plan has 17 goals. They are called the **Sustainable Development Goals**, or **SDGs** for short.



The goals are about things like health, school, work, being treated fairly and looking after the planet.



The plan promises to **leave no one behind**. This includes people with disabilities.



There are only 4 years left until 2030.

The rights of people with disabilities



There is a world agreement about the rights of people with disabilities. It is called the **CRPD**.



Countries that agree to the CRPD promise to protect these rights.



The rights include going to school, having a job, getting health care and taking part in the community.



All 56 Commonwealth countries have now agreed to the CRPD. Tonga was the last country to agree, in September 2026.

Disability around the world



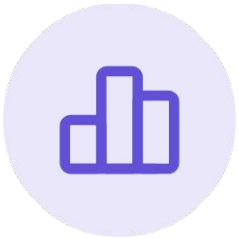
About 1 in 6 people in the world has a disability. That is about 1.3 billion people.



People with disabilities are more likely to be poor than other people.



About 2.5 billion people need things like wheelchairs, glasses or hearing aids. These are called **assistive products**.



The United Nations checked how the world is doing for people with disabilities. Only 5 out of 119 measures were on track for 2030.

The Commonwealth



The **Commonwealth** is a group of 56 countries that work together.



About 2.7 billion people live in Commonwealth countries. That is about 1 in 3 people in the world.



The countries are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific.



The countries can learn from each other about what works for people with disabilities.

What we looked at



We looked closely at 8 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Fiji, India, Kenya, Uganda and the United Kingdom.



We looked at 8 parts of life. These are health, school, women and girls, work, being treated fairly, transport, disasters and working together.



We collected stories from people with disabilities in 12 countries.



We also talked to 7 leaders with disabilities.

What we found



Good news: all 8 countries have laws or plans to protect the rights of people with disabilities.



But laws are not enough. They are not always followed.



There is not enough proof that life is getting better for people with disabilities.

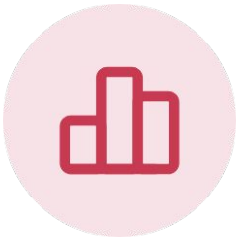


Countries must show that their plans are making a real difference to people’s lives.

Counting people with disabilities



To make good plans, countries must know how many people have disabilities and what their lives are like. This is called **data**.



Countries count disability in different ways. So their numbers are very different.
In Bangladesh, one count found about 1 in 70 people had a disability. Another count found about 1 in 36.



Many countries do not check if children with disabilities finish school, or if adults with disabilities have jobs.



What must happen: countries should all use the same short set of questions. These are called the **Washington Group questions**.

Health and having babies

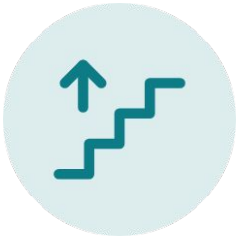
SDG 3



People with disabilities have a right to good health care. This includes care about sex, relationships and having babies.



In Bangladesh, about 1 in 4 people with disabilities could not get health care when they needed it.



Some clinics have steps and beds that are too high. Often there is no sign language. Some women with disabilities are not allowed to make their own choices.



What must happen: clinics everyone can get into and use. Information in sign language and Easy Read. Women with disabilities make their own choices.

Going to school

SDG 4



All children have a right to go to school and learn together. This is called **inclusive education**.



In Bangladesh, about 1 in 5 children with disabilities of secondary school age are not in school. For other children it is about 1 in 8.



Going to school is not enough. Children need trained teachers, books they can use and support in class.



Good example: in Odisha, India, support centres in 8 schools stopped children with disabilities dropping out. Now the idea is used across the whole state.



What must happen: check that children with disabilities learn and finish school. Train every teacher.

Women and girls

SDG 5



Women and girls with disabilities are treated unfairly twice: for being female and for having a disability.



In Bangladesh, about 8 in 10 women with disabilities have faced violence in their lives.



Countries spend money to help women. But they do not check how much of it reaches women with disabilities.



What must happen: track the money for women and girls with disabilities. Make safe houses and help lines accessible. Give women with disabilities a seat where decisions are made.

Having a job

SDG 8

People with disabilities have a right to work and to be paid fairly.

In the United Kingdom, about 1 in 2 disabled people of working age have a job. For other people it is about 8 in 10.

Some employers have unfair ideas about people with disabilities. Many workplaces are hard to get into.

Some countries pay for changes at work, like special equipment or software. These changes are called **reasonable accommodation**.

What must happen: check that people keep their jobs and are paid fairly. Pay for changes at work quickly.

Being treated fairly

SDG 10



Every country has laws against treating people with disabilities unfairly. Unfair treatment is called **discrimination**.



In Australia, about 1 in 10 people with disabilities said they faced discrimination in one year.



In Kenya, nearly 4 in 10 people with disabilities are poor.



Making a complaint can be hard and cost a lot of money. Offices and courts are not always accessible.



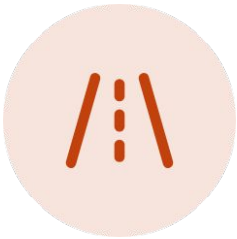
What must happen: make it easy and cheap to complain. Check for discrimination every year.

