**Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum**

**Submission to Commonwealth Secretariat outlining the positions and recommendations of CDPF to 10th CYMM, London September 11th to 15th 2023**

Since relaunching in New York in June 2019 the CDPF has grown, with currently 95 member organisations in 50 Commonwealth countries and seeks to be representative of the more than 450million disabled people across the Commonwealth, whatever their impairing condition. We support the leadership of disabled people on disability issues. **Nothing About Us Without Us**.

We are a cross impairment organisation and seek to support and challenge our governments to dismantle the stigma, prejudice and barriers that hold us back from achieving equality.

On Youth we have set up a Youth and Women’s Forum and produced a Disabled Youth Manifesto. (Attached).

The CDPF aim is the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UNCRPD , full equality and human rights for disabled people across the Commonwealth.

**ENGAGEMENT** 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 well being is increasing, especially in low and middle income countries. Disabled Youth are largely ignored in mainstream Youth Organisations. Their access and reasonable accommodation needs are often ignored preventing them from participating in discussion on Youth Issues.

The World Health Organisation now identify 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**.

The Commonwealth at CHOGM 2024 needs to adopt a **Disability Inclusion Protocol** to ensure access and equal treatment of disabled youth and all disabled people across the Commonwealth. This will not change things overnight, but the United Nations adopted such a protocol; in 2017 and many positive changes have occurred since. This process needs to be embarked upon by6 the Commonwealth.

**Develop disabled youth involvement and equality.** Innovative, tailored approaches

are necessary to guarantee that disabled children and young people are heard and responded to, especially disabled girls, those with communication challenges, mental health issues, learning impairments, neurodiversity or complicated health requirements. Governments should set up mechanisms to hear the representative views of disabled youth on a regular basis.

Article 4.3 and 33.3 of the UNCRPD require Governments to engage and consult with representative Disabled People’s Organisations DPOs (OPDs) . Many of our organisations including Youth Networks receive no Government funding. This needs to change so DPOs can be funded on a regular basis to engage with disabled people to provide their views and knowledge to Government to implement their Rights.

**EDUCATION** (UNCRPD Article 24) Disabled Youth and Children are disproportionately excluded from all levels of education. Progress towards implementing inclusive education systems is too slow with the barriers of access, teacher preparation, unsuitable curriculum and assessment not being sufficiently funded or addressed. Still too many countries rely on segregated special education provision. Where Inclusion is properly organised and resourced it has been shown to be highly successful in many different Commonwealth countries. Teachers need to be valued, properly remunerated and trained for inclusion to work.

Governments need to introduce reasonable accommodations for the curriculum and assessment. Disability Equality needs to be taught to all learners. Families need support as has happened under Community Based Rehabilitation to see the potential of their disabled children. Disabled children and youth are impacted by bullying and they must be engaged in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and revision of anti-bullying policies in schools and colleges and be educated as rights holders. **Specific schemes to improve take up and access to school, college and universities must be developed in the Year of Youth.**

**Disability equality training.** All business leaders and public service professionals i.e.

doctors, nurses, civil servants, social workers, teachers and lecturers need training based

on the **paradigm shift from Medical to Social Human Rights Thinking on Disability**, its

implications and undergo Awareness Raising and Training for Disability Equality. **Disabled**

**Youth should be trained and empowered here to take the lead.**

**Increase provision and access to mobility aids, rehabilitation, assistive**

**Technology for disabled youth:** Sign Language, Braille, Mobility Aids, Auxiliary &

Alternative forms of communication are essential to address various barriers disabled youth

face. **Having the right equipment, support and professional expertise available at local**

**centres, colleges, schools is a priority to help unlock the potential of disabled youth.** Governments should develop projects to deliver these during Year of Youth & beyond.

Stigma and negative stereotypes based on outdated ideas are still far to frequently held towards disabled youth in many parts of the Commonwealth. Governments need to commit to implementing Article 8 of UNCRPD to use the media to educate the public with concrete advertising and public education.

**EMPLOYMENT VOCATIONAL TRAINING & TRANSFORMATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY Disabled Youth are disproportionately unemployed and not economically active.** CDPF

calls for a massive uplift in effort to provide accessible employment training. Pressure on

employers to recruit disabled staff and a focus on supporting disabled youth to set up their

own enterprises. Quota systems need to be extended to the private sector. Anti Discrimination Legislation not only needs to be passed, but Tribunals and mechanisms need to be set up to challenge disability discrimination in employment. Surveys show that young disabled employees are often more productive and better time-keepers compared to their non-disabled peers. Modern workplaces need to develop team approaches where everyone can utilise their strengths. As we move to a digital world many disabled young people once they have had training and access are on a level playing field. Governments need to work with employers to facilitate such approaches.

**ENVIRONMENT** As the Climate crisis deepens and we move to the point of no return, Young people need to be supported and encouraged as they campaign for Global environmental justice and compensation for the impact of **Climate Change.** Disabled Youth and people are at enhanced risk of negative impact in events caused by the climate emergency, must be in the vanguard of solutions and they and their needs must be included in all emergency responses.

Article 11 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires ratifying Governments to prioritise protection measures for disabled people in emergency situations whether floods, droughts, typhoons, landslides, wild fires, earthquakes/volcanic eruptions, famine, war or epidemics.

Immediate Disability Disaster response must include:-

1. Disabled people and other at risk groups must be accommodated first not last.
2. Developing end-to-end early warning systems to prevent loss of life in disasters.
3. Developing and maintaining accessible and feasible channels of open communication within and across all at risk groups.
4. Early warning systems should be accessible for disabled people especially blind, deaf, deafblind and learning disabled people.
5. Establishment of a 24 hour hotline for disabled people to call the local authorities.
6. Evacuations must be rehearsed and all rescue methods must be accessible.
7. Involving disabled people and their DPOs in planning for all emergencies. We are the experts on our needs.

**The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

**The World has reached the half-way mark on the SDGs and all the indicators are that they will not be achieved by 2030. Lack of funding, commitment, financial crisis, political instability, corruption and Covid are among the forces that have derailed the SDGs. We must redouble our efforts. If the SDGs mean anything we have to build a consensus that challenges these negative forces. The CDPF and Disabled people in the Commonwealth and 1.3billion disabled people worldwide are major stakeholders in ensuring we do carry on implementing the SDGs.**

**Target 13** to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. All the SDGs are linked and we need to implement a new consensus around concrete and achievable positive change. **This requires :-**

* **Strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters.**
* **Integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.**
* **Improving education, awareness-raising, human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.**
* **Ensuring evacuation routes are as accessible as possible including public transport.**
* **Continuing pressure on rich Northern countries and international multi national corporations to provide at least $100 billion per year to address the needs of developing countries to mitigate the impact of climate change.**
* **Promoting mechanisms in least developed countries for raising the capacity for effective climate change related planning and management. This must involve focusing on disabled people, youth, women and other local, grassroots and marginalised communities.**
* **Governments with international donors to provide support and funding for these community based initiatives that will work bottom-up to bring about real change and have democratic control of these initiatives.**

Greater effort needs to be made to involve disabled youth in climate crisis solution discussions.

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