

Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum

Newsletter No 3 June 2020



Much has happened since our last Newsletter. Our Executive had an important face to face meeting in Malta towards the end of February. COVID-19 has impacted greatly upon all our lives. Many disabled comrades have been killed by the virus, millions have had their employment, livelihood, support, schooling and lives altered beyond recognition. The landscape of our operations has altered with regular online Zoom or Team meetings putting us more in touch than ever before.

Figure 1 (overleaf p.3) In the largest countries by population COVID-19 infections are either growing or at a high level. In the two weeks up to 24th June if we divide infections by all infections since the COVID outbreak began (10th to 24th June) we get a useful indicator of how much the virus is still impacting. The infection is still very much with us, with 21.5% of cases of Covid-19 worldwide being identified in the last 2 weeks. East, West and Southern African countries and Southern Asian countries are all still reporting high infection rates. In other areas which had the infection under control there are spikes e.g. Singapore.

We drafted a statement of principles and policy on COVID-19 at the beginning of April, urging our members to contact their [Governments](#). We gathered information with a survey and discussed the results at an online Summit on [24th April](#) with a further survey and Summit on [5th June](#).

Our findings can be summarised:

- Disabled People's Organisations are generally not being consulted by Government, with a few exceptions e.g. in Malaysia and Guyana.
- Lack of information access has been addressed in most countries. Stigma is still an issue.
- Lack of support for personal assistants, food, welfare, medicines and usual medical procedures.
- Unemployment and lack of reasonable accommodations, especially for self-employed.
- Lack of access to online schooling and erosion of support for disabled students.
- Higher fatality rates for disabled people in institutions, people with Learning Difficulties and those with chronic conditions who need shielding support from Government.

CDPF are concerned that the epidemic is far from over and there needs to be a much greater effort internationally to get preventative PPE and track and trace in place around the world and to deal with the additional adverse impact Government measures are having on the lives of disabled people. CDPF wrote to Prime Minister Johnson making these points.

CDPF are of the view that UK DFID and other Governments particularly Australia, Canada, India and South Africa should use their influence to get the G20, G7 meeting again. We are pushing for this. We will seek to influence other global meetings, the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council to act urgently to globally collaborate on stemming the adverse medical, economic and social consequences of the pandemic, from a human rights point of view and not least to include disabled people throughout the Commonwealth and the world.

CDPF is convening **Regional Meetings** in the next three weeks on COVID 19, its impact and what concretely needs to be done to Build Back Better. All member organisations will be contacted about these.

The regions are Caribbean

Southern Africa

West Africa

East Africa

South Asia

Pacific

Europe/Canada

These will be convened by Executive members and we are hoping a representative from each member DPO in the region will take part. We hope DPOs in Commonwealth countries, not yet members, will also take part. gemm.white@add.org.uk is arranging the technical support including captioning or signing where required.

CDPF note the launch of the **UNESCO Global Monitoring Report on Inclusive Education: All Means All** on the 23rd June and note the lack of progress in achieving SDG 4 even before COVID 19. We think that the gap between disabled and other marginalised pupils and their peers has widened, as clearly demonstrated and that much good work on developing inclusion is now at severe risk with disabled students being hardest hit. To coin the phrase at the launch we must now '**Build Back Better**'. <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2020/inclusion>



The International Disability Alliance (IDA) have also released a report on Inclusive Education, which followed 2 years of discussion of a working group that has led to IDA adopting a unified position on Inclusive Education. This has been something the sensory impairment Associations have had difficulty with in the past. Therefore this is to be welcomed. <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/news-inclusive-education-2020>

The **Building Back of Education** to get all disabled and other marginalised groups into school and achieving, will require a colossal global effort to implement SDG4. This requires accelerating Global Efforts through GLAD, World Bank, GPE and others to raise substantially more money from the corporate and philanthropic sector to develop Inclusive Education throughout the world. We need Global Collaboration urgently. As Bill Gates said about the initiative on Health **Gavi vaccine alliance which raised commitments of \$6 billion**, chaired by Prime Minister Johnson a few weeks ago "The virus doesn't care about borders. Even if wealthy nations succeed in slowing the disease over the next few months, Covid-19 could return if the pandemic remains severe enough elsewhere". We now need a similar initiative on education.

