

NEWSLETTER NO 10, MAY 2023

COMMONWEALTH DISABLED PEOPLE'S FORUM

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Ahead of the Coronation, Leaders of Commonwealth member states met with His Majesty King Charles III at Marlborough House, the Headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Photo Credit: Commonwealth Secretariat

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UPDATE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Dear Colleagues, I hope all is going well for you in these difficult times.

Firstly, I would like to welcome the DPO for the Bahamas, bringing our membership to 50 out of 56 Commonwealth countries.

We were well represented in March 2023 by Ms. SARAH KAMAU (CDPF Chair) and Mrs. GAUDENCE MUSHIMIYIMANA (CDPF Women Rep) at the UN Committee on the State of Women where they [presented](#) the outcome of CDPF [Women's Survey](#) that 34 CDPF member organisations responded. These outcomes were then discussed at CDPF Women's Forum and led to the presentations and a [CDPF Women's Declaration](#).

CDPF has been talking to UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UKFCDO) about their Strategy for Women and Girls 2023-2030. We were critical of the few mentions of disabled women and girls. We have been discussing with them developing a project for disabled girls in several Sub-Saharan African countries. This will be aimed at grass roots DPOs, to address empowerment, inclusive education and eliminating violence. We are at early days in scoping this initiative but would be interested to hear from national DPO's that have the capacity to manage this project and hold the funds.

On 30 January 2023, we published our [Manifesto for Disabled Youth](#) at the launch event of the Commonwealth Year of Youth. The [Secretary General, Patricia Scotland](#) mentioned our initiative in her speech (see video 01.16.45 - 01.37.45) at this event, in particular mention of CDPF Manifesto for Youth (see video 1.34.55). Commonwealth Day celebrations were held at the Westminster Abbey on 13 March 2023 and the CDPF was represented by self.

We have secured a grant from Disability Rights Fund (principle funder for CDPF since reestablishment in 2019). The grant is limited and provides some resources to concentrate fund raising, as there are unlikely to be renewals of this particular funding stream. The grant does allow us to organise two initiatives around Commonwealth Year of Youth.

Firstly, we wish to build on our [14 Module CDPF On-line Disability Equality Capacity-building Course-2021](#), by recruiting to a 06 Module CDPF On-line Disabled Youth Training for Leadership course between July 2023 and January 2024. This will consist of online lectures, course work and interactive seminars. Recruitment will be for disabled young people aged 30 or under, who are members of affiliated DPOs of CDPF and are recommended (stamped) by their umbrella DPOs of their country. Participants have to start by completing the 14 Module On-line Training Course and then be prepared to put in the time to follow and participate in the new 06 Module On-line Training Course. Please publicise this course to your members and member organisations.

We will send out application forms in the next two weeks and these needs to be returned, duly endorsed, by June, 18th 2023. The course will be in English and captioned (signed if necessary).

Our second initiative is to hold a series of regional seminars for current leaders of DPOs to improve involvement and participation of disabled young people aged 30 and under and to improve involvement of Women in our DPOs and activities. These will be held in September and October 2023. Member organisations will be asked to apply the ideas that results from the seminars. Then a further series of Regional meetings will be held in January/ February 2024 to draw together what has worked to increase the profile of involvement of Youth and Women in our DPOs and guidance will be agreed.

We are focussing on holding 03 side meetings at the Conference of State Parties of UNCRPD (now 188) in New York in the second week of June. One will be on the Disabled Youth Manifesto, the second on Disabled Women and Sexual and Reproductive Health. Both of these are sponsored by UKFCDO. A third meeting will be held with Kenyan and Indian Governments on evaluating the collaboration of DPOs and State Parties to implement elements of the UNCRPD. We will also hold a meeting of CDPF members who are in New York on morning of 16th June 2023. If you are likely to be there, contact rlrieser@gmail.com for more details.

We are setting up a Climate Emergency and Disabled People working group. If you have particular individuals with expertise and interest in this, please nominate them to take part and send their details to rlrieser@gmail.com.

Best wishes, **RICHARD RIESER**, CDPF General Secretary

"I have (just) committed myself in Westminster Abbey in a service of 3,000 to pledge to uphold and serve the values and fellowship of the Commonwealth. I did this on behalf of CDPF. Let us all commit to establishing Disability Equality across the Commonwealth this year" - RichardRieser, 14 March 2023.



Photo Credit: Richard Rieser

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW67) CONFERENCE 03 – 09 MARCH 2023 UN HEADQUARTERS NEW YORK, USA

NOTE: Photo Credit for this article: Sarah Kamau & Gaudence Mushimiyimana

INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (CDPF Women Forum) participated during the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67). The CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946. It is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The theme for CSW67 was ***“Innovation and Technological Change Education in the Digital Age – Progress towards Gender Equality”***. The conference took place at UN Headquarters from 6-17 March 2023 in New York City, United States of America.

CDPF Chair SARAH KAMAU and CDPF Executive (Women Rep) MUSHIMIYIMANA GAUDENCEE attended the conference with support from the Commonwealth Gender Section. Their participation went a long way in imparting knowledge and skills gained will help in improving the implementation of laws, policies, programs and strategies in the Commonwealth countries and will ensure inclusion of disability rights for women and girls with disabilities are brought to the decision making tables.

