**Background to Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum**

**1**. The Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum (CDPF) was restarted in New York on 13th June 2019.The Commonwealth promotes democracy and equality across its member countries with over 2.5 billion citizens. Over 450 million are disabled people, mainly young people. The self-organisation of Commonwealth Disabled People’s Organisations and their collaboration, capacity building with each other and advocacy play a crucial role in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals. The relaunching of the Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum with the support of DPOs in the majority of Commonwealth countries, gives us a supportive and democratic structure to ensure disabled people across the Commonwealth are not left behind.

**2**.The CDPF was originally set up in 2008 and operated until 2013 but through administrative and financial problems ceased to function. At the UK Government Global Summit on Disability, in July 2018, a side meeting of 25 disabled people from 20 Commonwealth countries agreed that it was important to restart the CDPF. It was agreed that we should raise funding and hold the launch event in New York during the Conference of State Parties. The Disability Rights Fund agreed to fund us for 2 years with a fiscal partner, Action on Disability and Development. Representatives from Disabled People’s Organisations in 27 Commonwealth countries came together and adopted a revised Constitution, Action Plan and elected a new Executive Committee of 20.

**3.** **The CDPF Priorities for Work of Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum (CDPF) 2019-2020:**

1. The recruitment and active engagement of Disabled People’s Organisations across all Commonwealth Countries in the CDPF.
2. To continue to support the full ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other legally binding treaties in all Commonwealth Countries.
3. To challenge the continuing inequalities and exclusion that disabled people face throughout the Commonwealth in all areas of life. Specifically, by developing inclusive education, employment opportunities - economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, equality of livelihood, assistance in humanitarian situations, gender equality and the provision of assistive technology. To challenge stigma, discrimination and other intersectional oppressions which lead to negative attitudes, stereotypes and inequality.
4. To develop the capacity of DPOs at local, regional and national levels in each country, to understand the principles of disability equality, the requirements of the UNCRPD and SDGs, the requirements and practices of running representative DPOs, and methods for effectively influencing Government policies for Disabled People, shadow reporting and monitoring.
5. To develop National Umbrella cross impairment organisations of Disabled People which are widely geographically based and inclusive of different impairments.
6. To support, develop and promote leadership amongst young disabled people.

To achieve all the above we will:

1. Encourage and support North-South and South-South Collaboration of DPOs
2. Promote the Social Model and Human Rights Approach to Disability Equality, provide and facilitate training on these
3. Share good practice and information
4. Work with Governments, funders and donors to fund DPO projects to capacity build to implement the UNCRPD, Sustainable Development Goals and other initiatives
5. Capacity Build by developing strong representative National DPOs of cross impairment groups, which are gender responsive and reach disabled people in all areas, across each country
6. Develop the capability to gather data, research and monitor programmes and spread effective good practices
7. Encourage disabled women’s and girls’ self-organisation and make our DPOs habitable to women
8. Work for the inclusion of disabled youth and other under-represented groups and people of all ages in our organisations
9. Encourage representation on global, regional and national bodies and work with UN Development organisations, other international agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations.

4. **Disabled People** is the Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum chosen description rather than **persons with disabilities,** which features in the UNCRPD and many other international documents and is only used when not quoting texts. **Disabled people** are subject to a common oppression regardless of our different impairments.It is the barriers of environment, attitude and organisation that disable us because we have impairments. This disablement needs to be challenged by Governments with legislation, shifting practices and attitudinal change to ensure disabled people have full equality, accessibility and human rights. Impairments can include physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or psycho-social and represent a loss of function which can be mitigated by assistive devices and technology.

[See our Annual Report July 2018 to July 2020 for more detail.](http://commonwealthdpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Annual-Report-Commonwealth-Disabled-People-final.docx)

**5. COVID -19 :** In March 2020 the CRPD Executive met and adopted a series of principles and statement for our member organisations to put to their [Government’s concerning COVID-19 and Disabled People](https://worldofinclusion-my.sharepoint.com/personal/richardrieser_worldofinclusion_com/Documents/Desktop/CDPF/CDPF%20Executive/Commonwealth%20Collaboration/r%20organisations%20to%20put%20to%20their%20Government%E2%80%99s%20concerning%20COVID-19%20and%20Disabled%20People%20%5Bhttps%3A/commonwealthdpf.org/covid-19-statement/). The key principles were that :

* Disabled People must receive information about infection mitigating tips, public restriction plans and the services offered, in a diversity of accessible formats with use of accessible technologies.
* Additional protective measures must be taken for people with certain types of impairment and for many disabled people to function, they require close personal assistance from carers or family members.
* Rapid awareness-raising and training are essential for all personnel involved in the response. This must include accommodations and the support disabled people require.
* All preparedness and response plans must be inclusive of and accessible to disabled women and children.
* No disability-based institutionalization and abandonment is acceptable.
* During quarantine, support services, personal assistance, food and clean water supply, physical and communication accessibility must be ensured.
* Measures of public restrictions must consider disabled people on an equal basis with others.
* Disabled people in need of health services due to COVID19 cannot be deprioritized on the ground of their disability.
* Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) can and should play a key role in raising awareness of disabled people and their families.
* DPOs can and should play a key role in advocating for a disability-inclusive response to the COVID19 crisis to their Governments, Health Service and Communities.