The Secretary General of the United Nations Policy Brief on Persons with Disabilities and COVID 19 issued in May was important in helping to re-orientate World Governments and NGOs on Disabled People during and after the pandemic. It identified overarching themes:

1. Ensure mainstreaming of disability in all COVID-19 response and recovery together with targeted actions.
2. Ensure accessibility of information, facilities, services and programmes in the COVID-19 response and recovery.
3. Ensure meaningful consultation with and active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all stages of the COVID-19 response and recovery.
4. Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure disability inclusion in the COVID-19 response.

Quotes from Antonio Guterres, Secretary General:

"We must guarantee the equal rights of people with disabilities to access healthcare and lifesaving procedures during the pandemic....I urge governments to place people with disabilities at the center of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts and to consult and engage people with disabilities....We have an unique opportunity to design and implement more inclusive and accessible societies."

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_persons_with_disabilities_final.pdf

On 18th May 138 countries and observers signed a Response to the Secretary-General's Policy Brief Statement <https://usun.usmission.gov/joint-statement-on-the-disability-inclusive-response-to-covid-19-towards-a-better-future-for-all/>.

This was endorsed by the following Commonwealth Governments and we should use this to push these Governments to greater efforts on behalf of disabled people. Antigua Barbuda, Australia, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Malawi, Malta, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierre Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Kingdom and Tanzania.

Commonwealth countries by population and impact of COVID-19 24th June 2020

Country	Infections notified last 14 days over all Covid notified infections.@	Percent last 14 of all	Population*	Infection rate~ Number infections divided by population	Deaths Covid-19
India	179,600/456,183	39.3	1,380,004,385.	0.03%	14,476
Pakistan	75224/188,926	39.8	220,892,340	0.08%	3,755
Nigeria	7,907/21,371	36.9	206,139,589	0.01%	533
Bangladesh	47,523/119,198	39.8	164,689,383	0.07%.	1,543
United Kingdom	17,070/306,210	5.6	67,886,011	0.45%	42,972
Tanzania	0/ 509	0%	59,734,218	0.00085%	21
South Africa	53,117/106,108	50%	59,308,690	0.18%	2102
Kenya	1,963/4,952	39.6%	53,771,296	0.009%	107
Uganda	140/797	17.6%	45,741,007	0.0017%	0
Canada	5,321/101,963	5.2%	37,742,154	0.27%	8454
Malaysia	254/8,590	2.9%	32,365,999	0.026%	121
Mozambique	304/757	40.1%,	31,255,435	0.0024%	5
Ghana	4,367/14,568	29.9%	31,072,940	0.047%	95
Cameroon	3360/12,041	27.8%	26,545,863	0.045%	308
Australia	225/7492	3%	25,499,884	0.029%	102
Sri Lanka	132/1991	6.6%	21,413,249	0.009%	132
Malawi	393/848	46.3%	19,129,952	0.0044%	11
Zambia	277/1477	18.7%	18,383,955	0.008%	18
Rwanda	335/789	41.9%	12,952,218	0.006%	2
Papua New Guinea	2/10	20%	8,947,024	0.0001%	0
Sierre Leone	322/1347	23.9%	7,976,983	0.017%	56
Singapore	3918/42432	9.2%	5,850,342	0.72%	26
New Zealand	15/1169	1.3%	4,822,233	0.02%	22
Jamaica	65/670	9.7%	2,961,167	0.02%	10
Namibia	41/72	56.9%	2,540,905	0.002%	0
Gambia	14/42	33%	2,416,668	0.0017%	2
Botswana	47/89	52.8%	2,351,627	0.0038%	1
Lesotho	13/17	76.4%	2,142,249	0.0008%	0
Trinidad& Tobago	6/123	4.8%	1,399,488	0.0088%	8
Mauritius	4/341	1.17%	1,271,768	0.027%	10
Cyprus	17/991	1.7%	1,207,359	0.08%	17
Eswatini	303/674	44.9%	1,160,164	0.058%	7
Fiji	0/18	0%	896,445	0.002%	0
Guyana	50/206	24.4%	786,552	0.026%	12
Solomon Islands			686,884		
Maldives	299/2261	13.2%	540,544	0.42%	8
Malta	33/665	4.9%	441,543	0.15%	9
Brueni	0/141	0	437,479	0.032%	3
Belize	3/23	8.6%	397,628	0.0057%	2
Bahamas	1/104	0.9%	393,244	0.026%	11
Vanuatu	0	0	307,145	0	0
Barbados	1/97	1.03%	287,375	0.034%	7
Samoa	0	0	198,414	0	0
St. Lucia	19	0	183,627	0.01%	0
Kiribati	0	0	119,449	0	0
St Vincent & Grenadines	2/29	6.8%	110,940	0.026%	0

