



## INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY PEOPLE DAY 3 DECEMBER 2025 EVENT IN SOMALIA



## Table of Contents

.....	1
<b>Minute Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025</b> Error! Bookmark not defined.	
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Background .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Objectives of the Event .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Panel Discussion Made in the Event .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Recommendations to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Recommendations to Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Recommendations to International NGOs (INGOs) .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>SOMALI DISABILITY NETWORK (SDN) PROFILE .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>SOMALIA MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: PROFILE AND PLANS .....</b>	<b>20</b>

## **Acknowledgments**

We extend our sincere gratitude and high tribute to all stakeholders who played a vital role in the successful commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities held on 3 December 2025. Your commitment, energy, and collective passion made this event not only possible, but meaningful and impactful for the disability community in Somalia.

Special appreciation goes to the organizing team led by Mr. Aweys Sheikh Abdi from the Ministry of Health and Human Development, whose leadership, coordination, and tireless efforts ensured that every component of the program was meticulously planned and effectively executed. Your dedication was the driving force that kept the vision of the event clear and achievable.

We also express our heartfelt acknowledgment to Mr. Abdullahi Hassan, Chairperson of the Somali Disability Network, who served as a key pillar in the mobilization and coordination stages. Your active engagement, community connection, and strong advocacy helped bring together diverse voices and organizations representing persons with disabilities across the country.

Our gratitude is extended to all partners who made contributions technical, financial, mobilization, and advisor to support the success of the event. Your collaboration reflects a shared commitment to advancing disability inclusion and strengthening national progress in line with global principles of equity and rights.

Lastly, we recognize the valuable participation of representatives from the Ministry of Health, Parliament, Civil Society Organizations, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), Organizations of Disabled Persons (ODPs), Universities, private hospitals, public institutions, and international donors. To every actor, we say kudos for your contribution, dedication, and solidarity that shaped the achievements of this one-day commemoration. Your presence signified hope, unity, and a collective movement toward a more inclusive Somalia for all.

## **Executive Summary**

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) 2025 was successfully commemorated on 03 December 2025 at Afrik Hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia. Organized by the Somali Disability Federation in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and private sector partners, the event brought together a wide range of stakeholders including government representatives, civil society organizations, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), educational institutions, health professionals, youth and women groups, and members of parliament. The celebration demonstrated a growing national commitment to disability inclusion,.

Somalia has made notable progress in disability rights over recent years. Increased mobilization by PWDs and OPDs has expanded access to education, employment, and community participation. National frameworks such as the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2019, the establishment of the National Disability Agency, and the passing of the National Disability Act have laid the foundation for a rights-based approach to inclusion. The emergence of Paralympic sports, advocacy coalitions, and national awareness campaigns reflects growing social acceptance and visibility of disability issues across the country.

The event featured key speeches from senior government officials, academia, OPD leaders, and health professionals, all highlighting the importance of inclusive services, policy implementation, and equal opportunities. The Minister of Health reaffirmed the government's commitment to establishing disability-inclusive systems and ensuring the participation of PWDs in national decision-making. Representatives from Somalia International University and health institutions pledged continued support in education, rehabilitation, and specialized care, reinforcing the role of social sectors in achieving sustained inclusion.

A panel discussion provided in-depth dialogue on disability inclusion progress and challenges. Panelists stressed the need to improve access to health care, assistive technology, early childhood intervention, rehabilitation services, and inclusive education. The session emphasized collective responsibility and multi-sectoral action to overcome long-standing systemic barriers.

Many public and private institutions remain inaccessible, discrimination in employment continues, and OPDs are often excluded from program design and humanitarian planning. The National Disability Agency is not fully functional, and implementation of national and international policies remains weak. PWDs living in IDP camps experience inadequate protection, limited medical services, and risks of forced eviction, exacerbating exclusion and vulnerability.

