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Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Supplementary Report for Parallel Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

August 2026

Introduction

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) is an independent national human rights institution established under the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Act, No. 21 of 1996. The HRCSL has a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities. In carrying out this mandate, the Commission undertakes inquiries and investigations, monitoring and research, human rights education and awareness-raising, legislative advice, policy advocacy, and engagement with relevant stakeholders to advance the rights of persons with disabilities.

The HRCSL notes the Initial Report submitted by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In 2024, the HRCSL submitted its Parallel Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to provide an independent assessment of the implementation of the Convention in Sri Lanka. Following its consideration of these reports, the Committee adopted a List of Issues, to which the Government of Sri Lanka subsequently submitted its written replies.

This Supplementary Report is submitted in response to the Committee's List of Issues and provides updated information on the implementation of the Convention. The report is primarily based on information gathered through the HRCSL's Subcommittee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, national and regional consultations with civil society organizations, consultations with relevant government authorities, and reports submitted by government institutions, national stakeholders, and civil society organizations.

General Observations

1. Sri Lanka signed the CRPD on 13 March 2007 and ratified it on 16 February 2016. Despite more than a decade having passed since ratification, Sri Lanka has yet to enact comprehensive legislation to fully incorporate the Convention into domestic law. Over the years, several draft bills were prepared by different ministries; however, these legislative initiatives were not finalized due to a lack of sustained prioritization and coordination. The current GoSL has once again entrusted the Ministry of Social Services with the responsibility of preparing a new draft bill. While this is a positive development, the enactment of comprehensive legislation to incorporate the provisions of the Convention remains an urgent priority.
2. The HRCSL emphasizes that the adoption of new disability rights legislation is essential to give full effect to the rights guaranteed under the CRPD and to establish a coherent legal framework for the protection, promotion, and realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. Accordingly, the GoSL should expedite the legislative process and accord this reform the same level of priority as other significant legislative initiatives.
3. The HRCSL further observes that, although the Government has allocated budgetary resources to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, the effective implementation of these measures has been slow. This challenge is largely attributable to the limitations and inadequacies of the existing legal framework governing the rights of persons with disabilities. The prompt enactment of comprehensive legislation, supported by effective implementation

mechanisms, is, therefore, critical to ensuring that budgetary allocations translate into tangible improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities.

4. The HRCSL, by its letter dated 21 September 2023, recommended to the former Minister of Justice that the proposed National Council for Persons with Disabilities be established under the Ministry of Justice. The HRCSL emphasized that the CRPD encompasses a wide range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, the implementation of which requires the coordinated involvement of multiple ministries, departments, and public institutions. Accordingly, the national coordination mechanism should be established within an institution capable of ensuring a whole-of-government, rights-based approach to the implementation and monitoring of the Convention.
5. The HRCSL further observes that the institutions currently responsible for disability-related matters are primarily situated under the Ministry responsible for Social Welfare and continue to operate largely within a welfare-based framework. While these institutions play an important role in providing services and assistance, the CRPD requires a shift from a welfare-based model to a human rights-based approach that recognizes persons with disabilities as rights holders and promotes equality, non-discrimination, participation, accessibility, and inclusion across all sectors. Therefore, the HRCSL reiterates its recommendation that the national coordination mechanism be placed under the Ministry of Justice, or another central institution with the mandate and authority to coordinate the implementation of the CRPD across all relevant government agencies.
6. The HRCSL observes that several government institutions have developed policies, action plans, and administrative procedures to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. These include, among others, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Disaster Management, and the Ministry of Social Services. Additionally, several ministries are in the process of formulating or revising policies and action plans to further strengthen the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities. However, information received by the HRCSL through consultations with persons with disabilities at the grassroots level indicates that the implementation of these policies and action plans remains limited and inconsistent. As a result, many persons with disabilities continue to experience barriers to accessing public services and opportunities and remain vulnerable to discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization.
7. **The HRCSL recommends that the government adopts a coordinated top-down approach to policy implementation while ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations throughout the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and action plans, in accordance with the principles of the CRPD.**

Equality and Non-Discrimination (Article 5)

8. Persons with disabilities continue to experience discrimination at all levels, including within the family, the community, and public institutions, despite the constitutional guarantees of

equality and non-discrimination in Sri Lanka. They continue to face significant barriers in accessing public services and government institutions on an equal basis with others. Such discrimination limits their full and effective participation in society and undermines the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights.

