

Declaration and Work Programme from the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum General Assembly 8th April 2022

1. Declaration We, the 98 delegates of 40 Commonwealth Countries, being representative Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), attending the virtual General Assembly of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum (CDPF) April 2022, applaud the amending of the constitution, the wide-ranging work reported in the Tri-Annual Report of the CDPF 2019-2022, the newly elected Executive Committee, declared on 8th April 2022 and this draft work programme for 2022-2024.

2. The Covid19 pandemic has disrupted our Work Plan, over the last 2 years and we had to make adjustments to our grants to provide a focus on Covid, develop digital training and meetings. We lobbied the UK Government and G7 to provide more funding for vaccination across the Commonwealth and the world. The pandemic has shown up the cracks in Commonwealth Countries' Human Rights implementations for their disabled populations, especially in distribution of humanitarian aid, protection of life (especially in institutions), differential access to information and health leading to higher death rates amongst disabled people.

3. Pandemic and its Legacy The pandemic is not over and CDPF commits to campaign and support:-

- a) Equalisation of funding for vaccination and health provisionally to middle and low income countries;
- b) Removal of patents so drugs and vaccines can be widely manufactured and distributed;
- c) Overhauling Disability Disaster Reduction Plans, to include health emergencies and ensure all such services are accessible;
- d) Fair distribution of food, medicines and support products and benefits to isolated disabled people;
- e) An increased effort to develop inclusive education for all disabled children, emphasising measures to encourage the re-engagement of disabled pupils and students who dropped out during lockdown.

CDPF calls for World Peace and democracy and a return to the Rules based order established After 1945. We condemn the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Human Rights abuses accompanying this. We are concerned that whenever a crisis occurs, as they do more frequently in the world today that disabled people are the first to suffer detriment and the last to have their needs met. This is illustrated in Afghanistan, Myanmar, and now with the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. We are further concerned by unnecessary restrictions placed on the free press and journalists carrying out their essential role in democracies of independently informing the public such as in India, Turkey and Saudi Arabia recently. We call for world leaders to step back from the precipice of unknow cataclysms and collaborate with each other in the Commonwealth and beyond to minimise the detriment of their policies on ordinary people, but especially Disabled People.

4. Achievements and Priorities Much progress has been made over the last 34 months since our relaunch in June 2019:-

- a) CDPF now have 95 organisations in membership in 47 Commonwealth countries;
- b) CDPF have a website www.commonwealthdpf.org and regularly produce a newsletter;
- c) CDPF developed the capacity and leadership skills of the Executive Committee, member organisations and individuals through the residential Executive in Malta February 2020, on-line events around Covid 19, side meetings at the Conference of State Parties in 2019, 2020 and 2021, Global Summit 2022, with the Commonwealth Secretariat in December 2020 and through our online capacity building training course in 2021, with 14 modules that involved more than 420 individuals in 41 countries;
- d) CDPF has developed policies on -
 - i) Inclusive Education
 - ii) Disabled Women and Girls

- iii) Employment and Livelihood
- iv) Climate Emergency, Disaster Preparedness and Humanitarian Situations
- v) Stigma, Media and Discrimination
- vi) Accessibility and Assistive Technology
- vii) Covid 19, Vaccination and Building Back Better
- viii) Black Lives Matter and Anti Racism

xi) Long term funding to develop and strengthen Disabled People's Organisations

e) CDPF are now a recognised organisation at the United Nations and an accredited organisation of the Commonwealth, as the voice of disabled people across the Commonwealth.

f) CDPF will campaign for wider access to the Health Care System whilst educating health professionals to meet our needs within a Human Rights and especially a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities perspective.

5. CDPF commits to:

a) Develop, where possible with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association policies on greater involvement of disabled people in the political process and to increase the number of disabled people in elected political positions in all levels of democratic representative structures across all Commonwealth countries.

b) Develop and popularise our policy on the Environment. With the increasing Global energy crisis it is imperative that CDPF work at all levels for green, safe and cheap energy; to reduce global warming and prevent negative human impacts on the environment, especially rising sea levels which disproportionately impact on the 32 Island countries of the Commonwealth and to support the seeking of financial compensation from the large polluting economies.

c) Develop, update, popularise and publicise our policies across the Commonwealth, at CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) and to each Commonwealth DPO/OPD and Government.