The event generated strategic recommendations for PWDs, OPDs, civil society organizations, and international partners, emphasizing capacity building, inclusive governance, disability-sensitive budgeting, and stronger partnerships. Stakeholders called for meaningful participation of PWDs in decision-making bodies and urged international NGOs to provide direct institutional support for OPDs. The discussions highlighted the importance of data generation, monitoring policy commitments, and ensuring investment in accessible infrastructure and assistive technologies



## Background

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDP 3 December 2025 is commemorated worldwide, including in Somalia. In Mogadishu, a highly organized joint ceremony was held In Mogadishu At Afrik Hotel by the Ministry of Health and Human Development in collaboration with the Somali Disability Network (SDN), a coalition of 16 Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). The event brought together persons with disabilities (PWDs), civil society organizations (CSOs), OPDs, universities, schools, traditional elders, religious leaders, youth and women groups, as well as government members minister and members of parliament, demonstrating strong national commitment to disability inclusion and participation.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was established by the United Nations in 1992 through UN General Assembly Resolution 47/3. It is observed every year on 3 December to promote the rights, dignity, and well-being of persons with disabilities and to raise awareness about disability inclusion in all aspects of society and development. The day serves as a platform to highlight the significant contributions of persons with disabilities and the importance of creating inclusive and equitable societies that provide opportunities for all individuals regardless of physical or intellectual differences.

## Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025

Members of OPDs and PWDs from the SDN coalition presented their achievements through creative materials, including published books, paintings, drama performances, and lyrical songs. These works reflected both the progress made and the ongoing challenges facing disability inclusion in Somalia. Participants visited and engaged with the showcased materials displayed alongside the main event, creating strong interaction and awareness around the issues.

The event also hosted a panel discussion with participants from PWDs, OPDs, CSOs, and a senior consultant from the Ministry of Health and Human Development. The discussion was moderated by a facilitator who guided the session with structured questions. Panelists discussed key issues related to disability inclusion, including early childhood intervention, elimination of polio, prevention of diseases that cause disabilities, rehabilitation of newly affected persons with disabilities, and treatment of preventable disabilities. They also emphasized the establishment of assistive technologies essential for daily life, as well as the importance of supporting access to health care, education, employment, and economic empowerment for persons with disabilities.

Participants actively engaged with the panelists through a question-and-answer session, raising key issues related to International Disability Day and disability inclusion. Key speeches highlighted the major achievements and ongoing challenges of recent years, including the passing of disability-related legislation, the establishment of the National Disability Agency, increased participation of persons with disabilities in local council election registration, and the mobilization of Paralympic sports. The event was further enriched by cultural performances, including traditional folk dances, celebrating inclusion, talent, and national unity.



## **Objectives of the Event**

- Celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political contributions of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Somalia.
- Raise awareness on disability rights, inclusion, and equal opportunities across all sectors.
- Promote implementation of national and international disability frameworks, including the UN CRPD and the National Disability Act.
- Strengthen collaboration and partnerships among government institutions, OPDs, CSOs, private sector, UN agencies, and community stakeholders.
- Highlight progress and achievements made in disability inclusion and service delivery in recent years.
- Create a platform for discussion and learning through speeches, panel discussions, and experience sharing on key disability inclusion issues.
- Advocate for increased investment and resource allocation towards disability-inclusive services, rehabilitation, education, employment, and social protection programs.
- Amplify the voices of persons with disabilities by providing space for their participation, leadership, and decision-making.
- Challenge stigma and change negative attitudes through public engagement, cultural performances, and awareness campaigns.
- Promote accessibility and assistive technology solutions to enhance mobility, communication, and independent living for PWDs.

## **Methodology**

- A joint planning team composed of Somali Disability Federation, Ministry of Health, and private sector partners was established to coordinate logistics, programming, and resource mobilization.
- Invitations were extended to OPDs, government ministries, CSOs, universities, hospitals, private sector institutions, media, youth groups, women's organizations, and international partners to ensure wide representation and participation.
- Contributions were secured from government institutions and private sector partners to support venue preparation, exhibition materials, accessibility needs, and hospitality arrangements.
- Public announcements, social media campaigns, and direct outreach were used to publicize the event and mobilize participation across Mogadishu and surrounding regions.
- Sign language interpretation, accessible seating, ramps, and priority arrangements were provided to enable full participation for persons with diverse disabilities.
- The event proceedings, commitments, key messages, and recommendations were recorded and documented for follow-up, knowledge sharing, and future advocacy purposes.