Tonga	0	0	105,695	0	0
Seychelles	11	0	98,347	0.011%	0
Antigua & Barbuda	39/65	50.7%	97,929	0.066%	3
Dominica	18	0	71,986	0.025%	0
St Kitts & Nevis	15	0	53,199	0.028%	0
Tuvalu	0	0	11,792	0	0
Nauru	0	0	10,824	0	0
Comparators					
Brazil	416,215/1,188,631	35%	212,559,417	0.559%	52,842
USA	367,172/2,347,022	15.6%	331,002,651	0.71%	121,228
World	2,016,728/9,229,049	21.8%	7,793,775,000	1.18%	477,269

*Population <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>
@<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/geographical-distribution-2019-ncov-cases>

Anti Racism Since the very public killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis by the police, there have been world wide protests starting with ‘Black Lives Matter’ and broadening on to protests about decolonising the curriculum in Universities and Schools and more generally to representation through statues of slave owners, traders and empire builders. The history of the Commonwealth is the history of the British Empire with expropriation and slavery impacting on West Africa and the Caribbean, racial oppression and discrimination, as in Southern Africa and South Asia and ill treatment of indigenous people whether Aborigines in Australia, Maori in New Zealand, Bushmen in Southern Africa or First Peoples in Canada. The CDPF Executive Committee have approved the statement below.

Commonwealth Disabled People’s Statement on combatting Racism, Supporting Black Lives Matter and accelerating race equality and decolonisation of the media, culture and school and college curricula throughout the Commonwealth.

‘The Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum (CDPF), representing the more than 450 million disabled people in 54 countries of the Commonwealth, supports the current global protests against racism. We further recognise the impact on disabled people of the history of racism in the Commonwealth and the need to challenge the impact of colonisation, dispossession, current and historical colonial acts of oppression, and continuing injustice and inequality especially to indigenous peoples. The CDPF works to ensure that measures are in place to address these issues so that reconciliation can take place (Constitutional Object 3.i of CDPF).

We further recognise and reaffirm the Lusaka Declaration of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (1979), which helped created a climate to get rid of apartheid in South Africa but was aimed at all countries. The Declaration committed the Commonwealth:

“United in our desire to rid the world of the evils of racism and racial prejudice, we proclaim our faith in the inherent dignity and worth of the human person and declare that:

1. the peoples of the Commonwealth have the right to live freely in dignity and equality, without any distinction or exclusion based on race, colour, sex, descent, or national or ethnic origin;
2. while everyone is free to retain diversity in his or her culture and lifestyle, this diversity does not justify the perpetuation of racial prejudice or racially discriminatory practices;
3. everyone has the right to equality before the law and equal justice under the law;
4. everyone has the right to effective remedies and protection against any form of discrimination based on the grounds of race, colour, sex, descent, or national or ethnic origin” and

“We reaffirm that it is the duty of all the peoples of the Commonwealth to work together for the total eradication of the infamous policy of apartheid which is internationally recognised as a crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind and the very existence of which is an affront to humanity. We agree that everyone has the right to protection against acts of incitement to racial hatred and discrimination, whether committed by individuals, groups or other organisations.