Getting around

SDG 11



People need transport to get to school, to work and to the doctor.



A bus stop near your house does not help if you cannot get on the bus, or the path has no ramp.



In Barbados, new electric buses have space for wheelchairs and can lower to the kerb. But there are not enough of them. Taxis that take wheelchairs cost more.



What must happen: check the whole journey, from door to door, with people with disabilities. Only buy buses everyone can use. Train drivers.

Disasters and climate change

SDG 13



Storms, floods and fires are getting worse because of **climate change**.



Around the world, more than 8 in 10 people with disabilities have no plan for a disaster.



Only about 1 in 10 get warnings in a way they can understand.



Good example: in Fiji, OPDs send warnings as text messages, sign language videos and radio.



What must happen: warnings in every format. Shelters and escape routes that everyone can use.

Working together

SDG 17



Governments, OPDs and other groups must work together. This is called **partnership**.



People with disabilities are asked for their views more than before. But often they are asked too late, or nothing changes.



Countries must collect and share information about people with disabilities every year.

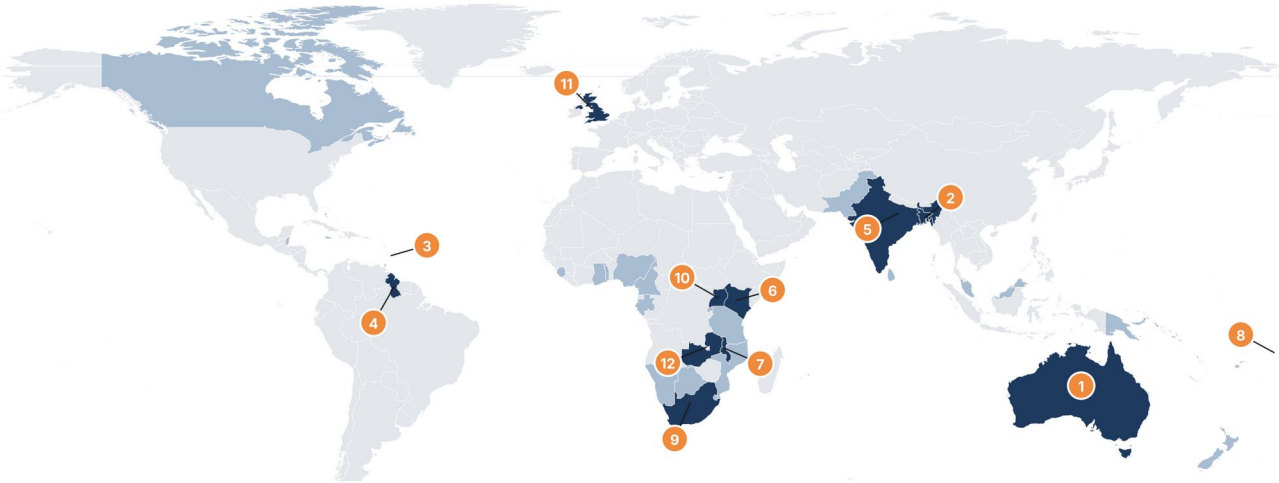


What must happen: OPDs help plan, check and judge every programme.

People told us their stories

People with disabilities in 12 Commonwealth countries told us what life is like for them.

Everyone agreed to share their story in this report.



1 Australia
2 Bangladesh
3 Barbados
4 Guyana
5 India
6 Kenya
7 Malawi
8 Samoa
9 South Africa
10 Uganda
11 United Kingdom
12 Zambia

Stories: going to school

Habiba, Bangladesh. Habiba is blind. Her school had no Braille books. Her mother found people to write her exam answers and helped her every evening. In 2025 Habiba got the top grade in every subject. She wants to be a teacher.

“I’ve learned to dream even without sight.”

Marydith, Kenya. Marydith is 10. She reads and writes Braille on a small low-cost machine. It also prints her notes for her teacher. Her school painted the edges of steps and made paths flat. She keeps up with her class.

Stories: a fair start in life



Patuma, Malawi. Patuma is 6. She could not sit or stand without help. A project got her a wheelchair and a place at a local early childhood centre. Now she plays and learns with other children.



Emmanuel, Uganda. Emmanuel is 14. He had to leave school twice after family members died. A project paid his school fees. His teachers now use sign language. He wants to be a teacher.

"Emmanuel is now a happy boy with many friends." (his mother)

Stories: change that lasts



Efita, Zambia. Efita is 10 and had never been to school. His teacher learned new ways to teach, like group work and pictures. Now Efita takes part and has friends. In the first year, 421 children with disabilities joined school.



Samoa. The national OPD worked with the government to start small payments for people with disabilities. Families used the money for things like medicine. Some children went back to school.

Leaders with disabilities told us



Mohua Paul, Bangladesh

To support people with disabilities, talk to them. Too often others talk for us.



Kerryann Ifill, Barbados

The barriers are the same everywhere: attitudes, awareness and buildings or transport people cannot use.