6. Our Goal We recognise much has still to be achieved to create equality for more than 450 million disabled people throughout the 54 countries of Commonwealth and to achieve the standards set in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Implementation UNCRPD/SDGs and Data Gathering We note only Cameroon, Solomon Islands and Tonga have yet to ratify and encourage them to do so, but much more needs doing to implement the UNCRPD and SDGs with relevant legislation, awareness, DPO strengthening, policy initiatives, data gathering and monitoring. CDPF commits to direct its long-term efforts to bring these about and to recruit national and regional DPOs in all Commonwealth countries. CDPF will press for all State Parties to gather disaggregated data in population censuses, household surveys and other data gathering exercises that they undertake and seek to ensure that these are in-line with the methodology developed by the Washington Group.

8. Involvement of DPO/OPD Representative Organisations Following our recent member survey and side meeting at the Global Summit 2022, our organisations and countries need core funding, human and technical resources to advise and pressure our governments to fulfil their treaty obligations. CDPF will continue to campaign at the United Nations, CHOGM and with National Government to fund us in carrying out our role as Representative DPOs, in line with Article 4 and 33 DPOs/OPDs to acquire long term core funding, so we can develop our organisation, capability to run democratic organisations.

9. Capacity Building a) CDPF reiterate our call on the international community, bilateral and multilateral donors and for Governments' support, in particular to provide the bulk of this through:-

- i. Government subventions for the running of DPOs/OPDs. Ministry of Finance should set a percentage of the Annual Budget of the country to support operations.
- ii. Government should establish Disability Fund for national and regional level operations. This can be done by setting aside a percentage of funds drawn from corporate social initiatives, particularly from the extractive and telecommunication industries or through national lotteries.

b) We need the coordination of capacity building for DPOs/OPDs across the world and coordinate all related funding

c) We need to be in the lead when working with NGO funded/organised projects (points below para.9)

d) We need on-line, computer based, learning resources, available in all modes and languages to raise awareness of disability rights

e) We need much more face-to-face training on how to successfully influence Government

f) We need access modes and methods to be available and capacity building on digitalisation and effective use of Information Technology and social media

g) We need to have regular 2 way-communication at highest level with Governments to challenge plans for implementation - Nothing About Us Without Us

h) We need to strengthen Cross Impairment National Umbrella Organisations.

Furthermore, CDPF views achieving adequate funding for DPOs from their Governments as our number 1 priority in the run up to CHOGM . This will enable disabled people to know and struggle for their Rights, build capacity to challenge and explain what is necessary for full implementation of the UNCRPD and SDGs.

10. Working with NGOs and Charities In CDPF's experience, since the adoption of the UNCRPD, Non-Governmental Organisations or Charities have increasingly sought to address some of the issues we as disabled people face, often with short-term and small scale projects. When our DPOs/OPDs are working with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or Charities, seeking to address some of the issues we, as disabled people face, they should try to get positive answers to the following questions:-

a) Do they maximise our participation and involvement through co-production, cooperation and other collaborative methods?

b) Do they accept the leadership and thinking of Disabled People's Organisations?

c) Do they do everything they can to empower and build the capacity of DPOs?

d) Do they reject the charity and medical model in favour of social/human rights model of disability?

e) Do they put their organisational, financial and training resources at the disposal of disabled people and DPOs/OPDs?

f) If the charity provides welfare services and health treatment, do they still empower disabled people they work with?

g) Do they allow disabled people and their organisations to lead, "Nothing About Us, Without Us" and not 'Steal our Clothes'?

11. Youth-work and relations with Commonwealth Children and Youth Disability Network (CCYDN) The CCYDN have had 2 representatives on the Executive since 13th June 2019. Attempts to develop a memorandum of understanding for working together did not come to fruition, though we collaborated on the Capacity building course in 2021. In January 2022 a new understanding was reached. The constitution/rules have now been amended so the CCYDN have 2 members of the Executive and an additional Youth post (aged under 28) are elected, together with an elected youth representative. Going forward the CCYDN will lead on organising disabled youth in conjunction with CDPF. In all our work we need to prioritise work with youth, recognising that two-thirds of the Commonwealth population are 30 or under.