Women with Disabilities (Article 6)

9. Women with disabilities require targeted support services, including accessible shelters for women with physical and psychosocial disabilities who face violence, abuse, or other vulnerabilities. Their reproductive health and rights should be protected by ensuring equal access to reproductive healthcare services, information, counseling, and support without discrimination. Specialized services should be developed to safeguard their dignity, autonomy, and overall well-being.
10. The establishment of the National Commission on Women under the Women Empowerment Act, No. 37 of 2024, represents a significant milestone in promoting and protecting the rights of women, including women with disabilities.
- 11. The HRCSL recommends that the government ensures that the National Commission on Women is provided with adequate financial, human, and technical resources to enable it to effectively carry out its mandate and safeguard the rights of all women without discrimination.**

Children with Disabilities (Article 7) and Education (Article 24)

12. The existing policies and mechanisms to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities remain inadequate. Although special needs education is available in selected schools across several districts, these programmes often operate with insufficient financial, human, and technical resources, limiting their effectiveness. As a result, children with disabilities continue to experience barriers to accessing quality education, contributing to higher rates of school dropout. The HRCSL observes that, particularly in rural areas, poverty, limited awareness, and inadequate support services discourage some parents from enrolling or retaining their children with disabilities in school. These challenges further undermine the right to education and equal opportunities for children with disabilities.
- 13. The HRCSL recommends that the government strengthens and effectively implements a comprehensive disability-inclusive education policy, supported by adequate resources, accessible infrastructure, trained teachers, and appropriate support services, to ensure that all children with disabilities can access inclusive, equitable, and quality education on an equal basis with others.**
14. The higher education sector has achieved notable progress in promoting the inclusion and success of students with disabilities. However, significant challenges remain. Educational infrastructure should be made fully accessible, and university by-laws should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the specific needs of students with disabilities, including reasonable adjustments such as extended examination durations. Additionally, accommodation facilities

should be upgraded and adapted to ensure a safe, accessible, and supportive living environment for students with disabilities.

15. As of June 2026, a total of 2,329 persons with disabilities were enrolled in vocational training island wide. However, vocational training institutions also face challenges. Special Expertise, including with respect to autism, specific instructional methodologies, equipment's and sign language competency remains concentrated in only a limited number of training centres. Furthermore, accessibility remain difficult in physical infrastructure facilities in training centres and limited number of job placement for National Vocational Qualification holders with disabilities.

Awareness-Raising (Article 8)

16. Several government institutions have taken positive steps to enhance the awareness and capacity of public officials regarding the rights of persons with disabilities and the promotion of their dignity. The Election Commission of Sri Lanka has implemented awareness programmes for voters with disabilities, provided basic sign language training to senior polling officers, and conducted disability awareness programmes for staff at its Head Office and District Election Offices. Similarly, Sri Lanka Police has initiated sign language training for police officers to improve communication with persons with hearing impairments. The Ministry of Health has also conducted training and sensitization programmes for Medical Officers of Health (MOH) and Public Health Midwives to strengthen disability inclusion and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.
17. Despite these positive initiatives, the HRCSL observes that disability awareness and understanding among public officials remain inconsistent across government institutions. Many public officers continue to lack adequate knowledge of the rights of persons with disabilities, and negative attitudes and discriminatory practices continue to impede their equal access to public services.
18. **The HRCSL recommends that the government institutionalizes mandatory disability rights and disability inclusion training for all public servants, including frontline service providers, and ensures that such training is continuous, adequately resourced, and aligned with the CRPD. Such measures should include awareness-raising on reasonable accommodation, accessibility, non-discrimination, and respectful engagement with persons with disabilities.**
19. The HRCSL is concerned that awareness and capacity-building programmes for family members and caregivers of persons with disabilities remain inadequate. Families play a critical role in supporting and advocating for the rights, autonomy, and inclusion of persons with disabilities.
20. **The HRCSL recommends that the government develops and implements comprehensive awareness and empowerment programmes for family members and caregivers to enhance their understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities. The government**

should also promote respect for their dignity and autonomy and support their full and effective participation in society in accordance with the CRPD.