We affirm that there should be no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, descent or national or ethnic origin in the acquisition or exercise of the right to vote; in the field of civil rights or access to citizenship; or in the economic, social or cultural fields, particularly education, health, employment, occupation, housing, social security and cultural life.

We attach particular importance to ensuring that children shall be protected from practices which may foster racism or racial prejudice. Children have the right to be brought up and educated in a spirit of tolerance and understanding so as to be able to contribute fully to the building of future societies based on justice and friendship.

We believe that those groups in societies who may be especially disadvantaged because of residual racist attitudes are entitled to the fullest protection of the law.

We recognise that the history of the Commonwealth and its diversity require that special attention should be paid to the problems of indigenous minorities. We recognise that the same special attention should be paid to the problems of immigrants, immigrant workers and refugees”.

The CDPF recognise that 40 years of free market economics, globalisation and (more recently) COVID-19 have acted to increase racism and further marginalise many social groups, especially disabled people and that false science and outdated racist tropes and stereotypes are again circulating in the media, magnified by the new, largely-uncontrolled, social media.

The CDPF calls on all civil society organisations and the leaders of Commonwealth countries to:

- Declare their support for ‘Black Lives Matter’ and promote racial and ethnic harmony
- Work with community organisations and educators to decolonise school and college curricula
- Ensure that galleries, museums and public statues recount the real history of colonialism, slavery and empire
- Promote a spirit of peace, environmental sustainability, reconciliation and collaboration
- Ensure reparations are made to indigenous and minority ethnic peoples wronged by colonialism
- Ensure laws are in place and prosecutions carried out to those who peddle race hatred
- Governments to challenge institutional racism in the police and other state agencies.
- Ongoing equality training is established for all Parliamentarians, civil servants, professionals and business managers.’

Congratulations to St Lucia on ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights Persons with Disabilities

St Lucia on 11th June became 182 state party to ratify the UNCRPD. **This only leaves 4 Commonwealth countries to ratify the Convention Botswana, Cameroon, Solomon Islands and Tonga.** Other countries to be congratulated for recently ratifying are **St.Kitts and Nevis** 17th October 2019, **Fiji** 7th June 2017, **Samoa** 2nd December 2016 and **Antigua Barbuda** 7th January 2016. Ratification is an important step that means the country undertakes to implement the UNCRPD from the moment of ratifying (Unless the place a reservation against certain articles).

Ratification is a concrete action taken by States which signals the intention to undertake legal rights and obligations contained in the Convention or the Optional Protocol. In terms of general obligations, States have to:

- adopt legislation and administrative measures to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities;
- adopt legislative and other measures to abolish discrimination;
- protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes;
- stop any practice that breaches the rights of persons with disabilities;
- ensure that the public sector respects the rights of persons with disabilities;
- ensure that the private sector and individuals respect the rights of persons with disabilities;
- undertake research and development of accessible goods, services and technology for persons with disabilities and encourage others to undertake such research;

- provide accessible information about assistive technology to persons with disabilities;
- promote training on the rights of the Convention to professionals and staff who work with persons with disabilities;
- consult with and involve persons with disabilities in developing and implementing legislation and policies and in decision-making processes that concern them.

The Convention reaffirms that persons with disabilities enjoy the same human rights as everyone. The specific rights recognized in the Convention are:

- equality before the law without discrimination
 - right to life, liberty and security of the person
- equal recognition before the law and legal capacity
- freedom from torture
- freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse
- right to respect physical and mental integrity
- freedom of movement and nationality
- right to live in the community
- freedom of expression and opinion
- respect for privacy
- respect for home and the family
- right to education
- right to health
- right to work
- right to an adequate standard of living
- right to participate in political and public life
- right to participate in cultural life



Executive Meeting Malta 24th to 27th February 2020

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/frequently-asked-questions-regarding-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html#sqc5>

Progressive Realisation Remember Article 4.2 “With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, each State Party undertakes to take measures to the maximum of its available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of these rights, without prejudice to those obligations contained in the present Convention that are immediately applicable according to international law”. **All other rights are immediately applicable on ratification.**

Implementation of UNCRPD and SDG’s. The Executive have been working on 6 policy document on policy areas identified as a priority at the Global Summit on Disability (July 2018). We spent a considerable time at our meeting in Malta shaping these and we are now moving to final drafts for approval the Executive at their meeting on 21st July.