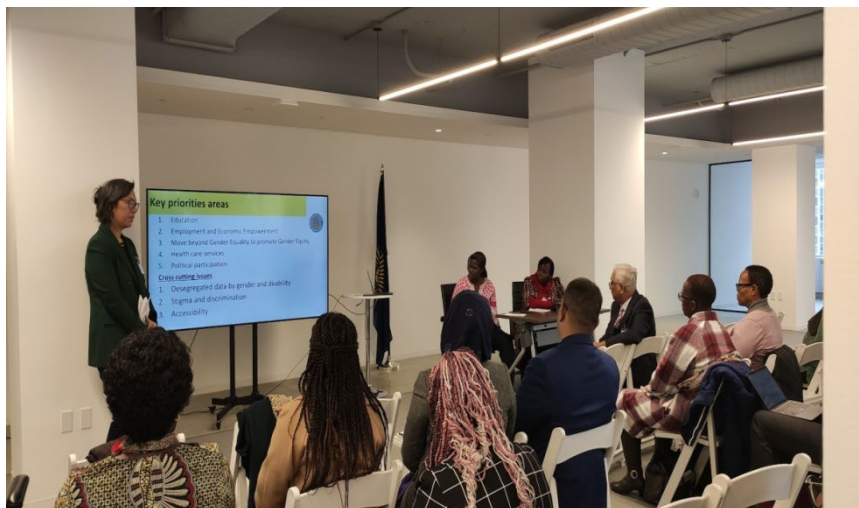
CONFERENCE SESSIONS

The two women representatives of CDPF (Women Forum) attended sessions of the side events and amplified the voice of disabled women and girls for inclusion in the digital age. The awareness and sensitization levels on disability rights, were raised among those who attended the meetings. This was also an opportunity to raise awareness on disability inclusion with particular attention to intersection of gender and disability leading to invisibility of girls and women with disabilities in general and women's spaces. The situation of girls and women with disabilities as well as persisting digital challenges for entrepreneur women and girls with disabilities was presented.



During the National Women Machinery meeting, a presentation from findings from a virtual survey on the priority areas of women and girls around the commonwealth countries was presented.

These included: Move beyond Gender Equality to promote Gender Equity, Education, Employment and Economic Empowerment, Health care services and political participation along with cross cutting of accessibility of information and communication, disaggregated data by gender and disability, stigma and discrimination on disabled people especially women and girls with disabilities.



Presenters at this workshop included Commonwealth Secretariat, Government of Seychelles, Lesotho and Bahamas as well as other Commonwealth Secretariat partners' organizations like No More Foundation and Cherie Blair Foundation and Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum.

The deliberations majored on Gender Equality in the Commonwealth, Economic Costing of Violence against Women and Girls, 13th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (13WAMM); while partner organizations presented what their organizations were doing, gender-based violence and digital age – progress towards gender equality.

Discussion during the side event ***"Bridging the Digital Gap for female owned businesses in Developing Economies"*** organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat as well as the meeting of the commonwealth women in business forum, CDPF Women representatives made clear statement about issues affecting girls and women with disabilities in business in a digital world.





CDPF Chair SARAH KAMAU recalled to the stakeholders the challenges of inaccessible online platform coupled with limited level of educations for girls and women with various disabilities to access information and business opportunities.

Among many other events, CDPF Women Forum representatives actively participated in an ***“Informal consultation with Women’s rights groups to inform the UN Global digital compact”***, held at the One UN Plaza and Organization of UN Women Generation Equality, Alliance for Universal Digital Rights and other partners, the event brainstormed about digital challenges and solutions for girls and women within all their diversities to safely enjoy their rights free from any online violence. Through the group’s discussions, CDPF women representatives managed to bring on the table issue of digital gap for girls and women with various types of disabilities and this was clearly understood and put on the papers with needed follow up with Generation Equality contacts for further discussions and influence for tangible disability inclusion actions in the global digital compact.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND WAY FORWARD;

- Governments should look at disability rights as human rights and ensure support is provided to disabled people at all levels.
- Women and girls with disabilities, who are disproportionately included, should be at decision making tables for their rights not to be forgotten and left out on an equal basis.
- Collaborative opportunities were discussed with No More, Commonwealth Business Women Entrepreneurs, Generation Equality and Bahamas government representative who expressed their interest to collaborate with CDPF and their local umbrella organizations in their work activities to ensure meaningful participation of disabled people.

- Follow up contact with the Bahamas team as well strategizing on how to get disability equality and rights taken on board during the planning of 13 WAMM in August 2023 is relevant. To this extent possible CDPF and the Bahamas team should work together to carry out a survey on priority issues for women and girls with disabilities from Bahamas to be presented during 13 WAMM meeting. The Bahamas team committed to register as CDPF members.
- Visibility of CDPF should be enhanced for the forum to be recognized and provide technical expertise for effective advocacy to inclusion and representation of disabled people. Part of the visibility is for CDPF to share its work including the networks with local membership organizations and to share experiences and ways in which its members forge alliances and collaborations to impact life of disabled people across the commonwealth.

ENCOUNTERED CHALLENGES

- Inclusion of disabled people themselves in decision making position before, during and after planning meetings. This poses the challenge of aspects of disability being left out thus making them struggle to fit in or unable to participate altogether.
- Funding availability to fully support reasonable accommodation for participants with extra disability related needs.
- Inadequacies in sensitisation and disability rights awareness levels and how to fully include disabled people in all aspects to ensure their full and effective participation on an equal level with others.
- Accessibility to information and to the environment is not fully inclusive from the onset.
- Disability related costs to accessing information, environment, waivers, tax relief, are not consciously factored into policies, programmes and projects from the initial planning stage.
- Logistics information not being communicated before on meetings and accommodation expectations poses a challenge to appropriate planning.