21. The HRCSL emphasizes the importance of strengthening public awareness programmes on disability prevention through rights-based and public health approaches.
22. **The HRCSL recommends that the government implements comprehensive awareness campaigns on preventable causes of disability, including road traffic accidents, workplace and domestic accidents, malnutrition, substance and drug misuse, and other preventable health risks.**

Accessibility (Article 9)

23. Accessibility remains a significant challenge in Sri Lanka. Although legal provisions, regulations, and Supreme Court judgments establish the right to accessibility for persons with disabilities, their implementation has been slow and inconsistent. The GoSL has taken positive steps by allocating funds in the recent National Budget and facilitating the importation of low-floor buses through the Ministry of Transport to improve accessible public transportation. However, the overall progress in ensuring accessible infrastructure, transport, and public services remains inadequate, and the effective implementation of accessibility standards requires greater priority and sustained commitment.
24. The HRCSL has established Accessibility Audit Teams in every district, comprising government officials and persons with disabilities. The HRCSL provided training to these audit teams, which subsequently conducted accessibility audits in selected public institutions. Based on the findings of these audits, the HRCSL convened a national consultation on the rights of persons with disabilities on 28th August 2025, bringing together key stakeholders to discuss existing challenges, identify implementation gaps, and develop recommendations to improve accessibility and promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The key recommendations emerging out of this process are as follows:

Policy Development and Legal Frameworks for Accessibility

- Formulate a draft bill on the rights of persons with disabilities to redefine accessibility broadly and embed monitoring in line with the CRPD;
- Establish an independent commission with authority, resources, and adequate representation of persons with disabilities.
- Conduct awareness and sensitization programmes for officials to address insensitivity.
- Introduce participatory policymaking with persons with disabilities included at all stages.
- Ensure accessibility for all vulnerable groups (i.e., elderly, children, pregnant women, and persons who are temporarily disabled).
- Introduce modernization of government media protocols and practices (e.g. Unicode adoption).

Inclusive Infrastructure, Mobility, and Public Services

- Establish a nationwide monitoring team to oversee accessibility compliance.

- Ensure local authorities strictly enforce accessibility standards when issuing certificates of conformity for buildings.
- Prevent unauthorized constructions by tightening approval processes and linking utilities (i.e., water, electricity) only to certified buildings.
- Build wheelchair platforms at bus stands.
- Procure low-floor wheelchair-accessible buses.
- Raise railway station platforms to ensure safe boarding.
- Guarantee accessibility in new transport hubs.
- Ensure ramps and accessibility features meet proper technical standards.
- Retrofit schools with accessible washrooms.
- Expand vocational streams tailored for persons with disabilities through the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority and other training authorities.
- Build one health institute per 10,000 people with integrated accessibility.
- Adopt a multi-stakeholder participatory approach in future health construction projects.
- Involve persons with disabilities directly in planning, design, and implementation processes.
- Develop and disseminate state-level guidelines on terminology to avoid derogatory or insensitive wording in official documents.
- Conduct awareness and sensitization programmes for officials, institutions, and the public.
- Use media campaigns to shift public attitudes toward disability inclusion.
- Keep the public informed on accessibility developments and government decisions to increase transparency and accountability.

Technology, Innovation, and Digital Accessibility

- Ensure all websites and applications comply with accessibility standards from the design stage.
- Create inclusive authentication methods for persons with disabilities.
- Introduce text-based, app-based, or sign-language compatible systems for 119 and 1990.
- Build safeguards to prevent exploitation of accessibility tools.
- Integrate accessibility at the blueprint stage of all new technologies.
- Expand access to affordable devices and services for the 40% of the population without smartphones.
- Provide services in Sinhala and Tamil alongside English to broaden accessibility.
- Encourage adoption of AI-driven assistive technologies (e.g., ‘Be My Eyes’) to empower persons with disabilities.
- Use initiatives such as the proposed ‘Digital Month’ to promote digital inclusion and accessibility.