## **Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025**



### Key Speeches

**Dr. Mohamed Hassan Mohamed Bulaale**, the Minister of Health Care and Human Development, expressed his sincere appreciation to all participants for dedicating their time and commitment to this important cause. He emphasized that persons with disabilities are not only in government statements but truly in their hearts and national priorities.

He reaffirmed that both the Prime Minister and the President of the Federal Government of Somalia are fully committed to giving higher priority to persons with disabilities (PWDs). As part of this commitment, the Ministry of Health has officially established a dedicated section for disability inclusion to ensure that the rights and needs of PWDs are addressed across all health programs.

The Minister further promised the placement of PWDs across different sections of the Ministry of Health, the establishment of facilities that ensure mobility and accessibility, and the strong implementation of disability-inclusive policies and legislation. He stressed that real disability inclusion must be led by PWDs and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (ODPs), with the government and international partners playing a supportive role.

### Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025



**Professor. Suheyb Ilmi Dhuhulow**, Deputy Administrator of Somalia International University, expressed his sincere appreciation to all participants, including representatives from the government, the Deputy Ministry of Health, legislators, civil society organizations (CSOs), persons with disabilities (PWDs), organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), medical practitioners, and professional health institutions and hospitals. He thanked all stakeholders for their presence and active contribution to promoting inclusive development.

He proudly acknowledged the talents, potential, and strong commitment of PWDs in the field of education. He noted that Somalia International University currently serves a number of students with disabilities, some of whom have successfully graduated and are now employed. In support of inclusive education, he announced the university's commitment that every student with a disability who graduates from secondary school and passes the national examination will be granted a full tuition-free opportunity to study at Somalia International University.

Professor Suheyb concluded by emphasizing the university's deep empathy and solidarity with persons with disabilities, stating that this day is an important moment to highlight their rights, dignity, and equal opportunities. He reaffirmed the institution's commitment to continue working closely with PWDs, OPDs, and national partners to promote inclusive, accessible, and quality education for all.

**Dr. Abdiwahid Adane Arale**, Chief Executive Officer of Mogadishu Memorial Hospital, expressed his sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Health and Human Development for the invitation. He warmly welcomed and greeted all distinguished participants, recognizing them by their names and professional titles, and appreciated their commitment to strengthening health services in Somalia.

As a professional neurology specialist, Dr. Abdiwahid highlighted that the hospital serves hundreds of patients every month suffering from neurological conditions such as epilepsy and seizures, cerebral palsy (CP), traumatic brain injuries, strokes, and various mental health disorders. A significant number of their patients are children affected by autism spectrum disorder and cerebral palsy, requiring long-term and specialized care.

He further explained that Mogadishu Memorial Hospital provides comprehensive services including diagnosis, medical treatment, physiotherapy, and psychological counseling. The majority of their clients are persons with disabilities, and the hospital's work focuses on reducing pain, preventing complications, and minimizing functional limitations to improve the quality of life of patients and their families.

**Dr. Faisal Mohamed Kasim**, representing Bahnano Physiotherapy Center, shared that the center provides modern physiotherapy services to several hundred patients every month, with special focus on children and adults affected by cerebral palsy (CP) and other physical disabilities.

## **Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025**

He explained that Bahnano Physiotherapy Center offers free physiotherapy services to persons with disabilities, including children, adults, and elderly people, while also supporting non-disabled individuals who suffer from physical injuries, pain, and stress-related conditions.

Dr. Faisal added that the center participated in last year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities event and made important commitments, and this year they are renewing and strengthening their promise to continue supporting and serving persons with disabilities with dedication and care.

**Mr. Mohamud**, a student at Somalia International University and a member of the community of persons with disabilities (PWDs), stated that PWDs have talents, the ability to learn, and the capacity to work when they are given proper support. He emphasized that access to inclusive education and fair employment opportunities is essential to unlocking the hidden power, skills, and abilities of persons with disabilities.

He further explained that disability does not mean inability, but that discrimination in society often creates the real barriers for PWDs. He called on institutions, employers, and the community to change negative attitudes, remove obstacles, and ensure that persons with disabilities are treated with dignity, equality, and respect.