To develop this work arrangement, which will be evaluated before next General Assembly, the following will take place:

- a) Regular monthly meetings between CCYDN and CDPF
- b) The setting up with Commonwealth Secretariat of quarterly joint meetings
- c) A standing item on Youth on CPDF Executive Agenda
- d) Support and promote the CCYDN Charter and other relevant activities
- e) Joint meetings where possible at Conference of State Parties, CHOGM and Commonwealth Games
- f) A joint face to face meeting of both Executives in Mauritius in Spring 2023 allowing for separate meetings and joint events
- g) CDPF will have a recruitment drive of Disabled Youth DPOs and encourage all members to focus on building up participation of disabled youth
- h) Joint efforts to train and empower young disabled activists to be leaders in the Commonwealth Disabled People's Movement
- i) Prioritise inclusive learning and training for disabled youth to develop the skills and knowledge for employment and to promote their employment.

12. Encourage Disabled Women's and Girls' self-organisation CDPF encourages our DPOs to champion sex equality, to be habitable to women and operate a policy of equal representation of men and women. CDPF seek to achieve this by:-

- a) Setting up of the Women and Girls' Committee of the Executive
- b) Ensuring a standing slot of the Executive agenda
- c) Regional and global Disabled Women and Girls meetings and training
- d) Regularly producing a CDPF Women's Newsletter to share information and good practice.
- e) Strengthen and promote Disabled Women and Girls networks Globally and across the Commonwealth.

13. CDPF will continue to challenge the 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, impact of the climate crisis, gender equality, access and the provision of assistive technology, increased involvement of disabled people in the political system, to challenge racism, stigma, discrimination and other intersectional oppressions which lead to disabled negative attitudes, stereotypes and inequality. We will put particular emphasis on organising, representing and challenging negativity towards those with intellectual impairments, on the autistic continuum, with mental health issues, DeafBlindness and other disabled isolated, and indigenous people. Recognising the continued low rate of compliance of member countries in the ratification of the Treaty of Marrakesh, the CDPF will undertake to lobby Governments of member countries to address this area of concern over the coming period. Facilitating the print disabled with access to printed material in an accessible format which will further bolster the moves to enhance the inclusive education opportunities.

14. Recruitment and Growth To achieve the above the key is the continued recruitment and active engagement of Disabled People's Organisations across all Commonwealth Countries and in the CDPF. We are committed to improving the position of disabled people across the Commonwealth. To this end CDPF will continue to develop the capacity of DPOs at local, regional and national levels in each country, so they and their members 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. CDPF will seek to:-

- a) Develop National Umbrella cross impairment organisations of Disabled People which are widely geographically based and inclusive of different impairments
- b) Encourage the recruitment of organisations that are underrepresented in the Disability Movement, such as those with intellectual disability, psycho-social, linguistic, cultural minorities or DeafBlind people

- c) Disseminate CDPF training materials developed during the 2021 Disability Equality Capacity Building Course, organise training the trainer events and work with selected countries to educate and interface more effectively with their Governments
- d) Encourage and support North-South and South-South Collaboration of DPOs
- f) Promote the Social Model and Human Rights Approach to Disability Equality in all our activities, sharing good practice and information
- g) Develop the capability to gather data, research and monitor programmes, spread effective good practices and get our Governments to do likewise, utilising the Washington Group approach in gathering data
- h) Encourage representation on global, regional and national bodies and work with UN Development organisations, other international agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations.

15. Organisational Growth From June 2019 to the present has been a period of emergence for CDPF. We are very grateful to Action on Disability and Development for being our fiscal partner and to Disability Rights Fund for being our main funder. Now we need to consolidate and set the organisation on a firm financial and organisational footing over the next three to five years. These will include:-

- a) Setting up as a charitable organisation in the UK
- b) Setting up our own bank account and financial systems
- c) Employing staff
- d) Developing the use of social media and other forms of communication
- e) Having a functioning registered Office
- f) Having regional coordinators and desks
- g) Seeking a number of long-term funders
- h) Gaining and managing project grants to achieve many of the above actions.

The CPDF will develop a Resource Mobilisation Strategy to approach new funders, sources of support and grant givers to secure sufficient funding to deliver the objectives in this Declaration. As part of this process the F&GP committee will undertake a SWAT analysis and training and capacity build in order to deliver this strategy.

Adopted, as amended, unanimously by the Virtual General Assembly of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum on 8th April 2022