**6.** CDPF have had reports from a majority of our country members, both through a questionnaire and verbally at a COVID-19 online video summit. These included the largest in terms of population India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Malaysia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Mozambique as well as reports from many smaller countries. They showed that a majority of Governments had responded well to our principles and statement, but there were major issues with roll out on the ground. The CRPD held 3 global summits, 2 rounds of regional meetings and 2 rounds of data gathering. The information of human rights abuses we gathered is matched by the much larger and more comprehensive world [Disability Rights Monitoring Report on the Impact of Covid-19](https://www.covid-drm.org/)  by 8 **International Disability Organisations.**

**7.** CDPF were most concerned that despite in many cases inclusive Commonwealth Country guidelines, disabled people are being left out of COVID 19 responses.

Further concerns were :-

1. Guidance is often not accessible in terms of Sign Language, Easy Read or Braille.
2. Disabled people in institutions were not receiving information or PPE and so where much more at risk of infection and death.
3. Where data has been gathered the death rates of disabled people is disproportionately high e.g. 3 x the rest of population in UK, 6 times for those with learning difficulty.
4. The social welfare measures for disabled people are often not reaching them on the ground such as food, water, medicines or money grants. 30-40% were often impacted. In Orissa State in India, local DPOs in a survey found that many disabled people had ​not received food or financial compensation they were entitled to ​and had no access to information about the guidelines or relief distribution centres.
5. Lockdown measures are hitting disabled people who rely on personal assistance particularly hard and PPE for those who provide personal care is in short supply or non-existent.
6. Those with psycho-social impairments such as autism, find it additionally difficult and need dispensation to go out in a safe way. Some Governments have agreed this.
7. Those with blood disorders are facing a Herculean task in getting their regular blood transfusions.
8. Closure of all rehabilitation centres has caused discontinuation of much needed physiotherapy and speech therapy.
9. Lockdown of schools lead to many disabled students not being able to access distance learning as not differentiated or equipment not available or adapted and to large drop out as schools return.
10. Violence to disabled women and girls was 2-3 times higher than the increased levels for all women and girls, because of confinement in the pandemic e.g. Uganda, Bangladesh;
11. Many disabled people, especially women lost, their livelihood, often in the informal sector.

**8.** [**Membership**](https://commonwealthdpf.org/members/) **:**We have continued to recruit more national umbrella DPOs to the CDPF. We currently have member organisations in 46 of the 54 Commonwealth Countries and 40 of these are the national umbrella Disabled People’s Organisation. In addition, we have 36 other DPOs affiliated. For a full list of membership as of the end November 2020. The CDPF has applied for accreditation to Commonwealth Secretariat and is awaiting the result.

**9. Governance** is in the hands of a 20 person [Executive Committee](https://commonwealthdpf.org/executive-committee/) elected at General Assembly. There is a [Constitution](https://commonwealthdpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Adopted-Constitution-COMMONWEALTH-Disabled-Peoples-Forum-2019-14-pt-2-1.doc) that Governs the functioning of the CDPF. It is a registered Company in London. [Action on Disability and Development International](https://www.add.org.uk/) is the financial partner of the CDPF and holds and manages its funding which has mainly been provided by 2 grants from the [Disability Rights Fund](https://disabilityrightsfund.org/).

**10. Future planned activities** : We are planning a major on-line capacity building training for January to May which will enhance the understanding of disability and advocacy in 14 sessions. Once these interactive sessions have been completed we will develop ongoing online training, DVD and manual that can be used in areas without connectivity. Developing our members capacity will enhance our involvement with CHOGM and associated forums. We have also set up an Anti-Racism Sub Committee to exam the intersectionality of Disability and Racism in its many forms and provide guidance based on their deliberations.

**The content of the course** will be focused towards CHOGM, SDG and UNCRPD implementation and is aimed at activists in DPOs:

 1. Thinking and Models of Disability and implications for Action

 2. The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals and their Impact on Disabled People’s Human Rights

3.Health - focusing on Mental Health and Covid-19

 4. Innovation - focusing on improving Access and Assistive Devices

 5. Trade- focusing on improving Livelihoods and Employment

6. Environment - focusing on the impact of Humanitarian Situations

7. Respect for Law-focusing on eliminating Stigma and Discrimination

8. Youth in collaboration with CCYDN

9. Inclusive Education

10. Women and Girls

11. Anti-Racism, Equality and Respect for Ethnic Minorities

12. Building DPOs and campaigning and increasing OUR voice

13 & 14. Influencing Government. Local/National

Contact CDPF [www.commonwealthdpf.org](http://www.commonwealthdpf.org) Gen Sec Richard Rieser rlrieser@gmail.com