**Ms. Hodan Said** stated that many persons with disabilities are now accessing higher education, but they urgently need fair job opportunities after graduation. She explained that in the past, PWDs were often limited to roles such as guides or home workers and were kept indoors, excluded from public life and decision-making.

She powerfully expressed that PWDs do not want support that sends them back to isolation, neglect, and lives that feel like "homes turned into prisons." Instead, they want opportunities that guarantee dignity, independence, and meaningful participation in society.

Ms. Hodan also highlighted that women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination because of both gender and disability. During the event, she performed an emotional song that deeply moved and shocked the audience, leaving a strong message about pain, resilience, and the urgent need for inclusion.



Dr. Abdisalam also emphasized the vulnerability of children with disabilities, underscoring their specific needs for care, education, and recreational opportunities. He highlighted the importance of child safeguarding and protection to prevent abuse, neglect, and discrimination. He called for collective action to ensure every child with a disability grows up in a safe, supportive, and enabling environment.

**Ms. Ayan Said**, representing civil society organizations, stated that technology and innovation can play a vital role in improving the lives of persons with disabilities by providing mobility aids, assistive devices, and communication tools that support daily activities. She noted that such innovations allow individuals to live more independently and participate more actively in society.

She emphasized that the implementation of disability-related laws and policies must include investment in technological support and access to assistive products. Ayan highlighted that the Ministry of Health's engagement with persons with disabilities is essential to ensure services are designed to meet real needs rather than assumptions.

Ayan also underlined the importance of partnerships with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to guide innovation and service delivery. She stressed that technology should not only be available but also affordable and accessible, ensuring that persons with disabilities are not left behind in a rapidly changing world.

**Dr. Abubakar Sheikh**, Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Health and Human Development, explained that the current situation of persons with disabilities in Somalia remains mixed in terms of access to health, education, and social services. While access to healthcare is recognized as a basic right, many still struggle to obtain the necessary care, rehabilitation, and assistive support required for daily living.

He acknowledged progress through growing awareness and improved service provision, but significant challenges remain in both public and private sectors. Dr. Abubakar noted that many health and educational facilities are still physically and socially inaccessible, and discrimination continues to limit full participation. As a result, persons with disabilities often experience delayed or inadequate services.

Dr. Abubakar emphasized the need to develop and implement practical policies in close partnership with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). He stressed that persons with disabilities are important members of society who have long been overlooked due to their impairments. He called for stronger collaboration, accountability, and resource allocation to ensure real inclusion beyond policy commitments.

**Mr. Abdullahi Hassan**, Chairman of the Somali Disability Federation, emphasized the urgent need for a national disability census to provide accurate data for planning and service delivery. He

## **Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025**



highlighted that national policies must be strengthened to ensure proper care, protection, and empowerment in areas such as healthcare, education, and vocational training.

He called for stronger partnerships with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and the development of a disability inclusion strategy across both the private and public sectors. Abdullahi noted that persons with disabilities continue to face major barriers in employment, governance, and access to services.

Although Somalia has made progress with the establishment of the National Disability Agency in 2018, the adoption of the CRPD in 2019, and the approval of the National Disability Act in 2024, Abdullahi stressed that these frameworks remain largely unimplemented. He urged practical action, clear policies, and accountability to ensure rights are realized in practice.





## **Progress Disability Inclusion Made In Somalia**

- Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) have increasingly been mobilized to access education and employment opportunities across Somalia. More children with disabilities are now enrolled in schools, universities, and vocational training centers, while youth and adults with disabilities have gained access to skills development and job opportunities. This progress has strengthened self-reliance, reduced dependency, and improved the social and economic participation of PWDs.
- Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) have grown stronger by organizing themselves into unions, umbrella bodies, and national coalitions to form effective advocacy networks. These structures have improved coordination, representation, and collective action, enabling OPDs to influence national policies and actively participate in the implementation of disability inclusion programs across different sectors.
- The Government of Somalia has made significant progress by passing disability-related laws and policies that protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The establishment of the National Disability Agency represents a major milestone in institutionalizing disability governance and ensuring coordination, monitoring, and implementation of disability inclusion at national level.
- Paralympic teams have been established, and sports competitions have been organized in recent years, providing platforms for athletes with disabilities to showcase their talents. These activities have helped challenge negative stereotypes, promote social inclusion, and inspire young persons with disabilities to participate in sports and community life.
- OPDs and PWDs have actively participated in national and international advocacy processes, including Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reporting, UN CRPD shadow reporting, and international conferences. In addition, nationwide disability inclusion campaigns led by PWDs and OPDs have increased public awareness, strengthened partnerships with CSOs and the UN, and amplified the voices of persons with disabilities at all levels.