The CDPF Women Forum is thankful to the Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Department commitment to champion inclusion of disabled people with particular attention to women and girls not only by supporting the CDPF Women Forum to attend the CSW67 but also putting disability inclusion on the agenda of 13WAMM in Bahamas August 2023 while creating an opportunity to interact directly with the Ministers in charge of Gender across the commonwealth countries. CDPF, which has United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) as its national umbrella representative organization from Kenya, is grateful for the support it gave for CDPF Chair Ms. Sarah Kamau to participate in the conference.

SARAH KAMAU - CDPF Chairperson & United Disabled Persons Kenya

GAUDENCE MUSHIMYIMNA -CDPF Executive & Women Representative andRwandan Organisation of Women with Disabilities

DIGITAL SKILLS FOR DISABLED YOUTH

As a self-taught software programmer with disabilities and a youth representative of CDPF, I have seen first-hand the transformative power of digital skills for people with disabilities. In today's world, digital literacy has become an essential skill for all, but it is even more critical for people with disabilities. Digital skills open up a world of opportunities for people with disabilities, from on-line learning and employment to social inclusion and community engagement.

My story is an excellent example of how digital skills can change the lives of people with disabilities. I did not have formal education in programming, but I used my vacation time after high school to learn programming skills. Since then, I have deployed several live projects on-line and even landed a paid contract to work on an e-learning platform for deaf and blind students in Uganda. With the help of assistive technology, such as screen readers, I can access and use computers with ease, and my skills have provided me with financial independence and increased opportunities for personal and professional growth.

The benefits of digital skills for people with disabilities go beyond personal success stories. The world is becoming increasingly digital, and people with disabilities risk being left behind if they do not have the skills to keep up. This is especially true in low and middle-income countries where exclusion from education, training, employment, health, and well-being is increasing, and the number of disabled children and youth with long-term impairments in the Commonwealth is growing. The World Health Organization now identifies 16% of the population as disabled people, 1.3 billion people, with an estimated 230-250 million disabled children and youth in the Commonwealth alone. These numbers are a stark reminder of the urgent need to make digital skills accessible to people with disabilities.

Stakeholders at all levels must work together to make digital skills accessible to people with disabilities. Governments must prioritize digital inclusion policies that promote access to technology, infrastructure, and assistive devices. Educational institutions must develop inclusive learning environments that provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Private companies must create accessible digital products and services that do not exclude people with disabilities. Civil society organizations, like CDPF, must continue to advocate for the rights and needs of people with disabilities and promote their active participation in digital society.

2023 a year dedicated to youth-led activity for sustainable and inclusive development, and it is an excellent opportunity to renew and strengthen our commitments to youth engagement and empowerment. As we work towards a renewed vision of the Commonwealth, founded on the principles and values of the Commonwealth charter, let us remember that inclusion and diversity must be at the forefront of our efforts.

Let us work with all partners and stakeholders to build a fairer, more sustainable, and more prosperous future for all, including people with disabilities.

Digital skills have the potential to change the lives of people with disabilities, providing them with greater opportunities for personal and professional growth and increasing their access to the digital world. I urge my fellow people with disabilities to embrace digital skills and seize the opportunities they provide. Together, we can build a more inclusive and prosperous future for all.

KIHEMBO WILBERT - CDPF Executive Officer (Youth Rep) & Voice of Youth Uganda.

COMMUNIQUE OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING “DELIVERING A COMMON FUTURE: CONNECTING, INNOVATING, TRANSFORMING”

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION - Cyberspace

102. Heads recognised that Commonwealth governments must work proactively to ensure that technological progress promotes social and economic equalities. To advance SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), they urged member countries to prioritise secure, inclusive, and affordable access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) including the provision of universal and affordable broadband. Heads also underscored the need for governments to invest in critical infrastructure for digital access.
103. Heads reaffirmed their commitment to equipping citizens, especially women, girls, young people, and others facing inequality, with the skills necessary to fully benefit from innovation and opportunities in cyberspace. They committed to ensuring inclusive access for all, eliminating discrimination in cyberspace, and adopting online safety policies for all users, especially children, whilst upholding human rights.
104. Heads renewed their commitment under the 2018 Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, to a free, open, inclusive, and secure cyberspace. They urged member countries to fully respect human rights online, as well as offline, and to promote practices that build trust and confidence in digital systems with measures such as: information sharing efforts amongst national Computer Emergency Response Teams; cyber capacity building; having effective data protection and privacy laws; countering online disinformation, misinformation and abuse or advocacy of hate, constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence; and stepping-up enforcement, alignment and development of cybercrime laws devoid of online/offline racial and hatred incitement, by enhancing international cooperation to tackle existing and emerging cybercrime. In this regard, Heads supported UN efforts to develop a comprehensive international convention on cybercrime.

Building a Commonwealth Innovation Ecosystem

107. Heads noted the launch and development of the Commonwealth Innovation Hub as a knowledge sharing digital platform. Heads underscored the urgency and necessity of scaling up innovation, data science, and digital transformation initiatives. They urged member countries to bridge the digital divide within and among countries through transformational partnerships, and to adopt an open, citizen-centric, and evidence-based approach to developing a Commonwealth innovation ecosystem that is inclusive and equitable and delivers sustainable development for all.