These cover **Employment and Livelihood, Inclusive Education, Stigma, Media and Discrimination, Humanitarian Situations, Women and Girls and Assistive Technology.**

If any members of the CDPF have any good examples of the implementation of rights for disabled people in these areas could you please send them to the General Secretary by 10th July. rlrieser@gmail.com.

Rachel Kachaje Chair of CDPF gets honorary degree (Interview MW Nation 26th June 2020)

<https://www.mwnation.com/disability-rights-warrior/>

“Last November, rights activist Rachel Kachaje was happy when Stellenbosch University resolved to give her an honorary doctorate in recognition of her extraordinary contribution towards promoting interests of persons with disability.

“I felt excited to be recognised by one of the prestigious universities in South Africa. I felt proud when the vice-chancellor himself called me, saying: ‘You have been awarded an honorary degree for being outstanding in disability rights advocacy across the globe.’ I didn’t expect it,” she says



Rachel(right)with CDPF VPs Sarah Kamau (centre) and Thandi Mufilo (left) outside Malta Parliament after meeting with Minister in February.

The university honoured Kachaje for outstanding contributions in the field of disability rights advocacy in Africa and beyond. According to the citation, she emerged top of the pack in terms of championing the rights of women with disabilities, who are often left behind in Malawi’s male-dominated society. “I have helped a lot to enhance their visibility and support their empowerment,” says the founder of Disabled Women in Africa (Diwa) based in Tanzania. In 2002, Kachaje formed the organisation to campaign for the rights of women and girls with disabilities in the neighbouring country. The same year, Diwa extended its tentacles to Malawi to continue its advocacy work.

Kachaje’s fight against injustices and exclusion faced by women and girls with disability spans almost three decades. The South African university aptly describes her as a “feisty disability advocate from Malawi with over 25 years’ experience in advocating for equal opportunities and rights for persons with disabilities.” Kachaje, who lost her mobility to polio aged three, has become a fierce fighter when it comes to the rights and well-being of people with disability, Stellenbosch University states. She was appointed Minister of Disability and Elderly Affairs by Joyce Banda, the country’s first female president.

During her reign, Kachaje helped bring disability issues into the mainstream, thanks to the enactment of the Disability Act which she helped push to the forefront of national conversations. As a minister, she vehemently pushed for the advocacy for the National Disability Strategy and influenced Parliament to give the Disability Bill a nod. She recalls: “I made sure it passed into law and was gazetted. I was also drawn to influence policy reviewers for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life. In short, I have raised the voice and visibility of women with disabilities. I’m still doing it now.”

“I dedicate this award to all people with disabilities. It is their honour and I urge them to celebrate with me, come December,” says the 60-year-old activist. However, Kachaje is concerned about persistent stigma and discrimination which has a disproportionate impact on the lives of women and girls with disabilities. From her stints as a foot soldier and policymakers, she is worried that national disability policies remain “remarkably low key” amid delays to turn promises into life-changing action. She says all the talk about ending the plight of persons with disabilities “is merely a smokescreen propagated by selfish politicians” who are reluctant to make policies work. “When I look back, I shed tears,” she states. “We have good policies, but there hasn’t been much to show; there is no transformative change from the government.” Kachaje believes that Malawi, like most African governments, hardly commits itself to transforming livelihoods of people with disabilities and “make their live worthwhile lives”. “If anything, there’s just talk, talk and more talk. This talk is not sufficient. We need affirmative action from the governments to ensure that no one is left behind. We’re tired of empty rhetoric that doesn’t tick the right boxes,” she says. Malawi is a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which promotes equal treatment and empowerment of persons with disabilities. How, Kachaje feels women with disabilities are disproportionately excluded from public life and economic empowerment. Her zeal to fight for the rights of women and girls with disability across Africa keeps burning. She says: “It is a fight I will never give up until all governments walk the talk on including people with disabilities in their processes. It pains me that people with disabilities are still being left out in Covid-19 response as most information, including preventive measures, isn’t accessible for persons with disability. Some people in rural villages don’t have radio receivers to listen to Covid-19 safety measures.”