## **Challenges of disability inclusion in Somalia**

- Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) continue to face widespread exclusion from essential services such as education, health care, and employment. Many schools, hospitals, and workplaces remain inaccessible, limiting opportunities for learning, treatment, and decent work for PWDs across the country.
- Public and private sector systems, policies, and physical infrastructure are largely not disability-inclusive. Buildings, transport, communication systems, and service delivery models remain inaccessible, creating daily barriers for PWDs to participate fully in society.
- Although Somalia signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in 2019 and passed the National Disability Act, these legal frameworks are not fully implemented. The National Disability Agency is not functioning actively and provides limited support to PWDs, with weak cooperation with OPDs.
- Despite the establishment of Paralympic teams, PWDs and Paralympic athletes continue to be excluded from national sports funding and institutional support. This limits training opportunities, participation in international competitions, and the growth of inclusive sports.
- PWDs are often excluded from humanitarian assistance in Somalia, and OPDs are frequently left out of partnerships for program and project implementation. Many disability inclusion projects have failed due to the exclusion of PWDs and the lack of cooperation with OPDs.
- Qualified professional PWDs face discrimination in recruitment for disability inclusion projects. Most staff and consultants hired for such projects are from the non-disabled population, despite the availability of capable PWD professionals.
- A large number of PWDs live in IDP camps under extremely difficult conditions. Many face forced evictions due to government land policies, limited access to medical services, lack of rehabilitation programs, and insufficient protection and support.
- PWDs and OPDs are often excluded as staff and partners from health campaigns such as polio vaccination programs. In addition, Somalia lacks an ad-hoc national emergency response unit specifically designed to address the needs of PWDs during crises.
- There is no fully developed and implemented national disability inclusion policy for health care, resulting in limited access to specialized treatment, rehabilitation services, assistive devices, and continuous medical support for PWDs



## Recommendations to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

- PWDs should actively engage in community decision-making spaces, local councils, school committees, and development forums to advocate for their rights. By raising their voices on issues affecting their lives, PWDs can influence policies, monitor service delivery, and hold duty-bearers accountable for inclusion.
- PWDs should pursue education, vocational skills, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy to improve independence and reduce poverty. Skills development enhances employability and enables PWDs to compete equally in the labor market and contribute to national development.
- PWDs should actively join OPDs and disability networks to strengthen unity, representation, and collective advocacy. Strong membership increases legitimacy, visibility, and bargaining power at local, national, and international levels.
- PWDs should engage in awareness campaigns to challenge discrimination, traditional misconceptions, and social stigma. Through public speaking, media engagement, and storytelling, PWDs can reshape public attitudes and promote a rights-based understanding of disability.

## Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- CSOs should integrate disability inclusion into health, education, livelihoods, humanitarian response, protection, and governance programs. Inclusion should be treated as a core principle, not a standalone activity.
- CSOs must allocate dedicated budgets for accessibility, assistive devices, inclusive communication, and reasonable accommodation. Monitoring systems should track disability-disaggregated data to ensure PWDs are not excluded.
- CSOs should recruit qualified PWDs as staff and consultants and establish strong partnerships with OPDs at every stage of project implementation. Inclusion must go beyond beneficiaries to leadership and decision-making roles.
- CSOs should document lessons learned, success stories, and challenges in disability inclusion and share best practices nationally. This will strengthen learning, coordination, and accountability within the civil society sector.

## Recommendations to Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)

- OPDs should invest in leadership development, financial management, strategic planning, proposal writing, and accountability systems to increase credibility and sustainability.
- OPDs should work under strong umbrella networks and coalitions to avoid fragmentation. A unified voice enhances national advocacy and engagement with government, donors, and UN agencies.
- OPDs must actively monitor government commitments to the UN CRPD and the National Disability Act and engage in policy dialogue, budget advocacy, and legal reforms at all levels.
- OPDs should systematically collect data on discrimination, service exclusion, and rights violations and use this evidence for national advocacy, international reporting, and strategic litigation where appropriate.