COUNTRIES CANNOT AFFORD THEIR SDG 04 - QUALITY EDUCATION BENCHMARKS

Without \$97 billion in extra funding per year, low- and lower-middle-income countries will not be able to meet their 2030 National SDG04 benchmark targets. This is more than 10 times the external resources currently available. The new findings were presented at the education and finance ministers' high-level panel took place on 13 April 2023 as part of the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings in Washington D.C. The event focused on raising education spending, while ensuring policy reforms to increase efficiency of the money spent. New research published by the [Global Education Monitoring \(GEM\)](#) report shows that:

- There is a need to triple the number of pre-primary teachers in low-income countries and double them in lower-middle income countries by 2030 to achieve national targets, the report says.
- Around one third of the gap could be filled if donors fulfilled their aid commitments and prioritized basic education in the poorest countries.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CDPF ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Our DPO members need to redouble their efforts to push for the inclusion of all learners in Education policy development and implementation. CDPF produced an [Inclusive Education Policy](#) paper in 2020. [Module 09](#) of our 14 Module CDPF On-line Disability Equality Capacity-building Course – 2021 provides a firm foundation for the arguments for inclusive education and a guide to the practical measures that need to be taken by state parties.

There are local Inclusion initiatives funded by NGOs or international donors, with the exception of India and their SSA, there are no attempts at national implementation. We need to build campaigns of parents, disabled people and teachers and educationalists to bring these local schemes to national level and this will require a greater proportion of Government spending to be focused on developing inclusive education system. The following would be some of the main points to make in these campaigns.

- All Governments must adopt a 10 year Plan to develop Inclusive Education for All children and young disabled people
- Ring fence funding for Access program, Reasonable Accommodations and Support
- All Non-disabled children and young people should be involved and receive Disability Equality and Anti Bullying Training
- This is a fundamental Human Rights Issue
- Challenge complacency, reaction and corruption
- Every local area needs an inclusion resource centre
- Funding must be locally controlled and globally provided
- Must be a bottom up movement
- Challenge Special Needs and the Medical Model Paradigm at all levels of education and replaced with Inclusive Pedagogy
- Must be Twin Track approach
- Need high tech and low tech solutions
- All teachers must receive Disability Equality and Inclusion training both In-Service and Pre-Service
- To develop inclusion we need a democratic inclusive movement.
- Will be of benefit to all and to society in developing the SDGs!

RICHARD RIESER, CDPF General Secretary & CEO- World of Inclusion Ltd, UK

“NOTHING IS MORE FASHIONABLE THAN INCLUSIVITY” - SINÉAD BURKE

Sinéad Burke Introduces British Vogue’s May 2023 Cover Stars.

Photo Credit: Adama Jalloh



The May edition of Vogue edited by Edward Enninful has put Disabled people front and centre, with five distinct covers featuring Selma Blair, Aaron Rose Philip, Ellie Goldstein, Justina Miles, and Sinéad Burke who all identify as Disabled. The magazine features articles by and about 19 Disabled people and their professional endeavors, including creating accessible fashion lines.



Vogue editor Edward Enninful has also gone public on his hidden disabilities – visual and hearing impairments and a blood disorder. He told the BBC’s Martha Kearney: my *"tenure here at Vogue has always been about inclusivity and diversity... people forget how hard it is for the disabled community"*.



"I felt real pride that people can actually speak up about disabilities and not have to hide it and how it impacts them".

"Diversity, inclusivity - it's all under the same roof you know," he said.

"Shining a light on people who have always been othered, or seen as outside of, has always been a mission of ours at Vogue, so this really is a part of that." [Read the full article.](#)



1. A new [Vanguard of Disabled Talent Covers British Vogue's May 2023 Issue](#) By Edward Enninful.
2. It took [40 years of silent pain for Selma Blair to receive her multiple sclerosis diagnosis](#). Now, she's done staying quiet By Frances Ryan.
3. Model [Aaron Rose Philip is on a mission to level fashion's playing field](#) By Sinéad Burke.
4. ["I wanted to match Rihanna's power": ASL performer Justina Miles](#) on going viral at the super bowl By Justina Miles.
5. My [goal was always to be on the cover of vogue": Model Ellie Goldstein](#) Fashion industry at her feet By Lottie Jackson.

BENEFITS FOR BOND VILLAINS

Villains, vigilantes, victims

“Were they not successfully self-employed, most of Bond’s enemies would likely qualify for disability benefits.” An essay on the [disabled villain](#) trope explores how narratives use disability: “outer difference [shows] inner monstrosity.”

An [open letter](#) to the entertainment industry shows how, since the beginning of cinema, movies have cast scarred characters in versions of the roles of villains, vigilantes, victims, and outcasts. The letter asks for “real, human stories that involve the communities they’re characterizing [because this can] prevent unnecessary harm and marginalization.”

Meanwhile, in Hollywood, creators are asking that shows hire [disabled writers](#). They point to an interesting dynamic where the industry hires consultants to advise on disability but that this is “often done instead of — not in addition to — hiring disabled writers, directors and producers to lead these projects”.

