

# **Disability Classification Framework for Sri Lanka**

Prepared by the Disability Classification Committee for the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)

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## **Executive Summary**

This document sets out the Disability Classification Framework for Sri Lanka prepared under the guidance of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). Its purpose is to establish a scientifically robust, inclusive and practical structure for the identification and classification of disability in conformity with national priorities and international obligations.

This classification is based on the bio-psycho-social model of disability and recognizes that disability arises as a result of the interaction between a person's health condition and social and environmental barriers. It integrates the following dual approach:

I. the impact on individual functioning (what a person is able or unable to do in day-to-day life); and

## II. medical diagnosis (the underlying health condition or impairment)

This approach permits a more realistic, person-centred and equitable assessment of disability. It avoids excessive medicalization while maintaining the clarity required for service delivery and policy implementation.

The fundamental principles of this classification are as follows:

- **Inclusion:**

No group warranting recognition as having a disability shall be excluded by reason only of the type, cause or visibility of such disability.

- **Non-discrimination:**

All categories shall be treated with equal dignity and respect.

- **Adaptability:**

It shall be capable of application to diverse circumstances, including different age structures, types of disability and dynamic levels of functioning.

- **Simplicity and clarity:**

It has been designed so as to be used in a simple and practical manner by professionals in both the health and non-health sectors.

- **Alignment:**

It has been formulated in conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO-ICF), the Washington Group sets of Questionnaire, the National Policy on Disability of Sri Lanka (2003), the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 28 of 1996, and other national and international frameworks.

This classification may be used as a foundational tool for the issuance of disability identity cards, service planning, data collection, and the promotion of the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.

## **Category 1: Physical Disabilities**

Physical and musculoskeletal difficulties affecting movement, coordination, strength or endurance.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
1.1 Limb-related disabilities	Congenital limb loss, limb deformities, dwarfism/little people
1.2 Neuromuscular disorders	Muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy (affecting movement and posture), spina bifida, fibromyalgia
1.3 Paralysis	Hemiplegia, paraplegia, spinal cord injuries
1.4 Joint and bone-related disabilities	Severe chronic arthritis, post-polio syndrome
1.5 Functional limitations arising from removal of, or damage to, body organs due to surgery, disease or injury	Functional loss resulting from limb amputation, disfigurement caused by burns, filariasis, complications following mastectomy, loss of bowel or bladder control
1.6 Congenital disorders and genetic or chromosomal abnormalities	Cleft lip and palate, heart defects, neural tube defects, clubfoot, scoliosis (without neurological involvement), Turner syndrome, Edwards syndrome

## **Category 2: Sensory Disabilities**

Difficulties affecting sensory perception such as vision and hearing.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
2.1 Visual impairment	Low vision (including partial sight)
2.2 Blindness	Complete absence of vision in both eyes
2.3 Hearing impairment	Hearing loss ranging from mild to severe
2.4 Deafness	Complete absence of hearing in both ears

## **Category 3: Deafblindness**

Dual sensory loss (hearing and vision), giving rise to unique functional challenges. It requires specialized and targeted interventions and support services, and is distinctly different from single sensory impairments.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
3.1 Congenital deafblindness	CHARGE syndrome, rubella-related
3.2 Acquired deafblindness	Trauma, ageing, illness-related

## **Category 4: Intellectual Disabilities**

Conditions, usually arising in childhood, which affect intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
4.1 General intellectual disability	Mild intellectual impairment to severe intellectual impairment
4.2 Genetic syndromes	Down syndrome, Fragile X, Prader-Willi syndrome

## **Category 5: Psychosocial / Mental Health Disabilities**

Mental or emotional conditions that impede social and functional participation.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
5.1 Schizophrenia spectrum disorders	Short-term schizophreniform conditions, chronic and severe schizophrenia
5.2 Mood disorders	Major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder
5.3 Anxiety-related disorders	Post-traumatic stress disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder
5.4 Behavioural and chronic personality disorders	Personality disorders, phobic disorders
5.5 Neurocognitive disorders	Dementia, amnesia, dissociative disorders

## **Category 6: Neurodevelopmental Disorders**

Conditions arising in the early period of development, characterized by deficits occurring during neurodevelopment and causing difficulties in personal, social, educational or occupational functioning.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
6.1 Autism Spectrum Disorder	This includes persons previously identified as having classic autism, Asperger syndrome or PDD-NOS, which are now consolidated under ASD
6.2 Regressive neurodevelopmental disorders	Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder
6.3 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	A neurodevelopmental condition affecting attention, impulse control and higher executive functioning
6.4 Developmental coordination disorders	Dyspraxia (motor, verbal and oral)
6.5 Global Developmental Delay (GDD)	Significant delay in two or more developmental domains, generally observed in children under 5 years of age

## **Category 7: Specific Learning Disabilities**

Neurologically-based processing difficulties which interfere with the learning of basic skills such as reading, writing or mathematics, despite normal intellectual ability, and which critically affect educational achievement.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
7.1 Learning disabilities	Dyslexia (reading), dyscalculia (mathematics), dysgraphia (writing)-related disorders