The COVID Pandemic has led to a huge increase in activity for DP0's across the Commonwealth.

Australia, Queenslanders with Disability Network: [Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness Planning for COVID-19](#)

Canada <https://www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca/covid-19-resources/>

NCPEDP in India <https://commonwealthdpf.org/covid-19-in-india-locked-down-left-behind/>

India [COVID and Women with Disabilities in India](#)

CSO Stakeholders' Forum on Mental Health – Convened by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights <https://commonwealthdpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Memoranda-on-mental-health-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic-KNCHR-and-CSOs-Forum-on-Mental-Health-08-04-2020-1-1.pdf>

COVID and Pakistan <https://commonwealthdpf.org/covid-19-and-disabled-people-in-pakistan/>

Education: Disabled Learners and COVID-19 school closures <https://commonwealthdpf.org/education-disabled-learners-and-covid-19-school-closures/>

IDA <https://youtu.be/FBoUDA3FnFY> What can social protection do for persons with disabilities in the current COVID19 crisis?

Malawi African Federation of the Deaf Blind: [COVID-19 Containment Measures Not Inclusive](#)

Nigeria Center for Citizens with Disabilities: [Coronavirus: Take Measures to Protect Yourself, CCD Advises PWDs, Laments Exclusion of PWDs in the Campaign](#)

The Albino Foundation (TAF): [COVID-19 Disability Inclusion Emergency Response](#)

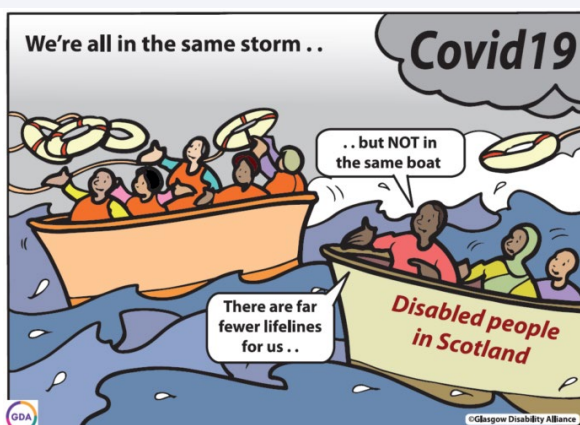
Rwanda National Union of the Deaf in partnership with local authorities: [Announcement on Enhanced #COVID19 Prevention Measures](#)

Samoa Nuanua o le Alofa (NOLA): [Information from the Samoan government on COVID 19](#)

Tanzania Disability Implementing Partners: [Disability Preventative Measures Against COVID19](#)

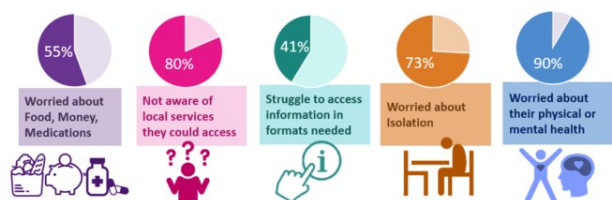
Uganda Lira District Disabled Women Association (LIDDWA): [Awareness Campaign on COVID-19 among persons with disabilities in Lira District](#)

United Kingdom, Glasgow Disability Alliance <http://gda.scot/>



Same Storm Different Boats

What We've Learned



- 1 COVID19 has supercharged inequalities already faced by disabled people
- 2 Pandemic responses have created new inequalities and left disabled people behind.
- 3 Recovery and renewal risks leaving disabled people even further behind - unless we supercharge disabled people's involvement every step of the way.

Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum www.commonwealthdpf.org 29th June 2020