As disabled people, it's tough for us to navigate these concerns about representation. Practical [everyday advice](#) comes from satire news-site Squeaky Wheel on how we can be less “inspirational disabled” and more “badass disabled”, “like the hot people with mobility aids from the woke TV commercials.”

“God has told me that you will transform”

In [Cameroon](#), [Kesah Princely explores](#) how churches can be a “breeding ground” of exclusion for the exclusion of disabled people. One pastor assumed he was a beggar just because he was blind. Disabled people are seen as “sites of potential healing” rather than full individuals.

In [South Africa](#), Nafisa Mayat explores [disability in Islam](#). She similarly acknowledges “a huge gap in the Muslim community around understanding disability, and broadly within other faith-based organisations too”. But she also points to the importance of religion and spirituality for us to make sense of the world and how research on both disability and religion have neglected these relationships. “In the *Qu’ran* there is no discrimination around disability”.

Meanwhile, in the [United States](#), where 19 states still allow corporal punishment in schools, Oklahoma [tried to pass a bill](#) to bar schools spanking disabled children. It was voted down, including by a lawmaker who quoted from the Bible, Proverbs 29 ‘The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame’.

How Judy changed the world (TRIBUTE TO JUDITH HEUMAN)

Our movement is still reeling from the [passing of Judy Heumann](#). The boss of the Ford Foundation [shares](#) how Ford was one of the many organizations Judy influenced, through her advocacy, connections and generosity: “*This is how Judy changed the world: Person by person, from the corridors of New York City’s public schools to the streets of Berkeley to the halls of power around the globe.*”

Michael Ashley Stein, of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, [paid tribute](#) to the “world’s most significant disability rights champion”: ‘*Ultimately and thoroughly, Judy was a teacher. Completely fearless, she eagerly approached anyone at any time whenever she spied a “teachable moment.” Judy would speed up to them in her power wheelchair and insist, “Excuse me, can we talk for a minute?” What followed was invariably a polite, concise, but direct lesson on how that individual could alter their behaviour to be more equitable, if not disability-empowering, in similar circumstances in the future. “Next time, when you . . .” No one was exempt from receiving her sagacious advice.*’

BRIEF ON THE 16COSP: WHAT'S SIGNIFICANT THIS YEAR?

Sixteenth Session of the Conference of State Parties (16COSP) to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) will take place at the United Nations Headquarters, New York 13-15 June 2023. This year, the Overarching Theme of the Conference is ***HARMONIZING NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES WITH THE CRPD: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES.***

There are another 03 Sub Themes namely; 01: Ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities, 02: Digital accessibility for persons with disabilities and 03: Reaching the under-represented groups of persons with disabilities. Keeping in line with the format and the tradition; this year also has the following program lineup where more than 45 formal/informal side events are also scheduled so far.

12 June 2023 from 10.00 am to 02.00 pm (Conference Room 04) **Civil Society Forum:**

13 June 2023 from 10.00 am to 01.00 pm & 03.00 pm to 06.00 pm (General Assembly Hall)

Opening of the Conference of States Parties (item 1) Chaired by the UN Secretary General.

Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (a) **General debate** (Co-chaired by Mr. Tasos Kezas, Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Greece, Vice President of the Conference and Ms. Savaira Tinaivunivalu, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation).

14 June 2023 from 10.00 am to 01.00 pm (Conference Room 04) Round-table discussions 01:

Ensuring equal access to and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health services for PwDs (co-chaired by Mr. Tasos Kezas, Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Greece, Vice President of the Conference and Ms. Savaira Tinaivunivalu, Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation).

14 June 2023 from 03.00 pm to 06.00 pm (Conference Room 04) Round-table discussions 02:

Digital accessibility for persons with disabilities (Co-chaired by Mr. Sugeeshwara Gunaratna, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka and Vice President of the Conference and Mr. Mohammed Ali Loutfy, Director for Capacity Building and Advocacy, G3ICT).

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15 June 2023 from 10.00 am to 01.00 pm (Conference Room 04) Round-table discussions 03:

Reaching the under-represented groups of persons with disabilities (Co-chaired by: Ms. Iris González de Valenzuela, Director of the National Secretariat on Disability (SENADIS), Panama, Vice President of the Conference and Ms. Ana Ivonia, The Leprosy Mission, Timor-Leste).

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15 June 2023 from 03.00 pm to 06.00 pm (Conference Room 04)

Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (c) **Interactive dialogue with the United Nations system on the implementation of the Convention** chaired by H.E Mr Tarek Ladeb, President of the Conference.

[Official UN Official Web Page](#) for detailed information.

[Brief Details of Side Events](#) from 12 – 16 June 2023.

[Detailed Description of Side Events](#) (with designated speakers) from 12 – 16 June 2023

Note: Tick off the DETAIL button to read the detailed descriptions.

In autumn 2021, we had a four page article about [CDPF](#) in [The Parliamentarian](#), the Journal of Parliaments of the Commonwealth, and in 2022 chaired a side meeting for them at the 2nd Global Summit on Disability about electoral participation. In August 2022, STEVE ESTEY, CDPF Executive attended a day of the CPA Annual Meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. We have been having discussions about how we can collaborate with them more, especially with their Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Network.

[The Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities](#) (CPwD) network has been established *in* recognising of the need to increase representation of persons with disabilities in political institutions and to facilitate activities and programmes to champion and increase the representation of persons with disabilities in Commonwealth Parliaments and to work towards the mainstreaming of disability considerations in all CPA activities and programmes, with the mission ***“To encourage Commonwealth Parliaments to enable effective and full participation of persons with disabilities at all levels”***.