## **Category 8: Communication and Speech Disabilities**

Difficulties in speech clarity, fluency, or expressive/receptive language.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
8.1 Language disorders	Delay in expressive/receptive language
8.2 Fluency disorders	Stuttering
8.3 Disorders arising in relation to articulation and voice	Mutism (including selective and organic causes), laryngeal sound disorders/voice production disorders

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
8.4 Dysarthria	Slurred or slow speech, difficulty in pronouncing sounds
8.5 Aphasia/Dysphasia	Brain damage affecting the ability to speak or understand language

## **Category 9: Neurological Disabilities**

Disorders of the brain or nervous system, whether atypical, chronic or episodic, with significant impact on individual functioning.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
9.1 Seizure disorders	Epilepsy and other clinically diagnosed similar conditions
9.2 Cerebrovascular conditions	Stroke-related difficulties affecting mobility, speech or cognition
9.3 Progressive neurological disorders	Multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease
9.4 Traumatic/acquired injuries relating to the brain or spinal cord	Brain damage due to oxygen deprivation, brain tumours, poisoning, ALS, ataxia, Bell's palsy, cerebral aneurysm
9.5 Neurocutaneous and neurological spinal disorders	Neurofibromatosis, tuberous sclerosis, spinal deformities or kyphosis with neurological effects

## **Category 10: Chronic Health-related Disabilities**

Long-term health conditions, not fully covered by other categories, which cause significant functional limitations in daily living, education, employment or social participation. Only persons experiencing significant disabling effects resulting from such chronic conditions shall be included within this category. Classification herein shall be based not only on diagnosis, but also on the impact on functioning.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
10.1 Metabolic disorders	Diabetes with complications, chronic kidney disease
10.2 Immunological disorders	HIV/AIDS, autoimmune disorders

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
10.3 Chronic pain/excessive fatigue syndromes	Fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, myalgic encephalomyelitis
10.4 Multisystemic and post-infectious disorders	Post-long COVID, COVID condition, cancer (with impact on functioning)
10.5 Chronic cardiorespiratory conditions	COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), severe/treatment-resistant asthma, congestive heart failure
10.6 Hematological and genetic blood disorders	Thalassaemia, sickle cell disease, haemophilia (with significant and functional impact on activities of living)

## Multiple Disabilities

Where two or more of the above 10 categories are significantly applicable and no single category is predominant.

<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Examples</b>
-	Intellectual disability + hearing impairment, autism spectrum disorder + epilepsy

## Essential Metadata Indicators

For service provision, eligibility determination and analysis:

Onset : Congenital / Acquired  
Duration : Permanent / Temporary / Episodic  
Severity : Mild / Moderate / Severe / Profound  
Support needs/supportive requirements : Assistive devices, caregiver support, therapy,  
accommodation requirements

## Implementation Guidance

Measures have been taken to formulate this classification framework in the simplest, clearest and most accurate manner possible so that it may be used by both medical and non-medical professionals. Although global diagnostic instruments such as ICD-11 and DSM-5 may be applied for purposes of classification, care shall at all times be taken to ensure that the

principal focus remains on the impact on individual functioning and barriers to participation. In conducting assessments on the basis of the above conditions, the following matters shall be taken into consideration:

1. the person's self-experience of disability;
2. the limitations imposed by the impairment on daily functioning;
3. the restrictions imposed on participation by environmental and attitudinal barriers; and
4. the underlying health conditions or difficulties affecting the person.

## **Review and Updating**

For the purpose of maintaining conformity with evolving local and global knowledge and expertise relating to disability, as well as with global educational standards and good practice, this classification framework shall be reviewed once every five years.

## **Sources Referenced in the Formulation of this Classification Framework**

### **International Sources:**

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- World Health Organization - International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO-ICF)
- World Health Organization - International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision (ICD-11)
- American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)
- Washington Group Short and Extended Question Sets
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

### United States

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004)

### United Kingdom

- Equality Act (2010)
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Code of Practice

## Canada

- Accessible Canada Act (2019)

## Australia

- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1992)
- National Disability Strategy (NDS, 2010-2020)

## New Zealand

- New Zealand Disability Strategy (2016-2026)
- Human Rights Act (1993)

## Japan

- Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities (as amended in 2011)
- Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (2013)

## India

- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD), 2016

## China

- Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons (as amended) (2008)
- China's National Program for Disability Development

## Russia

- Federal Law No. 181-FZ on Social Protection of Disabled Persons in the Russian Federation

France

- Disability Law (Loi Handicap, 2005)

Spain

- General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion (2013)

Sweden

- Discrimination Act (2009), with disability as a protected ground

Denmark

- Act on the Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Disability (2008)

Norway

- Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act (2008)

## **Local Sources**

- Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 28 of 1996
- National Policy on Disability (Ministry of Social Services - 2003)
- National Policy on Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education)
- Disability Data Collection Guidelines (Department of Census and Statistics)