25. The HRCSL has issued direction to all Provincial Councils to issue a general circular to ensure compliance with accessibility standards. A majority of the Provincial Councils have responded positively to this directive. Notably, the Uva Provincial Council issued Internal circular 02/2025, the Central Provincial Council issued Circular 02/2026, and the Eastern Provincial Council issued Governor’s Memorandum 2025/01 to all provincial departments to strengthen compliance with accessibility standards. Additionally, the Southern Provincial Council

initiated comprehensive accessibility audits across all divisional secretariats within its jurisdiction.

Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (Article 11)

26. The Disaster Management Department has developed comprehensive policies and a National Disaster Management Plan that incorporate the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. However, the implementation of these policies and plans remains inadequate in practice. Persons with disabilities continue to face significant challenges before, during, and after disasters, including barriers to evacuation, access to emergency assistance, and recovery services.
27. During its monitoring visits following Cyclone Dithwa, the HRCSL observed that most temporary shelters lacked accessible facilities and were not designed to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, existing disaster relief circulars do not adequately address the specific needs of persons with disabilities, despite the additional costs and support requirements they often face during emergencies. The HRCSL accordingly raised these issues in a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury on 10 December 2025 related to circular No. 08/2025.
28. **The HRCSL recommends that the government ensures that, during disaster situations, the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities are ensured through inclusive early warning systems, accessible evacuation plans, and disability-friendly camp facilities. Compensation schemes and other government procedures should be made accessible and implemented effectively to address their specific needs. Existing policies and procedures should be properly enforced to ensure the safety, protection, and equal treatment of persons with disabilities during all stages of disaster response and recovery.**

Access to Justice (Article 13)

29. **The HRCSL recommends that the judicial system be made more accessible through inclusive infrastructure, digital solutions, and modern approaches such as virtual court systems. Courts should provide necessary facilities, including accessibility adaptations and communication support, to ensure equal access to justice for persons with disabilities.**

Liberty and Security of the person (Article 14)

30. **The HRCSL recommends that the government ensures that police stations are made more accessible for persons with disabilities by improving physical infrastructure, providing communication support such as sign language interpretation, and ensuring disability-sensitive practices. Police officers should be trained to understand the specific needs of persons with disabilities, including considering the communication methods of hearing-impaired persons when applying procedures such as the use of handcuffs, to ensure their rights and dignity are protected.**

Health (Article 25)

31. The HRCSL notes that the Ministry of Health conducts awareness and sensitization programmes to promote disability prevention, early intervention, and inclusive healthcare practices. The Ministry also provides training to healthcare professionals to strengthen early identification, management, and support for persons with disabilities and their families, including the identification of high-risk pregnancies and early intervention for infants with disabilities. Additionally, the Ministry facilitates access to rehabilitation, community support, and social protection services while promoting equitable access to reproductive healthcare and protecting the reproductive rights of persons with disabilities without discrimination.
32. According to persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at the grassroots level, the implementation of these initiatives remains limited. They reported that access to disability-inclusive healthcare, rehabilitation, and support services is still inadequate, particularly in rural and underserved communities.
33. Disability Support Teams to be established in hospitals to provide coordinated services, facilitate access to healthcare facilities, and ensure the effective provision of healthcare services to persons with disabilities. They also provide capacity building training to public health personnel, including public health nurses and midwives, to identify the needs of persons with disabilities and deliver disability-inclusive healthcare services.
34. **The HRCSL recommends that the government further strengthens Hospital-Based Disability Support Mechanisms.**
35. **The HRCSL further recommends that the government establishes Disability Prevention and Early Intervention Mechanisms to assess how many disabilities occur due to birth-related conditions, accidents, diseases, and other preventable causes. This mechanism should focus on strengthening maternal and child healthcare services, early identification of risks during pregnancy and childbirth, accident prevention measures, and timely medical interventions. Public awareness programmes should be conducted to educate communities on disability prevention, safety measures, and the importance of early detection and rehabilitation. A coordinated approach involving the health sector, social services, education institutions, and other relevant stakeholders should be developed to ensure effective prevention strategies, early intervention, and continuous support for persons with disabilities and their families.**

Work and Employment (Article 27)