Recently, CDPF General Secretary met the Chair of CPwD Network, Hon. LAURA KANUSHU, Member of the Parliament of Uganda who is an old friend of CDPF, having been a youth representative at CDPF founding meeting in 2008 and subsequently on the Executive. The discussion was about what had happened to CDPF up to 2013 and the progress since we restarted in 2019 and exploring the ways of working together and lead to setting up a triumvirate of CDPF, CPwD and Commonwealth Human Rights Institutes (HRI) to push forward implementation of the UNCRPD in line with Article 32 (International Cooperation) and Article 33 (National Implementation & Monitoring) which mentions Parliaments, Independent Focal Points (HRI) and DPOs.

The main focus of CPA around disability has been issuing grants to Parliaments to make them more accessible. For example this year CPA gave grants:-

CPA Parliament	Activity
Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase accessibility of Parliament Buildings by Parliamentarians and the public. • More persons with disability observing the Sitting of the House
Monserrat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will enable more individuals with audio or learning difficulties to have a great opportunity to see what is happening in the Assembly and engage in its proceedings.
St Helena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramps to enable access as elected Speaker and Deputy who are both Wheelchair users.

66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) is scheduled to be held in Ghana from 30 September – 06 October 2023 and CDPF is exploring the ways of CDPF contribution and will also be contacting Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD) about this.

CPwD Network does not have details of all Parliamentarians who consider themselves as disabled people. Therefore, we hereby request member organisations to send the details of disabled parliamentary representatives such as the nature of their impairment and whether male or female to CDPF General Secretary by email rlrieser@gmail.com.

UN CHARTER BODY / TREATY BODY REVIEW OF COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

CRPD COMMITTEE STATE PARTY REVIEWS OF COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	STATE PARTY REPORT DUE/SUBMITTED	REVIEW DATE	SESSION
Canada	11-Apr-20 / 07-Nov-20		
India	1-Nov-25		
Ghana		2024 or later	
Kenya		11 – 15 Sept 2023	18 Per Session WG
Malawi		14 Aug- 08 Sept 2023	29 th Session
Maldives		2024 or later	
Malta	10-Oct-26		
Mauritius		2024 or later	
Mozambique		2024 or later	
Namibia		2024 or later	
New Zealand	24-Aug-22		
Pakistan		2024 or later	
Rwanda	14-Jan-23		
Siera Leone		2024 or later	
Sri Lanka		2024 or later	
Trinidad and Tobago		2024 or later	
Tuvalu	23-Nov-26	2024 or later	
Uganda	25-Oct-22	2024 or later	
United Kingdom	8-Jul-23		
Vanuatu	23-Nov-26		
Zambia		2024 or later	

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS OF COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	UPR SESSION	REVIEW DATE
Australia	43rd Session	3-May-23
Bangladesh	44th Session	13-Nov-23
Barbados	43rd Session	5-May-23
Botswana	43rd Session	3-May-23
Cameroon	44th Session	14-Nov-23
Canada	44th Session	10-Nov-23
Tonga	43rd Session	1-May-23
Tuvalu	44th Session	8-Nov-23

UPCOMING EVENTS

CDPF SIDE EVENTS DURING THE 16COSP 13 - 15 JUNE 2023

SIDE EVENT 01: EVALUATING DPO/OPD COLLABORATION WITH STATE PARTIES ON IMPLEMENTING ELEMENTS OF THE UNCRPD ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Tuesday, Jun 13 2023 from 06.30pm – 07.45pm (EST) Conference Room 07 (In Person + UN Webcast)

Organizer: Government of Kenya, Government of India with Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, Action on Disability and Development International and Disability Rights Fund.

Chair: Richard Rieser—CDPF General Secretary & World of Inclusion Ltd, UK.

Speakers so far: Rajesh Yadav -Joint Secretary Dept for Employment PWD, Government of India; Moses Kamau - Social Protection Department, Ministry of Labour, Kenya; Sarah Kamau—CDPF Vice Chair & United Disabled Persons of Kenya; Kerryann Ifill—CDPF Vice Chair & President Barbados Council of the Disabled; Speaker from Disability Rights Fund; Speaker ADD International; Steve Estey—CDPF Executive & Inclusion Canada; Dr. Sruti Mohapatra—CDPF Vice Chairs & Swabhimani, India & Vice Chair DPI; Patience Ogolo Dickson —CDPF Executive & Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative (AWWDI), Nigeria.

186 countries and 53/56 countries have ratified the UNCRPD. We find countries at all stages of implementing the Convention so as to make real positive changes to the lives of their disabled citizens. The country report concluding comments of UNCRPD Committee chart some progress, but everywhere has a long way to go.

The purpose of the meeting is to demonstrate when DPOs are closely involved in discussions with their state parties more progress can be made in developing statutes, policies and practices following the fundamental paradigm shift that is necessary from the traditional/medical model to a social model human rights approach. Speakers will illustrate this with examples for employment, social protection, health, education, awareness raising and accessibility.

SIDE EVENT 02: DISABLED YOUTH INVOLVEMENT, AWARENESS, EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP IN DPOS / OPDS ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

Wednesday, Jun 14 2023 from 11.30am - 12.45pm (EST) (Online)

Organizer: Government of Barbados, United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth Development Office.

