

Disability Classification Framework for Sri Lanka

Prepared for the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)

On Second^d May 2025

Prepared by the Committee for Classification of Disability

Executive Summary

This document presents the finalized Disability Classification Framework for Sri Lanka, developed under the guidance of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). It aims to provide a scientifically sound, inclusive, and practical system for identifying and categorizing disability in alignment with national priorities and international obligations.

The classification is based on the bio-psycho-social model of disability, recognizing that disability results from the interaction between an individual's health condition and social and environmental barriers. It applies a dual approach combining:

- Functional impact (what the person can or cannot do in daily life), and
- Medical diagnosis (the underlying health condition or impairment).

This approach enables a more realistic, person-centered, and equitable assessment of disability, avoiding over-medicalization while maintaining clarity for service provision and policy implementation.

Key principles guiding this classification include:

- Inclusion: No eligible group is excluded due to type, cause, or visibility of disability
- Non-discrimination: All categories are treated with equal dignity and respect
- Adaptability: Suitable across ages, disability types, and changing functional levels
- Clarity and simplicity: Designed for use by both health and non-health professionals
- Alignment: Consistent with the UNCRPD, WHO-ICF, Washington Group Questions, Sri Lanka's national policy on disability (2003), Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996, and other national and global frameworks

This classification will serve as a foundational tool for issuing disability identity cards, planning services, collecting data, and promoting full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Category 1: Physical Disabilities

Impairments affecting movement, coordination, strength, or endurance.

Subcategory	Examples
1.1 Limb impairment	Amputation, limb deformities, dwarfism
1.2 Neuromuscular conditions	Muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy (affecting movement and posture), Spina bifida, Fibromyalgia
1.3 Paralysis	Hemiplegia, paraplegia, spinal cord injuries
1.4 Joint and Bone Conditions	Severe chronic arthritis, post-polio syndrome
1.5 Functional Loss Due to Organ Removal or Damage following trauma, disease, or surgery	Limb loss, post-burn disfigurement, filariasis, post-mastectomy, loss of bowel/bladder control
1.6 Congenital malformations, deformities 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

Impairments affecting vision, hearing, or sensory perception.

Subcategory	Examples
2.1 Visual impairment	Low vision (including partial sight)
2.2 Blindness	Complete absence of vision
2.3 Hearing impairment	Mild to severe hearing loss
2.4 Deafness	Profound or total hearing loss

Category 3: Deafblindness

Dual sensory loss (hearing and vision), leading to unique functional challenges. Requires specialized support and is distinct from single-sense impairments.

Subcategory	Examples
3.1 Congenital deafblindness	CHARGE syndrome, rubella-related
3.2 Acquired deafblindness	Trauma, aging, illness-related

Category 4: Intellectual Disabilities

Conditions affecting intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior from early age.

Subcategory	Examples
4.1 General intellectual disability	Mild to profound
4.2 Genetic syndromes	Down syndrome, Fragile X, Prader-Willi syndrome

Category 5: Psychosocial / Mental Health Disabilities

Mental or emotional conditions impairing social and functional participation.

Subcategory	Examples
5.1 Schizophrenia spectrum	Schizoaffective disorder, schizophreniform disorder
5.2 Mood disorders	Major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder
5.3 Anxiety-related disorders	PTSD, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder
5.4 Other conditions	Personality disorders, disabling phobias
5.5 Neurocognitive disorders	Dementia, amnesia, dissociative disorders

Category 6: Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Conditions that manifest early in development, characterized by developmental deficits that produce impairments in personal, social, academic, or occupational functioning.

Subcategory	Examples
6.1 Autism Spectrum Disorder	Includes individuals previously diagnosed with classic autism, Asperger's syndrome, or PDD-NOS, now unified under ASD
6.2 Other neurodevelopmental disorders	Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder
6.3 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	A neurodevelopmental condition affecting attention, impulse control, and executive functioning
6.4 Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)/Dyspraxia	Motor planning and coordination impairments
6.5 Developmental Delay (GDD)	Significant delay in two or more developmental domains in children under 5

Category 7: Specific Learning Disabilities

Neurologically-based processing problems that can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing, or math, affecting academic achievement despite otherwise normal intelligence.

Subcategory	Examples
7.1 Specific learning disorders	Dyslexia (reading), dyscalculia (math), dysgraphia (writing)

Category 8: Communication and Speech Disabilities

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

Subcategory	Examples
8.1 Language disorders	Expressive/receptive language delay
8.2 Fluency disorders	Stuttering
8.3 Articulation and voice disorders	Mutism (including selective or organic), phonation disorders
8.4 Dysarthria	Slurred or slow speech, difficulty articulating sounds
8.5 Aphasia/dysphasia	Brain damage affecting a person's ability to speak or understand language

Category 9: Neurological Disabilities

Brain or nervous system disorders with atypical, chronic or episodic functional impact.

Subcategory	Examples
9.1 Seizure disorders	Epilepsy and other medically diagnosed seizure conditions
9.2 Cerebrovascular conditions	Stroke-related impairments affecting mobility, speech, or cognition
9.3 Progressive neurological conditions	Multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease
9.4 Traumatic/Acquired brain or spinal cord injury	ALS, Ataxia, Bell's Palsy, cerebral aneurysm
9.5 Neurocutaneous and neurological spine disorders	Neurofibromatosis, tuberous sclerosis, scoliosis or kyphosis with neurological impact

Category 10: Chronic Health-Related Disabilities

Long-term health conditions not fully captured in other categories but causing significant functional limitations in daily life, learning, employment, or social participation. Only individuals who experience disabling effects resulting from these chronic conditions are included. Classification is based on functional impact, not just diagnosis.

Subcategory	Examples
10.1 Metabolic conditions	Diabetes with complications, chronic kidney disease
10.2 Immunological conditions	HIV/AIDS, autoimmune disorders
10.3 Chronic pain/fatigue syndromes	Fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, myalgic encephalomyelitis
10.4 Other systemic conditions	Post-COVID condition (Long COVID), cancer (with functional impact)
10.5 Chronic cardiorespiratory conditions	COPD, severe asthma, congestive heart failure
10.6 Hematological and genetic blood disorders	Thalassaemia, sickle cell disease, hemophilia (with disabling functional impact)

Multiple Disabilities

When two or more categories apply significantly and no single category is primary.

Subcategory	Examples
-	Intellectual + hearing disability; Autism Spectrum Disorder + epilepsy

Metadata Tags (Required)

For service delivery, eligibility determination, and analytics:

- Onset: Congenital / Acquired
- Duration: Permanent / Temporary / Episodic
- Severity: Mild / Moderate / Severe / Profound
- Support Needs: Assistive device, caregiver support, therapy, accommodation requirements

Implementation Guidance

This framework is designed for use by both medical and non-medical professionals. While diagnostic criteria from ICD-11 and DSM-5 may inform classification, the primary focus remains on functional impact and participation barriers. Assessment should consider:

1. The person's self-reported experience of disability
2. Functional limitations in daily activities
3. Participation restrictions due to environmental and attitudinal barriers
4. Underlying health conditions or impairments

Review and Updates

This framework will be reviewed every five years to incorporate evolving understanding of disability and maintain alignment with current international standards and best practices.

Members of the Disability Classification Committee

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Referenced International and National Frameworks

Global and International Frameworks

- UN 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, 5th Edition (DSM-5)
 - Washington Group Short Set and Extended Set of Questions
 - 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 Code of Practice (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

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 (amended 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 (2008, amended)
- 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 Prohibition of Discrimination on Grounds of Disability (2008)

Norway

- Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act (2008)

Sri Lanka

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