36. In August 2023, the HRCSL issued guidelines and recommendations to the Ministry of Public Administration for the revision of the 1988 Public Administration Circular governing the reservation of 3% of public sector vacancies for persons with disabilities. Subsequently, the HRCSL held discussions with the Ministry to facilitate the revision of the Circular in line with its recommendations. The Ministry submitted the draft Circular to the Public Service Commission (PSC) for its observations. The PSC, in turn, requested the views of the National

Council for Persons with Disabilities before proceeding further. Thereafter, the Ministry submitted a Cabinet Memorandum in May 2026, and the Cabinet decided to appoint an Officials' Committee to examine the matter further. The HRCSL observes that the review and approval process has taken more than two years due to administrative delays, resulting in the continued absence of an updated policy framework to enhance the recruitment of persons with disabilities into the public service.

- 37. The HRCSL recommends that the government expedites the process of revising the 1988 Public Administration Circular in line with its guidelines and recommendations.**
38. Persons with disabilities engaged in self-employment often face challenges due to limited market opportunities and inadequate family support.
- 39. The HRCSL recommends that the government supports self-employment and economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. Existing barriers should be addressed through measures such as expanding market access, providing entrepreneurship support, skills development, financial assistance, and strengthening family and community awareness to promote sustainable livelihoods and economic independence.**

Adequate standard of living and social protection (Article 28)

40. Persons with disabilities living in rural areas, conflict-affected regions, and plantation estates continue to experience an inadequate standard of living. In particular, persons with disabilities residing in line room housing on plantation estates face significant challenges due to poor housing conditions, limited accessibility, and inadequate access to essential services. The HRCSL observes that plantation companies have taken insufficient measures to improve the living conditions and ensure reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in estate communities.
- 41. The HRCSL recommends that the government takes appropriate legislative, administrative, and policy measures, in collaboration with plantation companies and other relevant stakeholders, to ensure an adequate standard of living and improve housing and accessibility of persons with disabilities in accordance with the CRPD.**
42. The GoSL has introduced new procedures for the administration of social protection schemes. However, the implementation of these procedures has been inconsistent across districts, resulting in disparities in the assessment and allocation of benefits. Consequently, some persons with disabilities have lost their social protection payments, causing significant economic hardship, particularly for those who rely on these benefits to meet the costs of medicines, assistive devices, and other disability-related expenses. The Government should review and harmonize the implementation of the social protection scheme to ensure that eligibility criteria are applied consistently and that all persons with disabilities who are genuinely in need receive adequate and timely assistance.

43. Assistive devices required by persons with disabilities are often expensive and difficult to access.
44. **The HRCSL recommends that the government introduces measures to ensure the availability, affordability, and easy procurement of assistive devices through financial support schemes, subsidies, and accessible distribution mechanisms, enabling persons with disabilities to participate fully in society.**

Specific Obligation (Article 31-33)

Statistical and data collection (Article 31)

45. Sri Lanka does not yet have a comprehensive and coordinated system for collecting and maintaining data on persons with disabilities. The Department of Census and Statistics uses the Washington Group methodology for disability data collection. However, this methodology does not capture data on children below the age of five, resulting in significant gaps in disability statistics. Additionally, the current methodology presents challenges in accurately identifying certain categories of disabilities, and the available data may not fully reflect the actual situation of persons with disabilities in the country.
46. **The HRCSL recommends that the government establishes a comprehensive, coordinated, and disability-inclusive national data collection system. This system should be implemented through close collaboration among the Department of Census and Statistics, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Services, and other relevant institutions to ensure the collection of accurate, reliable, and disaggregated data that can effectively inform evidence-based policymaking and the implementation of the CRPD.**

National Implementation and Monitoring (Article 33)

47. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities has been designated as the national monitoring mechanism for the implementation of disability-related policies and programmes. However, as the Council functions under the Ministry of Social Services, concerns remain regarding its institutional independence and its ability to effectively and impartially monitor the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.
48. **The HRCSL recommends that the government establishes an independent monitoring mechanism in accordance with article 33(2) of the CRPD. Such a mechanism should operate independently of the executive, be adequately resourced, and be mandated to monitor, protect, and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in full compliance with the Paris Principles and the requirements of the CRPD.**