Chair: Sarah Kamau - Chair CDPF & Disabled Persons Kenya.

Speakers: Penny Innes - Head of Disability Inclusion team, FCDO UK; Kihembo Wilbert – CDPF Executive (Youth Rep) & Voice of Youth Uganda; Saista Parwin—CDPF Executive & Swabhimani Foundation, India; Emile Gouws – CDPF Executive (Rep. Underrepresented Groups) & Autism South Africa; Speaker from Government of Barbados; Richard Rieser —CDPF General Secretary & World of Inclusion Ltd, UK.

Ensuring Disabled Youth are aware of their rights, become empowered, engage with DPOs/OPDs and join the struggle to implement their rights is crucial. The number of Disabled Children and Youth with long term impairments in the Commonwealth is growing and their exclusion from education, training, employment, health and wellbeing is increasing, especially in low and middle income countries. The World Health Organisation now identifies 16% of the population as disabled people, 1.3 billion people. In the Commonwealth where 60% of the population are aged 30 years or under, there are likely to be 230-250 million disabled children and youth in the Commonwealth.

2023 is Commonwealth Year of Youth. The Commonwealth Disabled Peoples Forum (CDPF) which represents Disabled People's Organisations in 50 of the 58 countries in the Commonwealth wants this year to make a difference. Two thirds of the Commonwealth population are under 30.

CDPF calls on Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) or Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) to champion the rights of disabled youth, develop, listen to and prioritise their concerns and support them to become leaders. CDPF calls on the Commonwealth and member Governments to prioritise tackling the barriers disabled youth face to leading equal lives and develop long term strategies in the areas highlighted below.

- After consulting, CDPF has produced a Disabled Youth Manifesto. 2 of the key aims are to recruit and develop the capacity of Young Disabled Leaders with a customized Leadership on-line course, building on the 14 unit Disability Equality Course, CDPF produced in 2021.
- To compliment this initiative CDPF will hold two regional seminars for the leaders of all our 96 members to develop the best ways of engaging disabled Youth in their organisations and develop guidelines on the best ways to embed a new generation of DPO/OPD leaders. We welcome other people's perspective on what should be in these guidelines.

PRIORITISE DIGITAL INCLUSION which benefits disabled people by allowing them to live richer, more independent lives. Covid showed the large number of young people excluded digitally. For disabled people digital inclusion aids in the reduction of social isolation and the promotion of social inclusion is particularly important.

Develop strategies for promoting digital inclusion for people with impairments. i.e. Make their websites and digital services accessible to people with different impairments e.g. Deaf, blind, Deaf Blind, Learning Difficulties or Neurodiverse, provide training and assistance to disabled people in using digital technologies. Ensure during this Year of Youth all digital communications across the Commonwealth and Governments are accessible. Create more free access points to the internet.

DEVELOPING WAYS OF CREATING EQUAL ACCESS FOR DISABLED GIRLS AND WOMEN TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES AND GREATER EQUALITY.

Thursday, Jun 15 2023 from 08.15am -09.30am (EST) Conference Room II (In Person + UN Webcast)

Organizer: UK Foreign Commonwealth Development Office & Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum.

Chair: Sarah Kamau - Chair CDPF & Disabled Persons Kenya.

Speakers: Diana Dalton - Head of Gender and Equalities Dept UK FCDO; Dr. Sruti Mohapatra – CDPF Vice Chair & CEO Swabhimani, Odisha, India and Vice Chair DPI; Gaudence Mushimiyimana – CDPF Executive (Woman Representative) & Rwandan Organisation of Women with Disabilities; Kerryann Ifill – CDPF Vice Chair & Barbados Council of the Disabled; Richard Rieser- CDPF General Secretary & UK.

The meeting will present different aspects of the struggle for sexual and reproductive health and other rights for disabled girls and women. It will be in the context of the wider ongoing need to challenge the twin oppressions disabled women face of disability and sexism, in different societies.

The UK FCDO (co-sponsors of the meeting) will talk about their Strategy for Girls and Women 2023 to 2028, the implications for girls and women with disabilities and relevant work they are funding helping to implement greater equity for disabled women and girls.

Several of the female leaders of the Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum will talk about their ongoing work to empower disabled women and girls through their policy forum. They will give practical examples of the barriers faced and solutions developed and ways to reduce the high levels of violence in different national contexts. The meeting will also examine how men, particularly disabled men, can be good allies in these struggles.

SIDE EVENTS ORGANISED BY COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT DURING 16COSP

The Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat will host two events in New York City from 13 to 15 June 2023, on the sidelines of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The conference is an annual gathering of United Nations member countries to discuss matters related to the implementation of the CRPD, a treaty that aims to “promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity”.

Under this year’s conference theme of ‘harmonising national policies and strategies with the CRPD: achievements and challenges’, the Commonwealth events will focus on strengthening the employability of persons with disabilities and sharing good practices in implementing the CRPD’s core provisions, such as non-discrimination and accessibility.

MAKING WORK MORE INCLUSIVE – STRENGTHENING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Tuesday, Jun 13 2023 from 08.00am -09.15am (EST) Conference Room IV (In Person)

Organizer: Commonwealth Secretariat & Whaikaha & Government of New Zealand (Ministry of Disabled People)

Speakers: Dr. Shavana Haythornthwaite - Head, Commonwealth Secretariat Human Rights Unit; Whaikaha Representative from Whaikaha; Representative from Commonwealth Member State; Representative from a DPO/OPD; Representative from Business Sector.