## Recommendations to International NGOs (INGOs)

- INGOs must involve PWDs and OPDs from project design through implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Participation should be genuine and influence decision-making.
- INGOs should fund OPDs directly and support long-term institutional development instead of short-term, project-based engagement only. This builds ownership and sustainability.
- INGOs should actively recruit PWDs into leadership, technical, and advisory roles. This will strengthen representation and improve the quality and relevance of disability programs.
- All disability-related interventions should be fully aligned with the UN CRPD and Somalia's national disability laws and policies to ensure rights-based and sustainable impact.

## Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025





## SOMALI DISABILITY NETWORK (SDN) PROFILE

### Background:

The Somali Disability Network (SDN) is a national coalition of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) established in 2019. SDN brings together 16 member organizations representing persons with diverse disabilities, including physical, visual, hearing, intellectual, and mental health impairments. The network aims to strengthen the voice, participation, and rights of persons with disabilities in Somalia, advocating for their inclusion in education, health, employment, governance, humanitarian response, and social development. Over the years, SDN has coordinated disability inclusion initiatives, facilitated advocacy campaigns, and represented PWDs in national and international forums.

### Vision:

A Somalia where persons with disabilities enjoy equal rights, full participation, and opportunities in all aspects of social, economic, and political life.

### Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025



**Mission:**

To empower persons with disabilities through advocacy, capacity building, and coordinated action, ensuring their inclusion, protection of rights, access to services, and active participation in Somalia's development.

**Core Values:**

- Inclusivity promoting participation of all PWDs regardless of type of disability, gender, or location.
- Collaboration strengthening partnerships among OPDs, civil society, government, and development actors.
- Empowerment Building capacity and leadership of PWDs to lead advocacy and initiatives.
- Accountability Ensuring transparency, integrity, and evidence-based advocacy in all program



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## PARTNERS



International  
Day of  
Persons with  
Disabilities  
3 DECEMBER

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF  
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



## SOMALIA MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: PROFILE AND PLANS

### Profile:

The Ministry of Health and Human Development (MoHHD) is a key government institution responsible for leading Somalia's health sector and promoting the overall well-being of its population. The Ministry formulates health policies, develops strategies, regulates health services, and coordinates with national and international partners to strengthen the health system. It also oversees human development programs, including education, social protection, and community development initiatives, with a focus on improving access, equity, and quality of services across the country.

### Role in Disability Inclusion:

The Ministry plays a central role in advancing disability inclusion by ensuring that health and social services are accessible to persons with disabilities (PWDs). This includes implementing rehabilitation programs, preventive health campaigns, and specialized medical services. The Ministry collaborates closely with OPDs, civil society organizations, and international agencies to

## Report International Day of Persons with Disabilities IDPS2025



promote inclusive policies, advocate for PWD rights, and ensure participation in national development and humanitarian programs.

#### **Current Plans and Initiatives:**

The Ministry's current plans focus on strengthening the health system, expanding primary and specialized health services, and improving human development outcomes. Key initiatives include polio eradication campaigns, maternal and child health programs, vaccination drives, and emergency response preparedness. The Ministry is also working to integrate disability-inclusive practices across all health programs, ensuring that PWDs have access to assistive devices, rehabilitation, and community-based support.

#### **Future Strategies:**

Looking forward, the Ministry aims to develop a national disability-inclusive health policy, strengthen partnerships with OPDs and CSOs, and operationalize inclusive health infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. It also plans to invest in capacity building for healthcare professionals, enhance emergency response for vulnerable populations, and monitor the implementation of disability laws and international commitments such as the UN CRPD. Through these strategies, the Ministry seeks to create a more equitable and inclusive health and human development system for all Somalis.



## CONTACTS

Email: [info@sdn.org.so](mailto:info@sdn.org.so)

Website: [www.sdn.org.s](http://www.sdn.org.s)

Street Dandawadagaha

District Wadajir

City Mogadishu

Region Banadir

Country Somalia