Sruti Mohapatra, India

Count every child. Train every teacher. Do not send children with disabilities back to separate schools.



Sarah Muthoni Kamau, Kenya

Young people with disabilities must help design programmes, not just answer surveys.

We have written what they told us in Easy Read words.

Leaders with disabilities told us



Kihembo Wilbert, Uganda

Teachers who believed in me made the difference. Inclusion is not a favour. It is a responsibility we all share.



Richard Rieser, United Kingdom

Signing an agreement is not enough. Countries must do what they promised, and report on it.



Clare Gibellini, Australia

Most people with disabilities use ordinary services. So health, schools, transport and justice must work for everyone.



Scader Louis, Malawi

Care and support must be seen as a right, and as something good for everyone.

We have written what they told us in Easy Read words.

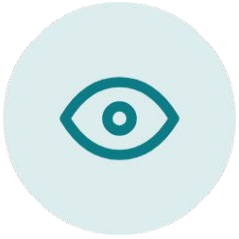
Technology that helps



Assistive products help people do things. Examples are wheelchairs, hearing aids and screen readers that read out text.



Good example: in India, people use a phone app to report places that are hard to get into. Over 1,800 problems were sorted out by June 2025.



Good example: in the United Kingdom, the government checked public websites. More than half of the problems found were fixed.

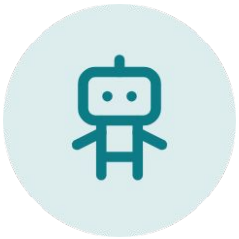


Many people cannot pay for assistive products, or get them repaired, especially outside cities.



What must happen: make assistive products cheaper and easier to get.

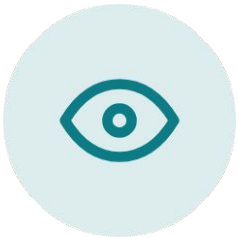
Artificial intelligence: the good things



Artificial intelligence, or **AI**, is computer technology that can do things like understand speech, read text and make decisions.



AI can turn speech into writing. This helps Deaf people.



AI can read text out loud. This helps blind people.



AI can make lessons easier to understand.



AI can help doctors find health problems, even far from a city.

Artificial intelligence: the risks



AI learns from information about people. If people with disabilities are left out of that information, AI can treat them unfairly.



For example, a computer that chooses people for jobs might reject someone because of the way they speak or move.



Many people with disabilities do not have the internet or a phone or computer that works for them.



What must happen: check AI is fair before it is used. A person must be able to check what AI decides. People with disabilities help make the rules for AI.

Organisations of persons with disabilities



OPDs know about the barriers that people with disabilities face every day.



OPDs support people, check what governments do and speak up for change.



OPDs are often asked their views too late. Many have very little money.



Good example: in Uganda, OPDs check how the government plans to spend money.



What must happen: governments give OPDs a real place in decisions and reply to what they say.

What must happen next (1)

1

Count people with disabilities

All countries use the same way to count disability. They share the results every year.

2

Follow the money

Countries show how money for people with disabilities is spent, and what changed.

3

Make services work for everyone

Hospitals, schools, buses, websites and emergency services must be accessible.

4

Learning and jobs

Check that children learn and finish school. Check that people keep their jobs and are paid fairly.

What must happen next (2)

5	**Remember people who face the most barriers** Women and girls, children, older people, people in the countryside, and people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.
6	**Include OPDs in every decision** Nothing about us without us.
7	**Work together** Commonwealth countries share what works and help countries that have less money.

The road to 2030

2027

Count

Countries share the information they have about people with disabilities.

↓

2028

Money

Countries show how much money they spend for people with disabilities. OPDs get seats on the groups that plan the SDGs.

↓

2029

Check

Hospitals, schools, transport, websites and emergency services are checked, together with people with disabilities.

↓

2030

Report

Countries show results for people with disabilities in all 8 parts of life.

This is a plan we suggest. Countries still need to agree to it.

Hard words

Accessible	Easy for everyone to get into, use or understand.
Assistive products	Things that help people do things, like wheelchairs, glasses, hearing aids and screen readers.
Artificial intelligence (AI)	Computer technology that can do things like understand speech and make decisions.
Commonwealth	A group of 56 countries that work together.
CRPD	The world agreement on the rights of people with disabilities.
Data	Information and numbers that show what is happening.
Discrimination	Treating someone unfairly because of who they are, for example because of a disability.
Inclusive education	Children with and without disabilities learning together in the same school, with support.
OPD	An organisation run by people with disabilities.
Reasonable accommodation	Changes that help a person with a disability take part, like special equipment at work.
SDGs	The 17 goals that countries agreed in 2015 to make the world better by 2030.
Washington Group questions	A short set of questions that countries can use to find out who has a disability.

Find out more



There is a full report with all the facts and where they come from. There is also a shorter **quick read** with pictures and charts.



To get a copy, or to ask a question, email Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, Vice Chair of CDPF: sruti_m@hotmail.com



Visit the CDPF website: commonwealthdpf.org



We thank all the people with disabilities and the organisations who shared their stories and ideas with us.

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