Target Audience: Ministers and senior officials; national focal points on disability; multilateral organisations and international agencies; representatives from key partner organisations and stakeholder groups; disabled peoples organisations and civil society; businesses; labour unions; and other interested parties.

Background: Persons with disabilities account for approximately 15.6% of the global population, yet they remain underrepresented in the labour force. Although there is a lack of internationally comparable official statistics on persons with disabilities in employment, the available evidence indicates significant gaps that impede the realisation of the right to work for persons with disabilities. Around the world, persons with disabilities are less likely to be in employment, with roughly two thirds of those who are working age outside the labour force. In most countries, the unemployment rate is higher for persons with disabilities than those without. According to the United Nations Development and Disability Report, the employment to population ratio across regions for persons with disabilities aged 15 years and older was 36% compared to 60% for persons without disabilities.

Women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than men with disabilities and persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities who are in the labour force are more likely to be in low-paying jobs. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately concentrated in self-employment or the informal economy as a result of the lack of opportunities for paid employment. The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact reinforced or created new barriers to gaining access to employment for persons with disabilities. The inequalities persons with disabilities face in the workplace remain significant. They include a lack of accessible environments and information, shortcomings in disability inclusion policy, inadequate employer capacity and stigma. The barriers persons with disabilities face in accessing education, training and continuous learning hinder development of skills relevant to the labour market and significantly impact on their subsequent employment prospects. Enhancing the employability of persons with disabilities is crucial to creating an enabling and conducive environment for employment and ensuring that persons with disabilities can access productive employment and decent work.

The right to work is a fundamental human right and is enshrined in several international human rights instruments. Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognises the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others.

The provision states that this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with

disabilities. Amongst the appropriate steps States should take to realise the right to work for persons with disabilities is enabling ‘persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training.’

The importance of ensuring meaningful work for persons with disabilities is reflected in other key international documents. For instance, Target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for achievement of ‘full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value’. The International Labour Organization’s Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work declares that efforts must be directed to ensuring equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work for persons with disabilities, as well as for other persons in vulnerable situations.

The Commonwealth Secretariat Human Rights Unit and Whaikaha – Ministry for Disabled People (New Zealand) are convening a side event to advance practical means of strengthening the employability of persons with disabilities to ensure they can enjoy work on an equal basis with others as per SDG Target 8.5. Framed around the CRPD requirement to enable access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training, the side event will critically examine the role of key stakeholders, including public authorities and businesses. The event will also address the impact of COVID-19 on efforts to strengthen the employability of persons with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities; explore the transformative opportunities provided by technological advancements, as well as how to mitigate their potential to widen inequalities; highlight effective measures to develop skills of persons with disabilities through inclusive education, job-oriented vocational skills training, and school-to-work transition support for young people with disabilities; and consider collaboration between States, the private sector and disabled peoples organisations.

Objectives: The overarching objective is to raise awareness of opportunities and challenges in achieving productive employment and decent work for persons with disabilities in line with SDG Target 8.5. Specific objectives are to:

- Discuss obstacles encountered by persons with disabilities in securing employment or progressing in their jobs.
- Increase awareness of reasonable accommodations to enhance the employability of persons with disabilities.
- Highlight the opportunities and challenges presented by technological advancements and the post-COVID return to work.
- Exchange experiences and good practices in strengthening employability of persons with disabilities through education, vocational training, and skills development programmes.
- Discuss recommendations for achieving SDG Target 8.5 for persons with disabilities through employability strengthening measures.

COMMONWEALTH GOOD PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE-SHARING DIALOGUE

Date & Time: To be conformed

Venue: Joint Commonwealth Office, New York City I (In Person)

Organizer: Commonwealth Secretariat

Speakers: Dr. Shavana Haythornthwaite - Head, Commonwealth Secretariat Human Rights Unit; Representative from Whaikaha- Ministry of Disabled People New Zealand; Representative from Commonwealth Member State; Representative from a DPO/OPD; Representative

The second event will focus on sharing good practices from Commonwealth countries in implementing the CRPD and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

For further information, please see website or contact [Human Rights Unit](#) at: HRU1@commonwealth.int

MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH YOUTH MINISTERS

The tenth (10) [COMMONWEALTH YOUTH MINISTERS MEETING](#) (CYMM) will be take place in London (Pakistan lead) from September 2023. Previously, the 09th CYMM was held between 31 July and 4 August 2017 in Kampala, Uganda.

The Commonwealth Secretariat convenes a four-yearly Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (CYMM), including a Youth Leaders Forum and Stakeholders Forum. The meeting enables government ministers and senior officials to share good practices, debate emerging issues, take stock of pioneering initiatives and forge new partnerships for resourcing youth development. The recommendations from each Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting are considered by leaders at the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). CDPF have put forward Disabled Youth representatives to attend.

EDU360 FOUNDATION-1ST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

DIVERCITY IS PHENOMINAL - SYMPOSIUM AND CONCRET



DIVERCITY IS PHENOMINAL - SYMPOSIUM AND CONCRET: The awareness event on the 02 -03 June 2023 hosted in South Africa by [EDU360 FOUNDATION](#) and EMILE GOUWS - CDPF Executive is the main organizer and the event is meant to create awareness in the Commonwealth.

